

Can Bad Husbands Really Be Good Pastors?

That statement is a sobering one for me. It's one that all pastors and church leaders need to hear.

There's a real temptation in ministry (at least for me), to spend my time ministering to those *outside* my home to the detriment of ministering to those *inside* my home. If we allow our congregations' needs to dictate our schedules, neglecting our responsibilities at home can be sinfully justified.

Remember, in order to be qualified to pastor God's people, a pastor "must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" (1 Tim. 3:4-5, ESV).

Also remember that pastors who preach the gospel should not undermine the gospel by refusing to love their wives as Christ loves the church:

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself,

and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Eph. 5:25-33).

The more we understand the gospel, the more we should be willing to die for the well-being of our bride. Marriage for every Christian man is a call to die for the salvation and sanctification of our wives.

These truths are important to mention because there is a real danger for pastors to think that they can separate the integrity of their ministry from the integrity of their home. Consider John Wesley, one of the greatest Christian preachers who ever lived, as an example. Nathan Busenitz, at the CrippleGate Blog, recently wrote an article titled "John Wesley's Failed Marriage." In this passage from Stephen Tomkins' biography on Wesley, he quotes a couple biographies about Wesley, and some statements about Wesley's marriage are startling:

- When Wesley left for a ministry tour in Ireland in 1758, Molly reported that her husband's parting words to her were: "I hope I shall see your wicked face no more" (p. 155).
- "Reunited in England, they clashed violently—Wesley refusing to change his writing habits [of sending affectionate letters to other women] and Molly accusing him of adultery and calling down on him, in her own words, 'all the curses from Genesis to Revelation'" (p. 155).
- "Almost the sole surviving record of this marriage from Molly's side dates from December 1760, when she said Wesley left a meeting early with one Betty Disine and was seen still with her the following morning. She told him 'in a loving manner to desist from running after strange women for your character is at stake'" (p. 159).
- "In 1771, Molly announced that she was leaving John again. On 23 January, the Journal reports, 'For what I cause I know not to this day, [my wife] set out for

Newcastel, purposing “never to return.” I did not leave her: I did not send her away: I will not call her back.” (p. 174).

You can find the full article here. It’s worthy of your time and attention.

How could the father of Methodism have such a glaring blind spot? I don’t know. But don’t assume that you and I are immune from such blind spots.

May we constantly examine the integrity of both our public and private ministries. May we constantly repent and believe in Christ’s finished work alone to save and sanctify us. May we never be satisfied with our own holiness as we depend solely on the holiness of Christ to justify us.

How will you respond? Will you remember the covenant you made before God and afresh and anew commit yourself to your bride, coming and dying for her physical and spiritual well-being?

You too may have a wife that has an occasional “wicked face” (to use Wesley’s words), but never pretend that her wicked face somehow changes your responsibility to God and her. Just as Christ died to cleanse His wicked bride, you do the same. Point her to Christ through your own self-sacrificial death. May Christ be the source of your love for your bride. Come and die, friend ... come and die.

What are your thoughts?

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