

How You Can Build a Biblical Marriage

Last Sunday on Father's Day, our church celebrated baby dedications for the first time in over a year due to COVID-19 restrictions. In the three Sunday morning services, pastors prayed over 18 families and 20 babies, held in their parent's arms.

A new generation is rising!

It has been wisely said that "any male can become a father; only a man can become a dad." The first is about nature, and the second is about nurture.

A real man accepts the mature responsibilities and blessings of being an adult, a husband and a father and sacrifices to provide time and treasure to help each child of his DNA. A faux-man selfishly demands his own time, toys and "space."

A real man plans and prepares memorable and moldable moments which become positive parts of his legacy for each of his children and their mother. A father is a critical link in his child(ren)'s heritage and future. His life should seek to model the character and spiritual qualities of God, Himself. God-designed fatherhood begins with the responsible initiatives of adulthood and "husbandhood."

Biblical Roles and Functions

"In the beginning" of human life, both male and female were made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28). They were equals before the Lord. Neither was or is superior or inferior as individuals or as a gender. However, by God's design, both husband and wife are to serve each other by different roles and responsibilities within the marriage relationship.

Both Paul and Peter speak to these different roles and functions in the New Testament. I've summarized them with two sets of key verbs, which describe roles and actions in a divinely-ordered marriage: The husband is to love and lead, while the wife is to respond and respect—all within a context of mutual submission.

“[Be] submissive to one another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5:21).

A teaching notation on this passage in the *Spirit-Filled Life Bible* explains that submitting relates to “a divinely ordered place in a relationship.” It goes further to say that “Submission can never be required by one human being of another; it can only be given on the basis of trust, that is, to believe God’s Word and to be willing to learn to grow in relationships.”

Husbands Are to Love and Lead

God calls husbands to love their wives unselfishly and unconditionally, just as He loves the church sacrificially (Eph. 5:24, 28, 33), even as He gave His Son for our salvation and sanctification (John 3:16). The Greek word used here is *agape*, the God kind of self-sacrificing and exclusively devoted love, which He models for us.

The apostle Paul uses this word in his memorable teaching about love in 1 Corinthians 13. We could adapt The Living New Testament’s paraphrase of verses four through eight this way:

Men, love your wives. Be patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty, or selfish or rude. Do not demand your own way, do not be irritable or touchy. Do not hold grudges, and hardly even notice if they do something wrong. Men, be loyal to your wives, no matter what the cost. Always believe in her, always expect the best of her, always stand your ground in defending her.

What if your demonstration of Godlike love was true and good, not only with your wife but for every member of the family? That is how God loves every member of His family!

Protector, Provider and Priest

Next, husbands are called to accept and assume greater responsibility by leading the family through God-appointed roles as a protector, provider and priest.

The protector role is more than just physical protection. It calls on husbands and fathers to seek to really understand their wives and children and protect and provide for their unique personalities, motivations and needs.

The provider role seems to be obvious and carries spiritual ramifications. In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul's instructions to Timothy were about caring for widows but apply to more than the extended family's physical or material needs.

"But if any do not care for their own, and especially for those of their own house, they have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers."

Men, the motivations, aspirations and dreams within our nuclear family members all need our care and consideration as well. Some husbands/fathers are workaholics and are never home to support their family's felt needs nor celebrate them in their achievements.

This leads to the role of the priest of the home. The husband is intended by God to be the initiator of spiritual matters with his wife and children. As a priest in the Old Testament, he is to represent God to his family and focus his family on the things of God. Husbands and wives ultimately worship God by accepting His divine order and functioning in support of their spiritual "heads."

"But I would have you know that the head of the woman is the

man, the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3).

God's designed order of relationships does not place males over females nor husbands to dominate their own wives, but it does command husbands to accept responsible leadership for spiritual things in the family.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head and Savior of the church, which is His body" (Eph. 5:23).

Sometimes, the better part of wisdom is to acknowledge a spouse's motivational gifting (Rom. 12:4-8), along with their experience or education in certain areas, and draw mutual benefit by releasing them to serve and function accordingly. It is a learned interdependence, as husband and wife learn to function as one, in Christ.

Spouses must learn to show real love by being willing to sacrifice their own interests to enhance the other one's interests. At the same time, spouses learn the benefits of reciprocity.

"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph. 5:28, NKJV).

That verse prompted one author to write a book titled *Men, Do Yourself a Favor: Love Your Wife*. Or, as another wit said, "Happy wife, happy life." {eoa}

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