



Keys to Happy Family Living

Christian Living Series

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Lesson 5 – The Husband’s Responsibilities

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25, NASB).

In Section I, we stressed the fact that there are steps to spiritual strength, which will enable you to live at peace with yourself and at peace with your fellow men.

The reason for including the first section in a course intended for parents is to show that it takes happy persons to make a happy partnership. Section II will show that it takes a happy partnership to create the climate for happy parenthood.

In this section, therefore, the material will point out some of the ingredients that go into making a happy partnership--into making a happy marriage. Lessons 5 and 6, although brief, deal with proper attitudes toward each other.

This lesson has to do with the attitude of the husband toward the marriage. Paul describes the ideal relationship between all Christians to "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). Then he goes on to describe the ideal relationship between husband and wife.

The husbands’ proper role

According to this teaching of Paul, "the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).

"Give, and it will be given to you"

A certain man started his career by doing a routine job for a large utility company. He was a good worker; and when the time came for him to be promoted, his superior opposed it because he didn't want to lose a good worker. The man in line for promotion learned through this experience that a superior who thinks only of himself can hinder the growth and progress people under him.

This good worker now supervises thirty engineers. He does everything he can to inspire them, to help them, to teach them. He promotes them within his own department as fast as possible. Other departments look to him for good men also. Because of his generosity, he is forever losing his best men and training new ones. However, his reward is great. He gets the best of cooperation from his men. They are loyal to him because he does his best to see that they are well taken care of. His experience reminds one of Christ's words:

"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Luke 6:38).

It is such an attitude toward his family that a husband should have. He is "head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body." Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Christ gave His life for the church.

Show "yourself to be an example of good deeds"

The husband who heads his family properly will seek to minister unto his wife. What can you do to be personally helpful to your wife? What can you provide for her that will make her tasks easier and happier? What can you do to be personally helpful to your children? What can you provide for them that will make their lot easier and happier? To be the head of the wife is to be dedicated to her best interests--to her happiness.

Several years ago, the dean of a college was the guest of a certain farmer whose son and daughter were students in the institution which he served. He rode with these young people to their home, along with two other students. It was a journey of four hundred miles. On the way the son and daughter spoke in the highest terms about their dad. They had great admiration for him as a father, as a husband, as a churchman, and as a citizen.

During the visit this man and his wife slept on cots in the basement so that the guests could have the best rooms in the house and in order that the children could use their rooms while they were at home. The next morning the son found that his father had washed his car for him. During the day, the daughter used her father's car, while he used the truck. He helped his wife in the kitchen, to give her free time with the children while they were at home. The children helped him with the farm chores. They pitched in and helped with the housework. This was as wholesome a family atmosphere as it is possible to achieve.

Now this man was no slave. He was not browbeaten. He was not ordered around or imposed upon. He took the initiative in being a servant. He was greatly appreciated and respected by his wife and children. They were as ready to be helpful to him as he was to be helpful to them. He offered his services to them. They offered their services to him. People in the church and in the town reflected the attitude of his wife and children. He was a man who was looked to for leadership and service both in the church and in the community.

Here was a prosperous farmer. He was respected as a leader by his family, church, and community. Yet he was a willing servant, a man who was of a mind "not ... to be served, but to serve." One is reminded of Paul's words to Titus " ... in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds ..." (Titus 2:7). Submitting to this man was a privilege.

Abusing his role

A young woman called her pastor to tell him that she was leaving her husband. She had endured all she could take from him. The pastor began to quote a verse to remind her of her responsibilities: "Wives, submit yourselves unto ..." (Ephesians 5: 22). He got no further. She screamed into the telephone: "I've been hearing that for months. I don't want to hear it any more!" Her husband had used that verse as the basis for treating her as he pleased, without consideration for her. It is wrong for a husband to abuse his responsibility as head of the wife. This verse does not give him license to be inconsiderate, to be a tyrant or a selfish dictator.

Reminders from the Bible

Paul tells us, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

If we teach that the husband is the head of the wife, we must equally stress its counterpart, that Christ is the Head of the husband. If the husband follows after Christ, then his leadership of his wife must be like Christ's leadership of man. Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart" (See Matthew 11:29; compare I Thessalonians 2:7-8.) The husband should likewise exercise his leadership in this spirit. Many husbands have been taught that they should take leadership of the wife, but do so with a haughty, superior attitude--the opposite of meekness. They parade their rights and say, "Submit, wife." This is a perversion of Bible teaching. To be the head of the wife is to look out for her best interests. The husband's purpose for his wife should be the same as Christ's purpose for the Church, "... that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5: 27). Such leadership surely is not domination, or inconsiderateness, or slave-driving.

This is not to say that a husband should not hold standards, live by them, and see that his wife lives by them. Again, Jesus is the Example. He said to His disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and "his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). Even as the Lord Jesus gives commands that are in the best interests of His followers, so the husband must at times give commands and make decisions in the best interests of the family.

To illustrate, a young couple stopped to visit some friends while returning home from a distant state. They intended to visit briefly and go on. Their friends invited them to stay for supper. The wife wanted to stay. The husband, thinking of responsibilities facing both of them the next day, turned down the invitation. The wife was unhappy about the decision. Later, as they arrived home at a reasonable hour and had a good rest, both

agreed that his decision was best. Thus the husband who is following after the Lord, and therefore is living and thinking according to His will, should take leadership as the head of his wife, even in the face of resistance.

True leadership is a labor of love, as defined in I Corinthians 13:4-7. The Bible has some specific commands to the husband. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies, because they are joined by God into "one flesh" (Ephesians 5:28a, 31). The husband should live considerately with his wife, bestowing honor on her as "someone weaker" (I Peter 3:7). Men, therefore, must not be harsh or bitter with their wives but gentle, tender, and kind in every circumstance. (See Colossians 3:19.) Whenever a man falls short of this ideal, he transgresses the law of God, and that is sin. (See I John 3:4.)

For a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the Church is to attain a high goal, for He came not to be served, but to serve. A Christian husband ought not to have the attitude that he deserves service, but rather that he enjoys the privilege of serving. Christ also gave His life for His Church. Husbands, this is the responsibility and this is the charge that God gives to you. You are to be the kind of man that is dedicated to his wife and family, even unto death. You are to give yourself faithfully to seek their well-being.

If wives are to submit to the leadership of their husbands, every husband has the responsibility of being the kind of man that warrants submission. This is an appeal to your conscience. May you seek God's grace to meet His standard. Be done with mere lip service to the commands of the faith, and seek to experience the reality of what the Word of God teaches about your daily life together.

The Lord Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Paul said something very much like that, "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28).

Study Assignment for Lesson 5

1. Look up all the Scripture references listed in the lesson and meditate on them.
2. List any ideas that are new to you, which you have learned in this lesson.
3. Review Lessons 1-4. Do this by glancing over the lesson outlines, study assignments, and tests. Look for important truths that you should be applying in your own life. Remember that in order to be a successful partner, you must first be at peace with God and before God.

Self-Check Test 5

Are you making progress?

In the space provided, mark the following statements "True" or "False."

- _____ 1. A husband's headship over his family involves being personally helpful to his wife and children.
- _____ 2. Headship sometimes involves being a servant.
- _____ 3. A husband's headship gives him the right to be dictatorial.
- _____ 4. A father who washes dishes and changes diapers is obviously browbeaten.
- _____ 5. A husband's headship of the home is based on Christ's headship of the husband.
- _____ 6. The husband should be meek and humble in his family leadership.
- _____ 7. God expects a wife to abide by the righteous standards of her husband.
- _____ 8. Husband and wife must always agree jointly on a course of action to take.
- _____ 9. A husband who is bitter and harsh with his wife is sinning against God.
- _____ 10. A husband should be worthy of his wife's submission to him.

Visit <http://biblicalcounselinginsights.com/keys-to-happy-family-living-series/answers/> for the answers to these questions.

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