

TEXT: Ephesians 5:25-6:4

TITLE: The Godly Husband and Father

OCCASION: Westminster Presbyterian Church DATE: June 19, AD 2010

Introduction

I saw a recent segment taking a closer look at the Post WWII generation and culture. They looked at the desire for that home, with the white picket fence, with the husband working hard and coming home to supper lovingly prepared by his wife. The piece noted how this Black and White *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* scenario is much maligned. However, I thought that it was with great insight that this was the generation which faced the horrors of WWII and returned to protect wife, mother, home, hearth, and children, so that they would never have to face such things. Of course the greatest growth out of poverty and expansion of the middle class happened through that period long before the Great Society Programs were ever enacted. So our father's protected, provided, nurtured us.

Now there is a new battle to fight by fathers and I do not refer to the threat of militant Islam. That battle is marriage and the family. Far too often the only information which young adults and teens get on the subject of marriage, children, and family life comes through media reports about the lifestyles of entertainers and athletes. These are often stories of living together and what would have once been considered scandalous, but are now the new norm, whether it be Tiger Woods or Al Gore.

I. The breakdown of social order arises from a breakdown in moral order.

Albert Mohler cites a social study done by John and Elizabeth Newson in the 60's & 70's, regarding childhood experience in Nottingham, England. In this study the consequences of street play which was dominated by the need to conform was compared to more heavily supervised middle-class children playing with friends chosen by parents and carried on under their watchful eye. Janet Daley of *The Telegraph [London]* writes: "When the watchful middle-class parent intervenes to insist that toys must be shared, that younger siblings must not be bullied, that visiting friends must be given a turn, he is effectively instructing his child in how a fair society operates and how those in charge may be trusted to administer it. He is, quite unconsciously, rearing a law-abiding citizen with respect for authority figures." When parents fail and society itself undermines parental authority the results become all too evident. Daley writes,

"What has happened to working-class parents, and to the communities they inhabit, is that they have had the concept of "respectability" itself-the notions of discipline, adult authority, and even the most basic principles of "right" and "wrong" - pulled out from under them.

"When the great progressive movement for personal liberation took hold of our public institutions - when the concept of authority itself was

trashed by the education system, the media and the mainstream culture, and the idea of individual guilt was replaced by the assumption that all crime and bad behavior had a socially determined “cause” - it was not the educated, affluent classes who were cut adrift.”

“There was a time when parents who were not all that secure in their own ability to supervise the young - who themselves may not have been particularly rigorous in their moral standards, and perhaps did not have the psychological resources to maintain consistent order - could rely on the support of public institutions.

“They could expect the schools to encourage outer discipline and the inner self-discipline of structured learning. They could expect the State to attempt to deter single girls from having babies on their own. They could expect the police and the courts to side unflinchingly with the law-abiding rather than offer excuses for the criminal.

“They could, in other words, count on the idea that all of the forces of adult life were joined together to uphold the structure of civilized life: that we all had pretty much the same conception of right and wrong, and the will to enforce it.

“The British elites persuaded themselves that their great crime was to impose bourgeois values on everyone. In fact, it is the undermining of those values that is destroying the lives of the poor.”

This analysis is nothing new. One can read Malachi 2, where God’s prophet indicts the sons of Israel for dealing treacherously with the wife of their youth. But this breakdown of social order in marriage and the family is bookended on both sides by a breakdown of moral order. The opening part of the chapter indicts the spiritual leadership, the priests. They should have revered God and been faithful preachers and teachers of God’s law, but what happened? Mal. 2:8, “But you have departed from the way; You have caused many to stumble at the law.” The end of the chapter is the Lord’s dealing with their assumption that it is without consequence whether one lives in obedience to God or not! Breakdown social order from brdwnmoral/rel order

II. Do father’s matter? What can we do?

The Protestant Reformers (followed by the Puritans) faced a culture in the middle ages awash in fornication and illegitimacy. The church of the middle ages considered monastic celibacy to be the ideal, which brought about the same problems then that it does today. How did they set things straight for themselves and their children?

A. They celebrated marriage as a creation ordinance.

Marriage is the good gift of God given to man in his state of righteousness. We are not ashamed of the opening chapters of Genesis and our Lord Himself quotes this as the Creator’s intention from the beginning in Matthew 19. This we need to celebrate. Are there more jokes about marriage than there are celebrations of it? Let us revel in God’s good gift.

B. They defined and described marriage as it is set out in the Scripture.

We have opened Genesis 2, before, where the creation ordinance of

marriage between one man and one woman, as God's good and wise gift is detailed. Whether we turn to the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount, the Prophets or the Epistles, heterosexual monogamy in the marriage covenant is the norm which is taught and enforced throughout the Bible. Yes, there are those called to the single life and all of us are at various times, but the ideal human life as purposed by the Creator is that it is not good for man to be alone, but that he should have a wife, a helper, answerable to his needs, a companion, and mate, in the bounds of marriage. Heinrich Bullinger was widely read throughout Europe. His *Housebook* more formally called *Decades* [Vol. I, p. 394. "Wedlock, which is also called matrimony, is an alliance or holy joining into one by mutual consent of them both, to the intent that they, using all things in common betwixt themselves, may live in chastity, and train up their children in the fear of the Lord."] Bullinger's *The Christian State of Matrimony*, went through numerous additions in its English translation in England. He carefully put together the biblical teaching to produce this definition and description of marriage which became the model for many to come: "Wedloke is the yoking together of one man and one woman whom God hath coupled together according to His word with the consent of them both, from thenceforth to dwell together and to spend their life in an equal partaking of all such things as God sends to the intent that they may bring forth children in the fear of Him, that they may avoid whoredom[*read* infidelity], and that (according to God's good pleasure) the one may help and comfort the other."

We must deeply appreciate the biblical definition and purpose of God's good gift of marriage. The *Westminster Confession* summarizes the great threefold purpose for which God established marriage: 24.2. "Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife [Gen. 2:18, "And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."]; for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the church with an holy seed [Mal. 2:15]; and for preventing of uncleanness.[I Cor. 7:2]" God who first instituted marriage, gave you husbands, your wife, to be your helper, counselor, comforter, and friend, as well as the mother of your children.

C. They set before husband and wife the ideal of wholehearted mutual love.

Do we not need as husbands and wives, to stir up an ardent love and steady affection for each other?! Prov. 5:18, exhorts "Rejoice with the wife of your youth." Eph. 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...so husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies." Christ's ardency of love for us was such that He loved His bride united to Him in the covenant of grace, even to the point of death for her. How much sin do we have to confess who are cold and with no ardent love for our wife? Titus 2:4, wives are to love their husbands. We must then constantly and conscientiously practice love for each other. It does involve affections as well as commitment. And yes, your affections are not something that simply are or are not, for God can command them and

hold you responsible for them. How shall we practice this great ideal of wholehearted mutual love? Richard Baxter answers the inquiry “my duty to my wife and hers to me” in this way:

1. “Entirely to love each other; and therefore choose one that is truly lovely and proceed in your choice with great deliberation; and avoid all things that tend to quench your love.” Col. 3:19, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” *Husbands love your wives* is the exhortation of the Spirit. You must set your affections and desires upon your wife. Fathers are you teaching your children now how to choose a wife and husband? Fathers and mothers, are you doing this by your actions and self-conscious teaching? How many times are we like Martha who neglected the best things because of the tyranny of urgent things. We neglect and presume upon our spouses and wonder where the ardency of our affection has gone? What are those things which tend to quench your love and what are you doing about them?

2. “To dwell together, and enjoy each other, and faithfully join as helpers in the education of their children, the government of the family, and the management of their worldly business.” I Pe. 3:7, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” Let the wife love her husband by being a helper suitable for him. Dwelling together is not simply living together; occupying the same domicile, the same bed. It is to share in the friendship, communion, union with each other in all aspects of life; and of course one of the central ones is the raising of the children which are the fruit of the marital union. Christ’s love was the fountain from which all His great work from us sprang and by which He remains constant, so it must be with us in our marriages and families. We must not become separate people who simply come to the same address in the evening.

3. “Especially be helpers of each other’s salvation: to stir up each other to faith, love, and obedience, and good works; to warn and help each other against sin, and all temptation; to join in God’s worship in the family, and in private; to prepare each other for the approach of death, and comfort each other in the hopes of life eternal.” Peter’s exhortation in I Pe. 3:1f, to wives to be submissive and honor their husbands and husbands to dwell with their wives and honor them, was in the context of “being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” They were to so dwell together in God’s ordinance of marriage and so love each other following after their callings as husband and wife, that they would actually further one another’s salvation, humanly speaking, as much as possible. Are we as husbands aware of the temptations which our wives face and seeking to be shield to them? Do we make it easy for them to love, to submit, to help, or difficult? Do we lay stumbling blocks to sin before them or incentives to godliness? Fathers, do you, Eph. 6:4, bring your children “in the training and admonition of the Lord”? It is the responsibility in love of husbands and

fathers to channel the family into biblical Christianity in faith and practice. It is your duty to take them to the stated times of public worship on the Lord's day. Do you know the faith so as to be able to teach your children? If not, are you in Sunday School and other Bible studies so that you can? Thomas Manton wrote an *Epistle to the Reader* in the front of the WCF: *I do therefore desire, that all masters of families would first study well this work themselves, and then teach it their children and servants, according to their several capacities. And, if they once understand these grounds of religion, they will be able to read other books more understandingly, and hear sermons more profitably, and confer more judiciously, and hold fast the doctrine of Christ more firmly, than ever you are like to do by any other course. First, let them read and learn the Shorter Catechism, and then the larger, and lastly, read the Confession of Faith.* Do you equip yourself through reading/studying the Word and good books? Today you can listen to a podcast on the way to work or on a trip. Yes, Church, Sunday School, VBS, Youth Group, and summer camps can supplement and reinforce, but none of these remove you from leading your family's religious life. Your labor to direct, teach, and lead your family in Christ and personal holiness is absolutely essential. Gen. 18:19, "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." Endeavor to make your family a Church in godliness and reverence for God in all things.

4. "To avoid all dissensions, and to bear with those infirmities in each other which you cannot cure; to assuage, and not provoke, unruly passions; and, in lawful things, to please each other." I Pe. 4:8, "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." There are all kinds of weaknesses, infirmities, all those wrinkles, warts, and moles, those imperfections which we all have. What keeps the gears of marriage and family turning with this grit in the gearbox? It is love. Love covers the multitude of weaknesses and sins that we do not keep track of, we do not build as a tsunami of resentment and brooding anger. Col. 3:19, "Husbands, love your wives and *do not be bitter toward them.*" What? You mean that there might possibly be something that your wife might do which your corrupt heart might use to build the smoldering fire of bitterness against her?! Rather in humility and love we cover these things. It is the constant baptism by the Spirit of I Cor. 13:4f, "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Love rejoices to endure difficult things out of affection and good will for its object.

Eph. 4:26f, "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil...Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger,

clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

5. “To keep conjugal chastity and fidelity, and to avoid all unseemly and immodest carriage with any other, which may stir up jealousy; and yet to avoid all jealousy which is unjust.” Heb. 13:4, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” In the way we dress, in the way we talk, in the way we carry on relationships with those of the opposite sex who are not our spouse, in the way we carry ourselves, we must be careful to be chaste, modest. Infidelity is the norm of the day in our culture, but you husbands must fight this battle, putting on the whole armor of God. We must be pure and faithful to our wives. We must teach our daughters what this means and our sons to be that godly man.

6. “To help one another to bear their burdens (and not by impatience to make them greater). In poverty, crosses, sickness, dangers, to comfort and support each other. And to be delightful companions in holy love, and heavenly hopes and duties, when all other outward comforts fail.” Listen to the Apostle in Phil. 2:1f, “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Oh how our pride and self-centeredness begrudges this!! How husbands and fathers have need of this: *looking out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of wife, mother, child, family.* How sacrificial to self, to time, to energy is this! What a school of sanctification is the role of husband and father! Baxter is again but echoing the Spirit: Gal. 6:2, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Gal. 6:1, places this bearing of one another’s burdens in the general category of seeking to restore another Christian from a path of sin with gentleness. Of course there all kinds of troubles and trials - poverty, difficulties, sickness, and struggles - which come across the path of husband and wife and family. Baxter’s practical directive raises an important question: When other outward troubles arise and other comforts fail, will you still be there? *To be delightful companions in holy love, and heavenly hopes and duties, when all other outward comforts fail.*

D. They set a high priorities on the family and Christian godliness in it.

Early on in my college career Mark Lowery gave me a very small tract entitled: *The Tyranny of the Urgent.* I would have done much better had I read it often as he counseled. I know that virtually every family has both husband and wife working. I know as time goes by you are pressed more and more with kids going to sports (which are now on Sunday), music, lessons, and events. You all know our Lord’s wise words that a man will have gained

nothing if he gain the whole world and loose his own soul. What must we do? We must recognize that God has given us both public/work a day world callings, and God has given us domestic callings; therefore we must seek a pattern of living that by shrewd and disciplined use of time meets both sets of claims. I urge you to set your priorities, to reevaluate the use of your time and energy, to take the lead in modeling, teaching, leading Christianity in your home. AMEN.