

Responsibilities of Fathers

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Introduction

Today our society faces crisis regarding the home and family. As goes the home, so goes society. As goes the family, so goes the church. Therefore, in this lesson, let us focus on the leadership responsibilities of husbands and fathers.

Duty of Husbands

It is the duty of husbands to provide their homes with love and leadership (Ephesians 5:22-33). As God is the head of Christ, so also is Christ the head of man, and man the head of woman (1 Corinthians 11:3). Headship implies both supervision and sustenance (Ephesians 4:14-16). Love necessitates sanctification and selflessness, (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Sacrificial love is a shield against bitterness (Colossians 3:19). Like the rivers and streams of Revelation, many marriages are poisoned with the Wormwood of intense resentment (Revelation 8:10-11). Such hostility should not find lodging in the Christian's heart (Ephesians 4:31-32).

As we live with our wives, we must manifest a spirit of honor and understanding (1 Peter 3:7). Differences must be taken into account, and compensation made for weaknesses. Mistreatment not only harms a marriage, it also severs one's relationship with God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Just as a prophet is without honor in his own country (John 4:44), sadly, a wife is often without honor in her own house. May we fulfill the divine mandate of being devoted to one another in brotherly love, giving preference to one another in honor (Romans 12:10). Let us give to our wives their due praise (Proverbs 31:28-31).

In the original sin in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve illustrate the problems that occur in marital role reversals (Genesis 3:1-6). Assuming a leadership position, Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, and Adam passively acquiesced. Her failure was not due to a lack of understand, but rather to a lack of discretion: "It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Timothy 2:12-14). Afterwards, the man bitterly blamed his wife (and God) for his failure: "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12). Thus, Adam was the first husband to manifest passive-aggressive tendencies. His failure in leadership had tragic consequences.

Duty of Fathers

The duty of fathers is manifold. First of all, they must provide for the material needs of their family (2 Corinthians 12:14). Even sinful men understand this duty (Matthew 7:7-11). Those

who fail in this obligation are counted as reprobates (1 Timothy 5:8). God demands honest, productive labor (Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-13).

Balance must be maintained. Some men place too much emphasis on money. Bowing before the god of mammon, they neglect spiritual obligations and forsake the assembly of the saints. They may also pressure their wives to work outside the home, not for necessity's sake, but for the sake of luxury. Such errors must be avoided. Later in this series of lessons, we will readdress the problem of materialism, but for now, let us affirm the duty of husbands and fathers. They are to be the primary breadwinners.

Loving fathers will manifest a spirit of compassion (Psalm 103:13). If our hearts are right with God, we also will be attuned to the needs of our children (Malachi 4:5-6). Christ, our great high priest, is sympathetic to our shortcomings and weaknesses (Hebrews 4:14-16). Fathers should manifest this same temperament, and avoid an overbearing disposition that engenders frustration (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4). How can fathers exasperate their children? Through unrealistic expectations – i.e., by setting standards that are either too high or too low. Fathers may also provoke their children to wrath by setting a bad example, by playing the part of a hypocrite, through mistreatment of their mother, etc.

Fathers must correct their children. The book of Proverbs repeatedly affirms the importance of parental discipline (Proverbs 19:18; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17). When such is lovingly administered, good and growth are the result (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Finally, let us realize that fathers are responsible, not only for material provision, but also for spiritual instruction. Moses repeatedly affirmed this principle (Deuteronomy 4:1-10; 6:4-9, 20-21). So also does the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 6:4).

Conclusion

Just as elders watch on behalf of a local congregation, so fathers must guard the spiritual well-being of their families (Acts 20:25-32). Both will give account for the souls entrusted to their care (Hebrews 13:17). Were we prematurely called away, could we honestly declare that we are free of the blood-guiltiness of our children? Since Sheol offers no second chance, let us redeem the time, taking advantage of the opportunity that each day affords, to tell our sons of God's faithfulness (Ephesians 5:14-17; Isaiah 38:18-19).