

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

The Husband and the Home

By Bobby Witherington

“Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity: which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and the labor which thou takest under the sun” (Eccl. 9:9). “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate” (Psa. 127:3-5).

Among other things, it should be apparent from the preceding scriptures that husbands and fathers should be the happiest men on earth. With a wife with whom he can *“live joyfully,”* and children who are *“an heritage of the Lord,”* such men have so much for which to be thankful and in which to rejoice. With this doubtlessly in mind, Dr. Paul Popeno, at one time considered America’s foremost family counselor, said *“a single man only lives one third of his life, a happily married man lives only two thirds, and the man who is happily married and the father of obedient children is the man who lives life to its fullest and best.”*

But being happily married and having obedient children are not things that just happen as if by accident, or by being on the receiving end of the unguided forces of “good luck.” It is true that the best laid plans and the most diligent efforts, with reference to mate selection and child rearing, sometimes result in disappointment and even tragedy. However, sorrow of this sort is still the exception and not the rule. In most instances if a godly man prepares soon enough for marriage and subsequent parenthood, if he tries hard enough, and endures long enough, his domestic cup of blessings will be such that he can say it *“runneth over.”*

The Husband’s Place

With reference to the wife, the husband is to be *“the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church”* (Eph. 5:23). I don’t know which is worse—a “hen-pecked husband” or a “hen-pecking wife”! However, notwithstanding the clamor of the so-called feminist movement, I am convinced that most wives want their husbands to assume their God-assigned headship rule. At least, all **godly** wives do! But all husbands need to know that there is more involved in being a man than merely possessing male sex organs. No husband should be a domineering tyrant. Every God-fearing husband should strive to dwell with his wife *“according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life,”* that their *“prayers be not hindered”* (1 Pet. 3:7). And in the midst of all this he is to recognize that husband-hood and headship are things which God has *“joined together”* and which neither he nor his wife have the authority to *“put asunder.”*

Regarding the children in the home, the husband is to rule *“well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity”* (1 Tim. 3:4). Elsewhere the apostle Paul admonished, saying, *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Eph. 6:4). “Nurture” is from the Greek *paideia* which, according to Vine’s **Expository Dictionary of New Testament words**, suggest “the Christian discipline that regulates character.” The same source states that *“Admonition”* (*nouthesia*, Gk), is “the training by word, whether of encouragement, or if necessary, by reproof or remembrance.” These words suggest that the husband has a responsibility to discipline, instruct, warn, and train his children. This responsibility must not be transferred entirely to the wife. The husband has some obligations too! But too many husbands have spoiled and Spocked (remember Dr. Spock?) their children, while neglecting to instruct, love, warn, spank, and encourage. And years later they will wonder what went wrong! I have my own opinion about a grown man (?) who says of his screaming, squalling, squirming three-year old child, “I can’t do anything with him!”

The Husband’s Responsibilities to His Wife

1. He is to “cleave unto his wife” (Gen. 2:24). Marriage is for keeps (Rom. 7:1-3). It is not a trial and error arrangement whereby they can divorce and look for another mate.

2. He is to love his wife (Eph. 5:25, 33; Col. 3:18). In fact, he is to love his wife *“even as himself”* (Eph. 5:23). This includes being faithful to the marriage vows, and a willingness to sacrifice in her behalf. He is to prove his love by action. And it won't hurt any to occasionally say “I really love you.” After she gets over the shock, she will be on “cloud nine” all day.

3. As stated previously, he is to **dwell with her** *“according to knowledge”* and give *“honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel...”* (1 Pet. 3:7). This suggests that he needs to learn something about his wife—her physical make-up, and her mental and emotional make-up. The husband may say “I can't figure my wife out,” but he had better try! When we don't understand our wives, we misunderstand them. No wonder there is so much misunderstanding in so many homes.

4. The husband is to praise his wife (Prov. 31:28). This is the very opposite of criticizing her to her disadvantage before others. Remember, *“a fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards”* (Prov. 29:11). A sincere “you look nice” compliment will please her—and motivate her to keep looking nice. A “my, but that was a good meal!” compliment is a good way to assure one of having more good meals. An appreciative “I like the way you cleaned the house today!” is a good way to keep from being banished to a pig pen, complete with telephone and address numbers.

5. He is to provide financial support. The man who refuses to *“provide for his own...hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Tim. 5:8). As one brother observed, *“a lazy man should not be denied his God-given right to starve to death”* (cf. 2 Thess. 3:10).

6. The husband is to render unto his wife “due benevolence” (2 Cor. 7:3). This includes faithfulness in conjugal duties. Irresponsibility in sexual duties and money matters have destroyed thousands of marriages. Don't let it destroy yours!

7. He should continue the courtship frame of mind—that is, with his own wife (Eccl. 9:9). Not many wives want to live in an icehouse! Those same courtesies, good manners, and loving words which convinced her to say “I do” will cause her to say “I'm glad I did!”

The Husband's Responsibilities as a Father

1. He should personally set a proper example before his family (Matt. 5:16). The man who *“has a few drinks with the boys,” converts his nose into a smokestack, “cusses like a sailor,”* and “flies off the handle” will be very influential on his family—but not for good.

2. He should personally “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). The wife and children should never have any difficulty knowing who and what is first in his life. The man who forgets to pray, neglects to study the scriptures, forsakes the assemblies of the church, and lets others do the work and giving may be seeking something first — but it is not *“the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”* If his children go to heaven, it will be in spite of him, and not because of him.

3. He should “rule well his own house” (1 Tim. 3:4), which includes rearing his children *“in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Eph. 6:4).

4. And he should teach his children respect for authority. This includes: (a) parental authority (Eph. 6:1), (b) Governmental authority (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13), and (c) above all else, divine authority (Acts 5:29).

Conclusion:

The man who is scripturally married to a good wife, and whose marriage has been blessed with children, is a man who is exceedingly blessed. He should thank God for both. However, he must also acknowledge the principle that *“unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required”* (Lk. 12:48). May those of us who are husbands fulfill our responsibilities so that we, with our wives, might truly be *“heirs together of the grace of life”* (1 Pet. 3:7). ■

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph. 5:31-33).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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