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The strength of society: the father's role

The feminist movement has drawn Christians away from the biblical pattern of the family. Karen Clark, in the work called, *The Document, Declaration of Feminism*, wrote:

Feminism rests on the belief that it is up to women to rescue the planet from the deeds of patriarchy and that women will join hands to build a feminist/socialist revolution.

And, again, the document reads:

Marriage has existed for the benefit of men and has been a legally sanctioned method of control over women... the end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women. Therefore, it is important for women to leave their husbands and not live individually with men...we must work to destroy it [the marriage].

Gloria Steinem (former editor of MS. Magazine) once said, "Overthrowing capitalism is too small for us. We must overthrow the whole #####ing patriarchy." So there has been for decades an attack on the position of the father in the home.

The modern church is unwilling to go as far as these radicals do, but their influence upon the church has been felt to such a degree that many churches shun the biblical teaching of man as head in the family and as leaders in the church. Pro 3:5-6 reads:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

To trust in the LORD "**with all your heart**" means, "**with a whole heart.**" It is not a divided heart where one follows God on certain matters but not on others. We often let the world determine their views in various matters of life rather than the Scriptures. But we are to trust in God without wavering. His word settles any issue in whatever it speaks to. And when we accept it and walk by it, trusting in the Lord, that His paths are correct, then we have come to what this verse expresses.

And according to Pro 3:5, what is one of the chief influences that leads us away from this "whole trust in God"? It is *our own understanding*.

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When Jesus challenged the prevailing views of His day, He would often close a teaching with the challenge: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." No exhortation is repeated more by Him than this one. In fact, to each of the 7 churches in Revelation, our Lord closes with, "He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Seven times He says it! It indicates that even the church has an unwillingness to listen to what the Spirit says, that is, to obey what the word of God truly teaches.

The fact is patriarchy is the biblical pattern of government for the home. The husband/father is given the designated role as head and is to be a diligent provider for his family. But the Scriptural teaching of patriarchy has been so impugned in our culture, that it will take a dog fight to re-establish it...and I don't mean to re-establish it in the world in general, but in the church.

This morning we wish to take a look at the position that the father has in family and society, since his role is necessary one designed by God for the world.

Fundamentally, there are two obligations that have been given to the father: First, he is to be a provider to his family, and secondly, he is to walk spiritually with God and assume a leadership role in that spiritual walk. His priorities then are twofold: he is to be a worker and a worshipper as the head of his family.

I. He is to be a worker and provider on behalf of his family

This role begins in the Garden of Eden. We read:

Gen 2:5 Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth; and there was no man to cultivate the ground.

Notice that at creation, before sin even entered the world, man was to work the ground. It is God's design that man "subdue the earth" (Gen 1:28) and "cultivate" the ground. This is the way in which man will make the earth produce the necessary needs as the population multiplies. This is fully God's intent. When God created Adam, we read,

Gen 2:8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

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Gen 2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Adam is to cultivate the ground (v. 15), get his food from it (v. 16); and guard his personal walk while doing it (v. 17). This doesn't mean that women did not help with various duties often regarded as belonging to men. In certain cases, women kept vineyards (Song 1:6), tended flocks and herds (Gen 24:11-20; 29:9; Exod 2:16), engaged in business (Pro 31:14-18, 34), and so forth. But man was chiefly given the task of provider in the *formation of a family*.

Now God places two commandments on Adam. *First*, Adam is commanded to take freely from every tree of the garden (v. 16). *Second*, he is commanded not to eat of one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One reflects God's abundant generosity (God will provide), and the other reflects upon man's moral and spiritual obligation. Man's responsibility, therefore, goes beyond just being a material provider; for as he goes spiritually, so goes his posterity. So, it is also important for a father acknowledge his spiritual responsibilities.

REMEMBER THE STORY OF NABAL AND ABIGAIL: Abigail presents an example where the wife may need to usurp her husband's wishes for the sake of the needs of the household.

II. The father's spiritual role

Carl Foss, founder of the prison ministry, "Vision," stated long ago that the vast majority of those in prison were fatherless. He made an interesting observation: In 1965, there were 3 million mothers who were raising their children without a father; in 1975, there were 10 million. Within that time the crime rate tripled. At that time Foss predicted that if the trend continued and fathers failed to assume their roles of returning to direct their children, then by the 1980s our cities and streets will be troubled with youth gangs of fatherless kids. He stated, "I am convinced that a father's leadership of his family determines more than anything else, the foundation of family and social order."

Now I wish to lay out four observations concerning a father's spiritual walk

1. A Christian father considers his spiritual walk as very important

Deut 11:1 You shall therefore love the LORD your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments. (2)

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Know this day that I *am* not *speaking* with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the LORD your God—His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm, ... (7) but your own eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did.

Biblical fatherhood begins here, with a man's love for God. Nothing is to interfere with your relationship to Jesus Christ. The listed terms, "His charge," "His statutes," "His ordinances," and "His commandments" refer to the different aspects of the Word of God. When listed together, it stresses the serious nature of keeping the word in its fullness. Not just certain parts are to be observed, but all of it; and it is to be applied according to how God intends for it to be applied. God is looking for an uncompromising Dad.

From Deut 11:7 it is implied that obedience first begins with the parents and their own spiritual learning. It is particularly the fathers whom God is addressing here in their observance of the Law. Daily Bible reading, regular Bible studies, prayer, assembling with the Saints ought to be sacred cows to us dads.

Deut 11:8 You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it.

Victory over the enemy does not come by a compromising faith to accommodate cultural norms. He is to observe every commandment. A man of faith sees that His religious practice as one of his foremost duties.

Deut 11:18 You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

Spiritual growth must be a conscious and deliberate effort to ingrain your life with Scripture. It means that you apply verses or commandments that establish why you do what you do. If we fathers are to lead the way God intends, then we allow Christ to teach us. Every area of our life must be mediated through the Lord Jesus Christ. "*For me to live is Christ*" (Phil 1:21; Gal 2:20).

2. A Christian father considers the spiritual training of his children as very important

Deut 11:19 You shall teach them [charges, statues, commandments, ordinances] to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road [when you are driving] and when you lie

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down [just before bed] and when you rise up [to begin the day]. (20) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, (21) so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens *remain* above the earth.

It is great that we have fathers who provide food and shelter for their families. God certainly regards this is one of the greatest roles of a father. And a man proves a degree of love by doing that. But that is not enough. Other Dads get involved with their children's activities. A dad may participate in various social, academic, or athletic events of his children have. How the child performs is important to him. He wants his child happy and successful, and he makes sacrifices for it. He attends recitals, cheers at sports events, helps with homework, etc. And he takes pride in how good his son or daughter does things. That also is very good!

Yet as wholesome as these things are, these do not fulfill the greater task that God has given the father. Why? Because God's passion concerns that which achieves the spiritual realm! It is here above all others that Dad must place his priorities. Think about it! We all will spend eternity somewhere: heaven or hell. And so will our children. It is not without concern that God wants the fathers of households to be a force in the spiritual training of their children.

Psalm 78:5 For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children, (6) that the generation to come might know, *even* the children *yet* to be born, *that* they may arise and tell *them* to their children, (7) That they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.

Every Christian dad has someone to disciple! And so does every mom. Here, as Moses gave these instructions, the inheritance of the land and the future prospects for keeping it were dependent upon the biblical education that the child received and the child's willingness to continue in it. The New Testament leans heavily on this text when it encourages fathers to bring up their children in the "**instruction and admonition of the Lord**" (Eph 6:4). To sit in a lazy-boy and shirk this duty is a certain recipe for social collapse.

Deut 11:26 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: (27) the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your

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God, ... (28) and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God...

3. A Christian father is a servant to his family

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus Christ is head over the church, but as head, he gives himself for the sake of the body. Christ gave himself to provide salvation for his church. Likewise, as head of his family, the father sacrifices for his family. For one thing, this is why he works; but this is also why he does even more than that!

When there was a debate concerning the Sabbath, Jesus made this point about the heavenly Father: **"My Father is working until now" (John 5:17)**. Just because the Scriptures say that God rested, it did not mean that God stopped working. The heavenly Father is always working on behalf of the Son. Do you think dads spend long hours at work because they want to get away from wife and kids? No! He does it because he wants to provide for his family. He does it as a service to his family. He puts the family welfare above his own comfort and convenience.

And not only through his job, but in the things he does at home. That is why he helps his son with the car, his daughter with her schoolwork, and his wife with the dishes.

4. A Christian Father knows his child's needs and meets them

Matthew 7:11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

Matt 6:8 Therefore, do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.

Repeatedly in Matthew 6, Jesus uses the Aramaic term, *Abba*, "Daddy." This expression ought to be read in terms of endearment. God is "fatherly" in His relationship with us. Our heavenly Father knows what we need even before we ask. Also earthly moms and dads understand their child in many ways, certainly far more than a stranger does. A father knows his child's needs so much better, really because he knows his child. When I was a little kid, 5 or 6 years old, I was into "Rin Tin Tin." And because my Dad knew me, and knew the way I was, he got me an old west outpost fort

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for Christmas, supplied with soldiers and Indians, horses and one little cannon that actually shot plastic cannons. I don't know if I expressed that that was what I wanted for Christmas, but even if I didn't, he knew that this fort outpost set would be something that I would be excited to get.

When I was a freshman going to college, coming home from school break, when I would be leaving to go back to school, he would slip me some money (\$20 or \$50) and not say anything but, "take this." I felt uneasy about taking it because I knew my folks weren't rich. Back then I was as skinny as a rake; they maybe thought I wasn't eating enough.

I also loved my mom's chocolate no-bake oatmeal cookies. Anytime she baked them, I probably ate the batch myself; and my folks knew I loved them too! But they didn't send me any while I was in college until I asked them to: "Hey send me a box of the chocolate oatmeal cookies." And they did! Even this didn't require much prodding, because they knew me, they knew my situation, they knew how much I loved them, and it wasn't a sacrifice beyond their measure. They were glad to send me a batch. My mom would bake them, put them in a box. My dad would drive to the Post Office and mail it. In fact, they started sending me more cookies even when I didn't ask! Fathers will do things that children want. Jesus knew that and utilized the ways of a father to teach a spiritual lesson when he said,

Matthew 7:11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

Dads want to give good gifts to their children (within what they are capable of giving). He wants to please his children. Here Jesus simply assumes that this is the nature of fathers. And if a father is the kind who likes to prove his authority and doesn't want his children to have anything or let them do some of the things they want to do, he will lose his children. But the child who sees his dad as generous, not only with material things but also with his time, the child recognizes this.

In such ways, we are like the heavenly father, who knows our wishes, our desires, our needs and our circumstances; and when we are related to Him in such a personal way as "our Father," then all we need to do is ask. In the same way, our children should not be afraid to ask us for things they need and we should always be willing to do what is best for them.