

Leading a Family: Mentoring Meaningfully at Home, part 2
August 8, 2010

²⁵ ***Husbands***, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so ***that He might sanctify her, . . . that she would be holy and blameless*** (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Fathers, . . . bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

Why did God give these commands?

1. As helpful _____ of Spirit-filling in the husband / father; God's assignment of these roles to the father / husband is for his own spiritual growth
2. As helpful _____ for the spiritual growth of our family members
 - *The relationships in our home are not _____*
 - *The role of the head of a household in the eyes of God is to be a _____ role.*

"This is the great duty of yoke-fellows and that is, to do all they can to help one another to heaven."
– Philip Henry

Imagine again that there is a verse in Hebrews 11 still waiting to be completed. It reads,

By faith, _____ deliberately disciplined his family with consistency and endurance.

Am I leading my family in such a way so that my name might be placed there? Am I displaying sufficient faith in God's words about my role that I trust Him to obey what He asks of me? Faith is the means to my obedience, my consistency, and my endurance.

Our Non-transferrable Sanctifying Role

Our response to our sanctifying role cannot be neutral.

“In the method of Satan . . . he labours to keep off all the forces of Christ, which should resist him and destroy his work, and to frustrate their endeavors, and fortify himself. And among many others, these means are notable: . . . He doth what he can to hinder parents . . . from doing their part, in the instructing and admonishing of children, and dealing wisely and zealously with them for their salvation; either he will keep parents ignorant and unable, or he will make them wicked and unwilling, and perhaps engage them to oppose their children in all that is good; or he will make them like Eli, remiss and negligent, indifferent, formal, cold, and dull, and so keep them from saving their children’s or servants’ souls” (Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 95).

The Bible does not provide believing husbands / fathers with a detailed “how to” manual. In fact, one could read all of the explicit Bible teaching on these roles in a matter of a few minutes.

A Place to Begin – What is my _____?

A place to begin – not the only place, but a helpful place – is to ask ourselves the question, “Why am I a husband / father?” Why did I take on this family responsibility and help bring eternal souls into the world?” Any discussion of Christian leadership in the home should first root itself in biblical motivations, and only secondarily concentrate on ancillary facets of parenting.

A Fresh Look at the Active-ness of our Roles

“Father” and “husband” are active verbs as much as they are nouns, and they are verbs in at least two aspects. (“Father” focuses on rearing children, more than simply “having” them.)

- Verbs of “Be-ing”

- What We _____
(personally and spiritually)

*These words which I am commanding you this day shall be on **your** heart (Deuteronomy 6:6).*

When Scripture does not give a host of specific commands about the specifics of our roles in the home, what does that force us to do? To focus on walking in the Spirit, on being a Christian in the everyday sense of life and letting the bulk of the Bible shape our conduct.

“That we are really which we are relatively. It is not so much what we are at church, as what we are in our families. Religion in the power of it will be family religion” (Philip Henry, quoted in *Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry*, 69, emphasis mine).

Surrendering to our responsibility to be the right kind of person is a vital component in our spiritual leadership in the home. We must submit with delight to this as a necessary part of our God-given role, and as a stewardship from Him for which we should be thankful.

- What We Are _____
We must not lose sight of the fact that God will be using this role in our lives to work on us to make us more spiritually mature. Being a head of a household is a process – a seemingly endless one – of growth in us, our wives, and in our children.

If we aspire to the goal of Kevin Leman’s book, *How to Have a New Kid by Friday* (March, 2008), we likely will come to realize that before we can have a “new kid,” we will need to become a “new parent.”

This is probably one of the greatest lessons we can model for our children: “I am a work of God in process. I need to be a model of submission to transformation.”

- Verbs of Action

Discipling (as a husband / father) is a process, not a loosely-connected series of events and actions. And it is a process that passes so fast – everyone warns us that it will – yet it still slips by so quickly.

When we carry out our Scriptural admonitions to sanctify our wives and / or to nurture and disciple our children, we are conducting ourselves with them as God the Father deals with us.

- a) To Sanctify
- b) To Bring Up – to nourish, to provide for with tender care

The word does not automatically have a spiritual character to it, but the context communicates that this is a nurturing of a spiritual kind. What does it mean to nurture?

- To encourage
- To maximize opportunity for growth or success
- Encompasses everything from physical care to attention to the inner man

Discussing the verb “to bring up,” begs the question of our goal. Is our goal our children’s comfort, or is it their spiritual formation? Are we aiming primarily to be a “best friend” to our children, or are we motivated to have our children think we’re the greatest parent ever? Are we willing to endure the costs and pains of parenting? Are we willing to allow our children to experience growth through pain? If we look at the example of our Divine Father, we find that He modeled that very willingness with His own Son.

- 1) Discipline (training) (Ephesians 6:4; Malachi 2:15)
- 2) Instruction (verbal) - To admonish / teach (Deuteronomy 6:6; Joshua 24:14-24; Proverbs 4:1-2)

We have already put our personal and genetic stamp on our children simply through the birth process, but God gives us a number of years to shape their lives more intentionally and spiritually.

What are the best vehicles through which we can teach our children? *You shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up (Deuteronomy 6:7-9).*

- Through our _____
“Among his earliest recollections is the sweetness of his mother’s voice, as he sat on her knee as she told him Bible stories, or sang his favorite hymns” (2). . . . The “lives of my parents compelled me to believe that the word of God is wholly true and also that there is a living Christ. My father’s gentleness, his long-suffering patience, his ennobling companionship, and my mother’s unfaltering, never-failing sweetness and love won my heart, not only for themselves but also for God. . . . If I may judge from my own experience, parental life with a child counts more than preaching, and parental sympathy more than exhortation (3) (Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Henry W. Frost and the China Inland Mission*).

- Through _____
 - Purposeful, but more random moments of talking about God, of looking for God, of helping family learn to recognize where God is at work.

 - Purposeful decision making; taking time to talk through Scriptural rationale for decisions.

- Through _____
Purposeful, regular moments

Thoughts from Philip Henry (1631-1696)

- “That we are really which we are relatively. It is not so much what we are at church, as what we are in our families.”
- “They who lie together, must pray together.”
- “Constant family worship is so necessary to keep alive a sense of God and religion in the minds of men, that he sees not how any family that neglects it, can in reason be esteemed a family of Christians, or indeed to have any religion at all.”
- Viewed family worship as the “hem” of the day that kept the family from unraveling.

What are we to teach them? For all of the seeming complexity of parenting, it can be reduced simply to making it our ambition to find out what God wants our children to know and then yielding our will, bending our energies, and prioritizing our lives to help them get it.

Why do we often NOT lead in this way? Many reasons could be listed, but the conclusion of J.W. Alexander (1804-59) in the final chapter of his book entitled *Thoughts on Family Worship* is worth considering:

[Reason #8] “The truth is, I am _____ to begin.’ We seriously believe that this single reason operates with more force than all the others put together; and it is one with which we are constrained to deal honestly and solemnly” (published 1847; reprint *Soli Deo Gloria*, p. 255).

Many of us also fear to begin something that we know we'll have trouble continuing.

Let's conclude by listening to several questions raised by Donald Whitney in his very helpful sermon, "Family Worship in the Bible, in History, and in Your Home" (p. 47).

- What better way to evangelize your children daily?
- What better way to provide a regular time for your children to learn the things of God from you?
- What better way to provide your children with an ongoing opportunity to ask about the things of God in a comfortable context for such questions?
- What better way for you to transmit your core beliefs to your children?
- What better way for your children to see the ongoing spiritual example of their parents?
- What better way to provide workable, reproducible examples to your children of how to have a distinctively Christian home when they start a home of their own?
- What better way for getting your family together on a daily basis?

Importance of Family Worship – the time in the life of a youth when they need more oversight and counsel is also the time when homes typically begin to get their busiest. Therefore, meaningful time in the Word together, becomes more scarce. Young people then are often left to dwell on their natural questions alone, to form their answers in quiet, and in some cases, to prepare themselves to live a life entirely different from that in which they were reared in their infancy.

- Isn't this what you really *want* to do?

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