

THE MAN'S ROLE IN THE FAMILY

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It's a shameful commentary on society that we should even need to discuss the man's role in the family. But, alas, it is necessary; mainly because of the abuse in society, but also because each member of a family is happier when the role of each member is understood and fulfilled.

As a Son

Each man obviously begins as a son. He has the responsibility therefore to fulfill that role in an honorable way. He is to honor his father and mother (Ephesians 6:2) and provide for them when they cannot provide for themselves (Timothy 5:8). When it comes time for him to take a wife, he is to "*leave father and mother andcleave to his wife*" (Matthew 19:5). This does not mean he no longer is to honor his parents, nor provide for them. It simply means he is no longer under their control and should no longer look to them for support. He now is beginning his own family and is to take on a new role in life. He is to "cut the apron strings" and exalt his new wife above all others (except God). The failure to do this has caused much heartache in marriages, and even caused many marriages to fail. A new wife should not have to compete with her mother-in-law for the affections of her husband.

As a Husband

When a man takes a bride a whole new world opens up for him. He has new blessings, new opportunities, and new responsibilities. In this new role the man, the husband, is the head of the family. One preacher is reported to have said; "It is my job by marrying you to make you one. It is your job to figure out which one". It was meant, no doubt, in jest. However, the humor is lost in the seriousness of the situation. God is the one who makes them one, and God has already determined "which one". Paul wrote; "*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is man; and the head of Christ is God*"(Corinthians 11:3). However, even though man is the head, he is to recognize that marriage is a partnership(I Corinthians 7:3-5; 11:11-12). The happiness and harmony of the family is upset and negated when the woman seeks to be the head of the family. The "he can be the head of the family as long as he doesn't interfere in what I want to do" attitude is wrong and God will deal with it in His time. In Ephesians 5:22-24 we have the following instructions... "*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything*". As a husband he is to love his wife, "*even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" (Ephesians 5:25). The husband should love his wife even to the point of dying for her if necessary. No man who truly loves his wife is going to permit her to be dishonored in the sight of others, nor will he refer to her in any abusive way that will cause others to think badly of her. The wife has the right to expect protection, respect, and provision from the one who is her husband.

As a Father

Any healthy male can be a father in the biological sense. It takes effort to be a father in the scriptural/spiritual sense. The father has the responsibility to provide for his family, otherwise he is seen as one who has *“denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (unbeliever)”*(1 Timothy 5:8). This includes providing them with the necessities of life (food, clothing, shelter), but it goes even beyond that. The father is to provide his family with spiritual guidance. The scripture says; *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4). The spiritual instruction of the children is the responsibility of the father. I am convinced, however, that this does not mean that the father must do all of the instructing personally, but that he must see to it that they get it from a competent source. Usually, the mother/wife is the one who does this most of this in a family. She is the one who spends the most time with the children, and she is usually more qualified to do the instructing. However, if the mother cannot, or will not, then it still remains the responsibility of the father to see that it is done. In my experience, the children are usually given spiritual instruction in spite of the father, not because of him. This is wrong, and the father who fails in this will answer for it. Children need, and deserve, the kind of father God planned for them in the family setting.

As a Disciplinarian

Please do not misunderstand. I am not an advocate of child abuse. I am, however, an advocate of the discipline of children. I am convinced that a lack of discipline is itself a form of child abuse. *“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying”*(Proverbs 19:18) is the advice of Divine wisdom. Indeed! *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”* (Proverbs 13:24). No man should enjoy this part of his responsibility (it is normal to find it distasteful), but neither should he leave it for his wife to do. From Solomon's wisdom we read; *“Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell”* (Proverbs 23:13-14). He also wrote: *“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul”* (Proverbs 29:17).

There is more to disciplining a child than physical correction. There is training. Solomon wrote: *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). This involves physical discipline, but it also includes instruction, and the setting of a proper example. The child has a right to learn from their father, and to see proper examples set. The “don't do as I do, do as I say” course of conduct will not work. So many fathers work hard to leave their children an “inheritance”, but do nothing toward leaving their children a legacy - something they can review from memory and continue to learn from as they grow older and wiser.

Son, husband, father - all roles of the man in the home. God's way leads to happiness, satisfaction, and peace. May it be so in your home.