The Christian Man

Man—Family Leader

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"If any person be in Christ, he is a new creature..."
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

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Before you begin this lesson, consider what you believe it means to be the spiritual leader of your family. **Write your thoughts on the enclosed** Response Sheet **and put it away until you finish the lesson.** Next, we recommend that you read the entire lesson though once without looking up the scriptures. **Finally, go back for a more in–depth study before completing the** Response Sheet.

I. Introduction

Man cannot exist without social organizations. Some of these are government, cities and towns, schools, churches, economic and trade groups, nations, clubs, and the family. How did these organizations develop? As we look at the history of mankind we see that they arose out of the needs of the people who lived at specific times in history. Also as we look at history we see how they have changed over time.

A good example is schools. For thousands of years, education was a right reserved for the religious and governing classes. Occasionally, you would find business men who could read and write so that they could conduct their business, but the vast majority of people could not. With the rise of the Greek city-states and their idea of democracy, education became more wide spread. However, it was still mainly restricted to the upper classes. With the collapse of the Roman Empire, education, especially in Europe, again became the monopoly of the religious classes. Slowly, as the merchant classes started to assert themselves, again education became more wide spread. Two major events led to the need of universal education in the Eighteen Century. One was the rise of American democracy. The idea was that if a people are to be free, they must also be educated so that they can rule themselves. The other event was the Industrial Revolution. Educated workers were needed to run the increasingly technological factories and machinery. Thus, the need for government provided universal education.

We can see the same patterns with our other social organizations. They developed and changed with time to meet the needs of people and cultures of the times.

The only exception is the family. Of all human social organizations, the family is the only one whose origins are explained in the Bible. In Genesis after God created man and woman, He declared that family was the basic human social relationship. It is the foundation upon which all other social organizations rest.

Today's society tells us that the concept of the family is either outdated or no longer important. For many people, the idea of the family is replaced by the government or just a number of people living together. Because of this attempt to remake and replace the family, our overall social fabric has collapsed. It is only when we restore the family to its God–intended pattern that we will be able to start restoring our social fabric.

II. Man—The Husband

Just as God is the source of the concept of the family, He declares that the husband and wife relationship is the basis of the family. Genesis 1:27–28 and 2:18–25 tell us why woman was created and the relationship she and man were to have.

Genesis tells us that after the creation, all animals had mates; only man was alone. It was at this point that God created woman who was to be "a helper suitable" for man. Victor Hamilton in his commentary on Genesis says the Hebrew, "suggests that what God creates for Adam will correspond to him. Thus the new creation will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal. The creation of this helper will form one–half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole." He continues to describe the word as normally being used to describe God's relationship with Israel as the one who saves or delivers Israel. Hamilton concludes that "the woman in Gen. 2 delivers or saves man from his solitude." Originally, woman was not subordinate to man, but was to be an equal partner who would help man.

After woman's creation, God presented her to the man, and Genesis 2:24 states "for this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." This state of equality remained until both Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Part of their punishment was abolishing their equality as partners and making a wife subordinate to her husband.

What does this mean today? The starting point is that wives are co–heirs with Christ just as their husbands are. Are they equal before God? Yes, but they still have certain God given functions to fulfill in their marriage. The husband is the leader, and the wife defers to his leadership. Does this mean that she does not have a say in how their family and

home are organized and ordered? No, but when all is said and done with a Christ–like attitude, the final decision belongs to the husband, and the wife supports him in it. The husband's leadership is not just in the physical and material, but also in their spiritual walk with God. Too often we see just the opposite; the wife is the family's spiritual leader. When a husband fails in being the spiritual leader, he will fail in being any type of family leader.

God does not intend that the husband is to be a tyrant or dictator. Instead, he is to love and care for his wife. She, in turn, is to love and obey him (1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5:23–33, Colossians 3:18–19, 1 Timothy 2:8–15, Titus 2:3–5, 1 Peter 3:1–7).

These commands to love, care, and obey are principles on which the marriage relationship is to be based, but they are just principles. God gives us principles by which to live, but we have to work out the details. What does it mean to love someone? What does it mean to care for someone? What does it mean to obey someone?

Too often husbands and wives beat each other up with these principles? The problem is they never get past the principles and put concrete details and understanding into what these principles mean. Husbands and wives have an obligation to discuss how to make these principles into reality.

An example of how different ideas of what it means to love one another is that in today's society "love" can mean almost anything from liking a particular flavor of ice cream to sexual passion. This is not the idea Paul had in mind when he told husbands to love their wives in Ephesians and Colossians. The word Paul uses for love is *agape*. This is the word that is used in the New Testament to describe God's love for man. Nigel Turner in *Christian Words* says, "*agape,* a deep–rooted affection, consciously reaching out for its object, always seeking to prove itself. Man receives God's agape as an unmerited bounty and feels the same emotion to Him in gratitude."

What does this tell us about the way a man should love his wife? It says that his love for his wife should be an act of will, not some fuzzy emotion that changes with circumstances and environment. He makes a decision and a covenant (contract) to live his life with her, whatever the situation they find themselves. The wedding vows say, "for richer or poorer, in sickness or in health and forsaking all others, until death do us part." That is the covenant that a man makes with his wife. If he breaks it, he has violated a sacred oath sworn before God and man. Remember, God says that he hates divorce (Malachi 2:14–16).

A man shows love for his wife by treating her with respect, care, and protection. Violence against your wife is never acceptable behavior. Violence is more than just physically pushing or hitting. It includes verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse. A mean spirited attitude toward your wife is violence. A domineering attitude toward your wife is violence. Threatening words or a threatening attitude toward your wife is violence.

God created a great mystery in marriage, that is the husband and wife are no longer two individuals; they are one flesh. I do not know how to explain this. I have heard all kinds of explanations, but none of them really seem to provide an accurate solution. The important thing is that a husband treat his wife as if she is the most precious possession, next to Jesus, that God has given him. This means that a man will do everything in his power to ensure that his wife reaches her greatest potential and everything within his abilities to help her find fulfillment.

One aspect of the marriage relationship is sexual. This is natural and is the way God intended for men and women to express their sexual love. When it comes to sex, men and women are greatly different. Men find fulfillment in the sexual act. Women find fulfillment in the affection and romance that lead up to the sexual act. For a man to truly be his wife's lover, he needs to make sure that her sexual needs are met along with his. If he has to, he will postpone his needs to help her meet hers.

Men's needs are different from women's needs, and women's needs are different from men's needs. Willard F. Harley, Jr. in *His Needs, Her Needs,* says that men's five basic needs from a marriage are (1) sexual fulfillment, (2) recreational companionship, (3) an attractive spouse, (4) domestic support, and (5) admiration. He says that a women's five basic needs from a marriage are (1) affection, (2) conversation, (3) honesty and openness, (4) financial support, and (5) family commitment. When we look at these differences, it is a wonder that any marriage ever lasts!

Making a marriage succeed is hard work. It is working to ensure that your wife's needs are fulfilled. Successful marriages do not just happen. Sweat, labor, tears, endurance over long years go into building them. A man learns to be a loving, caring, mature, husband by watching how his father treats his mother. If his father was cruel, abusive, uncaring, unresponsive, neglectful, and so forth, the son will most likely be that kind of husband. The only way to escape that trap is to learn another way. He does that either by watching and imitating mature, healthy husbands or by much self–help education. Easy? No! Hard? Yes!

III. Man—The Father

God is our example of what it means to be a father. This is not only true in His being the Father of Jesus, but, also, of His being the Father of mankind. As you read through the Bible, look at how God loves, teaches, guides, disciplines, expresses sadness and happiness for us both as a race and individually. God views us as His children; children who too often act as if they are in their "terrible twos." God wants us to move on, grow and mature into the kind of beings he originally created us to be.

When a man looks at his fatherhood in this light, he can only be overwhelmed at the great responsibility that he has undertaken. If he fails as a father, not only will his children and society disrespect him and hold him in contempt, he will have to answer to God.
Like being a husband, being a father is much hard work. Like being a husband, you learn to be a father by imitating how your father fathered you. What kind was he? Do you want to be the same kind of father to your children that he was to you? If not, what have you done to change? I have talked with many men who hate their fathers for being cruel and abusive (sexually, emotionally, and psychologically). They talk about their hate for him and how they wanted to be different, but they are just as cruel and abusive to their children. What happened? They only knew one way of being a father; yes, they hated it, but they never learned any other way to be a father.

One aspect of abuse that is often overlooked is that of neglect. The father is not really mean or cruel; he just is not there either physically or emotionally for his children. He leaves it up to his wife to raise and care for them. When men do this, they harm everyone in the family including themselves. Ashley Montagu phrased it this way, "When men abandon the upbringing of their children to their wives, a loss is suffered by everyone, but perhaps most of all by themselves. For what they lose is the possibility of growth in themselves for being human which the stimulation of bringing up one's children gives."

Being a father covers the two basic areas of our being: the physical and the spiritual. To be successful as a father, you have to train and guide your children in both areas. Contrary to public opinion, our nature is both physical and spiritual. When we neglect one of them, we are only half a man. We can only be a mature, complete man when our physical and spiritual sides are developed and in balance.

The Bible is not a how–to–guide with many imaginative and innovative parenting techniques. It provides basic principles. From these principles we use our own personality, love, and experiences to be a good father. The Old Testament provides many examples of being a good or a bad father: Abraham with Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, Lot with his children, Judah with his sons, Joseph with his sons, Eli the priest with his sons, Samuel with his sons, David with his children, Job with his children. We see doting fathers who lavish all their love and affection on certain special children

while they ignore the others. We see fathers so caught up in their businesses (being prophets, priest, or king) that they have no time for their children. These stories are there so we can learn. We can see what these men did right as fathers, and we can avoid their mistakes (Deuteronomy 6:4–9; much of the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, Matthew 7:9–12; Ephesians 6:1–4; Colossians 3:20–21).

From these scriptures we see that the father and his child have obligations to one another. The father is to love and train his child, while the child is to respect and obey his father. The father is to be kind and gentle. He is not to be overbearing and create anger, resentment, and hate in his child. He is to help his child discover the potential that is within him or her. He is to encourage them to develop that potential to the best of their ability.

Parenting styles were discussed in Unit 12, Lesson 3 and Unit 13. If you need to, go back and review them. Discipline was discussed in Unit 7, Lesson 3, Unit 11, and Unit 12. If you need to, go back and review them, also.

It is extremely difficult for a child to respect his father, just after he has been beaten, sexually abused, or told that he is worthless and will never amount to anything. Many fathers actually think they can "motivate" their children by berating and belittling them. Frequently, men and women state the reason they have succeeded in a certain area was to prove their father wrong. Did the father's abusive "encouragement" work? No, it might seem they succeeded in a small part of their life, but not really. Usually, the rest of their life is a mess. Motivation and encouragement come out of love and caring, not out of abuse. Abuse breeds anger, hatred, and failure. Love breeds love and success.

Paul tells fathers not to "provoke your children to anger, but to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) What does it mean to provoke your children to anger? It will vary from child to child. This verse does not prohibit a father from discipling his children. Discipline is different from provoking. To provoke is to purposefully attempt to stir up anger, antagonism, hostility in a person.

Discipline is correcting your child. Sometimes it involves punishment, in a loving, caring manner to teach them that what they have done is morally, ethically, or legally wrong or dangerous. Discipline is positive. Discipline it a teaching process. It helps your child learn the difference in what is right and wrong. Discipline is coming home and finding your child has not done his or her homework and is watching television. You sit down and talk with him about his day, ask about his homework, discuss the need for doing it (not preaching to him), and let him know that you expect him to do it (a kid's job is going to school). If he goes and does it without whining or throwing a fit, good. If it is a

continual problem, you could consider establishing some form of reward and penalty system. The result is that your child learns that there are consequences for not following the rules, that you really care about him, and that you practice what you believe.

Provocation is always negative. Although, some people might think that it challenges or encourages their children, it does not. It might momentarily get their child to do what they want him or her to do, but it will be done in anger and resentment. It is a means of victimizing the children. In the long–term it leads to an angry, dysfunctional person. In the long–term children will start abusing and victimizing others. Provocation is coming home and finding that your child has not done his or her homework, and is watching television. You angrily turn off the television, yell at him for not having done his homework, maybe even hitting him, and send him off to do it. Does he do his homework? Maybe. Is it done correctly? Probably not. What is his feelings and attitudes toward you? Anger, hatred, revenge.

The most effective way to teach or instruct your children in the ways of the Lord is by modeling Christian behavior. This does not exclude verbally teaching them about God. If your lifestyle does not match your verbal teaching, your children will probably follow your example, not your verbal teaching.

Since the Bible tells us to love and train our children, what does that mean? Love for our children is the same type of love that God shows for us as His children. It is wanting the best for us. It is wanting us to reach the highest limits of our potential. It is exposing us to all that is good, right, and holy and then letting us make our choices.

This kind of love is not that of a father's trying to relive his own life in his son or daughter. A child will never be like his father, no matter how hard the father might want or try to make him to be. Children are their own separate, independent selves. They have their own personalities. It is the father's job, yes a job, to help them discover what it means for them to be who they are. When a father helps his children become the best people possible, they will probably have the same loving, sharing, concerning characteristics and religious and moral values that their father has. That is the best that a father can ask. To try to make it anything more, normally results in abusive behavior.

IV. Conclusion

When a man chooses to establish a family, he is deciding to leave his past behind him and to take responsibility for a wife and children. Hopefully, he has learned how to be a husband and father from watching his own father. If his father was a loving, caring husband and father, the odds are that he will also be a loving, caring father. If his father was abusive, the odds are that he will also be abusive. Does this mean that a man is

trapped into a certain pattern of existence and behavior? No, but it means that unless he makes a strong, conscious effort he will be.

This lesson has not been designed to provide techniques on being a husband and father. Hopefully, it will start you thinking about what kind of husband and father you have been in the past. There are many good how–to books available for you to study. There are many books on family, marriage, and parenting available which push all kinds of weird secular and religious beliefs. If you want to do some studying on being a better husband and father, look for books based in Christianity. You can usually find them at religious book stores operated by mainline churches.

Now, please start over and study the lesson and the related scriptures. **When you finish your in-depth study, return to the enclosed Response Sheet and write your answers to the study questions about this lesson.**