

MARRIAGE

THE HUSBAND'S ROLE

By Elder Buddy Abernathy

According to most research, approximately forty to fifty percent of all marriages in America will end in divorce. As we consider the effect of divorce on the family and, consequently, our nation, we should be very concerned about this problem. As Christians, it should be our desire to identify the causes of divorce and help our youth, particular our own children, avoid it.

One of the factors which contributes to marriage problems is a misunderstanding of the unique roles of husband and wife. In spite of what the world may say, it is not chauvinistic or unfairly biased to teach that the husband is the head of the wife. The scriptures clearly teach this concept (Gen. 2:23, 1 Cor. 11:3, 1 Pet. 3:7). Therefore, the health of our marriage is directly related to how well we apply this principle. Sadly to say, some men think this position gives them the right to selfishly dictate orders to their wife. As a result, the wife becomes bitter, communication breaks down, and the intimacy of the relationship is lost.

In the First Epistle of Peter, we read, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." (1 Peter 3:7). To "dwell with them according to knowledge" means to live (interact) with them based on an understanding of how the husband is to treat his wife. He is to love her "...even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;" (Eph. 5:25). He is to deny his own comfort, desires, and interests in order to encourage and support her. He is to show her sacrificial love. Also, he is to keep in mind that she is "the weaker vessel". Peter is not speaking of physical strength. This term expresses the idea of fragile and valuable, not inferior and less intelligent. As one would value, take care of and protect an expensive, antique vase; so ought men to love their wives. Paul makes a similar statement about the husband's care for his wife as he compares it to how a man takes care of his own body, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:" (Eph. 5:29). A husband must train himself to focus on her needs more than his. He is to provide the spiritual food she needs (nourisheth), and he should constantly let her know he is going to take care of her and provide for her (cherisheth or, literally, "to keep warm"). Furthermore, Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." (Col. 3:19). Bitterness results when the husband remains selfishly focused on his own activities and interests. Consequently, he snaps at his wife every time she interrupts him or needs his help. If he doesn't repent of this sin, divorce may be the final outcome as bitterness leads to strife.

"Total Depravity" (Rom. 5:12) is not just a doctrine for theological discussions. It is a terminal disease that infects all of humanity. It is not necessary to train little children to be selfish and demand that

their "needs" be met. From a very young age, we must begin training them to understand that, as my mother would say, "The world doesn't revolve around you". As a result of parents failing to address the sin of selfishness, marriages are made up of two selfish adults. Therefore, divorce is often the consequence. As husbands, let us recognize the awful effects of selfishness and confess it to our wives, letting her know we want to conquer it. As we turn from this sin and model this behavior before our children, we will gain their respect as we train them to be unselfish. The Psalmist so beautifully describes the blessings enjoyed by the husband/father who lives this way:

"Blessed [is] every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy [shalt] thou [be], and [it shall be] well with thee. Thy wife [shall be] as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, [and] peace upon Israel. (Psa 128:1-6 KJV)

If you are interested in what the Bible says about family life and other fundamental bible subjects, we invite you to worship with us in Carrollton each 2nd & 4th Sunday night at 6:00 pm. We meet in the old Presbyterian Church building next to Carrollton Food Mart (CFM)

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