

The seven-fold responsibility of a Christian husband and father

Bible readings - Ephesians 5:15-6:4 and 1 Peter 3:1-7.

I want to share something very important with every Christian man who reads this study. But, please be warned first! *Only* read on if you are prepared to be challenged by God about your relationship with your wife and children.

As you look around your home, I expect you can see that most items within it have a specific purpose. The chair is for sitting on. The table is for eating at. The window lets in light to see with, as well as opening to give some fresh air to breathe.

Just as it is true that 'things' in your home are put there for a reason, so God has placed *you* in your home and in your family because He has a role in His mind for you to perform there.

A chair with a broken leg becomes almost useless in the home. It takes up valuable space, but it cannot be sat upon. Everyone has to take care of *it* rather than *it* offering itself to serve others. People living in the home, and their visitors, all have to be protected from sitting on the broken chair or they will likely hurt themselves by crashing down on to the floor!

And here's the challenge: if you and I do *not* live the way God intends for us to live in our own homes, then – without meaning to – we probably do more harm than we realise.

God has given to many men the privilege and responsibility of being both husbands and fathers. Every one began life as a son to his own parents. Some remain in that position alone for their whole lives. That is a special gift given by God to be received with deliberate faith, see 1 Corinthians 7:1, 7, 8, 32, 37. But most men will choose a bride for a wife, entering into a life-long relationship of partnership in family life.

I met my wife in Australia, on the other side of the world from England where we both grew up. Our homes were just 38 miles apart in England, although we never knowingly met. Thousands of miles away in Australia we were the only two English students at a College. God brought us together and gave us to each other. Your story will be different to mine. May be your parents chose your bride for you, after 'negotiating' with her family? Perhaps you married a childhood sweetheart? In the end, however you ended up together, you must realise that God makes no mistakes! His call to you is that you live out your responsibilities towards your wife and your children, using all the help and advice that He offers you in the Bible.

Let's go through what God expects from us and see what He will help us do.

1. A Christian man is to bring Leadership into his home and in family life, Ephesians 5:23.

As Jesus Christ leads the church, so men are to lead their families. Jesus' leadership was *not* self-centred. It involved great strength on His part, to sacrifice Himself in the service of others whom He deeply loved.

Christianity must come before culture, tradition and parental expectations. Where any of these conflict with God's plan as seen in the Bible, we men must chose to put the Bible's way into practice. We may have to be man enough to stand alone against community expectations.

God held Adam accountable for sin in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3:9, even though it was Eve who first took the forbidden fruit. Leadership involves accepting responsibility for the whole family unit.

2. A Christian man is to nurture deep Love for his wife and children,

Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33.

As Jesus Christ continually loves His church, so men are to always love their families. It does not matter what any family member does – bad or worse – love is able to hold on to the person while working on the problem.

The principle is in Ephesians 5:1-2. We men must chose to copy God in His patiently persistent dealings with wayward people. God has given us some examples of loving attitudes in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. We cannot control how others behave, but we can, and we must, control ourselves.

Christian love is much more than sex, although sex is a deep expression of love. Sharing in marriage is more than sharing bed and body. Making time to listen to your wife, taking an interest in her practical needs, and being available to do things and go places with your children, are all expressions of your love for them. In fact, your doing these things expresses your love for God as well as love for your family.

3.A Christian man is to give Loyalty to his wife,

Ephesians 5:31.

As Jesus Christ stands by His church through every experience of life, so each man is to keep at one with his wife. Loyalty means having and showing lifelong commitment to your partner. By marrying your bride, and by opening yourself up to her, your choice closed yourself off from every other woman!

In Africa, the common cup left by a water barrel for anyone to use, can spread disease as person after person puts it to their lips in order to drink. Basic hygiene says it is much safer for every person to drink using their own cup where possible.

A Christian husband and Christian wife are exclusive to each other. Adam received Eve as a gift from God, Genesis 2:22,23. Christian men must never give to anyone else what God has given us to share with only one other.

Christianity replaces polygamy and adultery and pre-marital sex. Standards of society and of tribe must be measured against God's standards through the whole of the Bible, and the choice must be made to live God's way.

4. A Christian husband is to Look after all the needs of his family,

Ephesians 5:29.

As Jesus Christ seeks to supply the material, emotional and spiritual needs of the church, so a man should do all he can to provide for his family. God told Adam he should work hard, Genesis 3:19. It is not right to be lazy. We should protect our families from hardships we can avoid by earning what we can. We should try to provide with our own hands for family food, clothing, healthcare, education, etc. *Working* is part of our worship of God. If any sacrifice has to be made, we should make it ourselves before asking any other family member to join us. We may have to sacrifice the job we really want to do in order to actually do the job God offers us as His provision for our family.

God took something away from the man, in order to bring him his wife. The sacrificed rib, Genesis 2:21,22, was used in the Creator's hand to make the best 'thing' ever to come into Adam's life! In God's intended way of life for us, *giving* is regularly our best way to receive.

5. A Christian father should be a Living example to his children,

Ephesians 6:1,4.

As Jesus Christ showed us His Father in heaven, so men should make it easy for their children to know and understand God, John 14:9, Matthew 6:9. All children learn by copying. We dads have to present our kids with a life worth copying!

As a young boy plays with a stick, holding it as if it was a gun and pretending to shoot, so I must remember that *how* I live in front of my children is more influential than what I say to them. Children are confused if they see one thing yet hear another, Proverbs 22:6.

God trusts you with being 'father' to your children. It is an awesome responsibility. God the 'Father' in heaven will be judged by what your children see in you as their 'father' on earth! Pray, and live, so that you will show many of your heavenly Father's qualities to your earthly children.

6. A Christian husband will be always Learning about his wife,

1 Peter 3:7.

As Jesus Christ knows all about us, so a man should try to understand his wife,

Song of Songs 4:1-15.

The more years that go by in my marriage the more I appreciate my wife. The better I get to know her by the things we live through together, the more I realise how thankful I should be to God for His gift of her to me. Men and women are not only physically different, they are emotionally different too. This does not make a man or a woman of any more *value* than the other. But it does mean that men and women need different treatment. What pleases me may not please my wife, so I must learn to bring her pleasure. A word of praise or encouragement can mean as much as a gift bunch of flowers. A 'Thank you – well done!' from you to her may mean this day is her best day of the week! She knows you have noticed her and appreciated what she has done.

Christianity always puts 'self' last. You probably love most what you think about the most. Little actions you do, and words you say, that please your partner, come from you thinking less about yourself and thinking more about her. They are two good habits to cultivate.

7. A Christian husband and father spends time Living with his wife and family, 1 Peter 3:7.

As Jesus Christ promised to be with us always, so a man should invest good quality time with his family. The family is the proving ground for church leaders, 1 Timothy 3:5. Even local church activities should strengthen family life, not stretch it to breaking point.

God made a family before He made any other institution of society. We must learn from God's priority and we must make our priorities the same as His.

Time passes whatever we are doing. Partners get older. Children grow up. It is not possible to turn the clock of life backwards. We will only have one 'today'. Let's make sure we use it wisely and well.

Favourite chairs that have been broken deserve to be mended, or – if they can't be fixed – they should be thrown out! If God has challenged you about your relationship with your wife or children, decide *now* to act on what He has shown you.

If you really want to be what God wants you to be as a Christian husband and father take heart! Your Heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask: and He will give you all the abilities that you need, Matthew 7:11. Together with God, you can become the family God plans for you to be.

Discussion guide

Using this chapter and the Scriptures quoted:

1. Share one thing you really enjoy about being a Christian in your home.

Then share one thing you find difficult.

2. List all the things 1 Corinthians 7 says to the unmarried Christian man.

Consider obeying God's calling against your own (or your family's) expectations.

3. In which ways do family or tribal traditions challenge living as a Christian father and husband?

Whose standards take priority? Why?

4. What do you learn about family life today from Genesis 3:9, where God held Adam to account for both himself and his wife?

5. Why does doing things for and with your wife and your children, prove your love for God?

6. What attitudes, sayings and mannerisms of yours do you see and hear in your children?

What would you like to change about them if you could?

7. Define in one short sentence the 'leadership' God is looking for from a Christian husband or father. (*Do not simply quote a Bible verse!*).
8. From Colossians 3:18-4:2 explain *in your own words* how a Christian husband and father should relate to everybody around him.