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## **Pastor C.R. Wiley on Recovering the Household**

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### **Alastair Roberts**

Pastor C.R. Wiley joins me to discuss practical steps towards the recovery of the household in the modern world.

Buy 'Man of the House' here: <https://amzn.to/2UPdFOY>

Keep an eye out for his forthcoming book, 'The Household and the War for the Cosmos' here: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/44787688-the-household-and-the-war-for-the-cosmos>

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## **Transcript**

Welcome back. Today I am joined by Pastor Chris Wiley of Presbyterian Church in Manchester, Connecticut. He's a member of the Academy of Philosophy and Letters, and he's the author of this book, Man of the House, and also the forthcoming The Household

and the War for the Cosmos.

On this podcast, I am often asked, what are some practical suggestions for how to develop a household? You've spoken about the need for having a household, the need to move away from a sort of society that's alienating us from our core context of production, where we're constantly depending upon contexts that are not conducive to our growth as human beings, our growth as communities, and our maturation as families. In this, I've found few people more helpful and more practical than Pastor Wiley. So I thought it would be great to have him on the show to discuss some of his work, some of his forthcoming publication, and also what he has done to this point.

Thank you very much for coming on. Well, thanks, Alistair. It's great to be with you.

So could you give my listeners just a rundown of this book, the basic thesis of it, and what you're trying to achieve within it? Man of the House. Right. Well, the background of the book is kind of fascinating because I was originally contracted to write it for a Catholic publisher, Herder & Herder Germany, and there's an American branch called Crossroads Publishing, which is distinguished from Crossway, of course.

And the editor there is a guy named John Zmierak. And John is a kind of a fiery guy, sort of an interesting traditionalist, yet kind of free market kind of guy. And so he took a liking to me.

And I had been writing a little bit on this theme, and he asked me to write a whole book on it. We had a contract to do that. Then he had a falling out with Gwendolyn Herder, who's the principal there in New York.

And then I was blackballed. I was suddenly leprous and cast adrift. And so at that point, but at that point, he he wanted something that would be a provocative title.

So my original title was something very bland, like a young man's guide to building a house. And he said, no, no, no, that I'll never do. So I said, how about Man of the House? He said, yeah, yeah, that'll really get him fired up.

So that's how the title came about. But the original title really is the heart of what I'm getting at. And it's you can say I'm popularizing a couple of things.

One is ancient wisdom in persons of, say, Xenophon and his, you know, the estate manager, his Socratic dialogue, which really was a handbook for establishing and ordering a household in the fourth century B.C. And it was sort of something that everybody knew about by the by the first century. And it was very much a kind of if you were if you were to go into the Barnes and Noble of the first century, you'd find it there and it'd be a bestseller. Everybody knew about it.

And Aristotle, of course, and politics, but also in our own time, people like Alan C.

Carlson, who's a friend and has done a lot of work on how the the household is a productive institution, was supplanted during the Industrial Revolution by the factory system and through it, you know, sort of the collectivizing and sort of new legal forms and all those sorts of things. And as a result, we have many modern conveniences and I like them like air conditioning, automobiles, things like that. But those things have cost us something.

And we have this sort of naive understanding of progress. It is just all up, up, up, up. Good, good, good.

When in fact, oftentimes it's trade. I think things are tricky. We trade off things.

And some some things that I think many people fail to sort of anticipate being costs were, you know, the integrity of the household, its ability to kind of hold together. And then there's also sort of I think and we've been feeling it for a couple of hundred years, the impact on the Christian faith. I think there's a profound impact because the household, all of the language in the New Testament or much of it is drawn from the productive household.

And when you lose a productive household, you lose your ability to think in those terms. And so a lot of the goofiness that we experience in, you know, sort of contemporary Christianity, I think in part is due to that. So that's it.

So at a practical level, I knew that I couldn't just do something theoretical. There's been a lot of stuff on that. What I want to do is sort of provide some help.

And how do you actually make it happen? Because I actually think we're at a point in time where the conditions are really good for bringing it back productive households. So within this book, you talk about a number of the basic principles. And one of those that you focus upon particularly is the concept of property and different kinds of property.

Would you be able to say something about that? Sure. I mean, it's one of my favorite things to talk about. So cut me off if I if I go on.

But, you know, when we think of property, we generally think about it in sort of a sloppy way. We don't feel make distinctions. So like my toothbrush is property.

My car is property. All the junk in my basement is property. But that's not what I'm getting at.

What I'm getting at is the sort of property that sometimes goes by the name real property. It was the property that the founding fathers in the United States had in mind when they limited the franchise to certain people, principally, particularly to men who own real property. And they what productive property is, is property that can give you a living and keep up on giving.

So, you know, you could say, well, I've got a lot of property. I've got my 401k to that. But you're cashing all that in when you when you look, you know, when you make it look good and you can use it.

So productive property would be something, you know, in the you know, prior to the Industrial Revolution, about 90 percent of people had it. And we're talking farms, you know, trades. I've got this marvelous image in my office of a carpenter.

Just when photography was beginning. And now think about this. He he has his photograph taken with his tool.

He's so proud of his tools. He wants to be pictured with them. His tools were his productive property.

They were what gave him a living. So that's an example. Those examples of productive property.

And when we think about property in that sort of way, it becomes clear, I think, that this is not just about numbers on a sheet or something like that. That identification of the worker with his tools, the tools or an extension of the worker himself. But also the trade that he has as part of his standing within society and something that he passes on to his children in turn.

And one of the things that I found particularly thought provoking was the way that you discussed the changing way that we view children in relation to the concept of property and how we see our investment within them. And able to discuss that a bit. Sure.

What's happened in our society is our children have gone from being assets to liabilities. Now, the state, of course, has a vested interest in it, having people having children. That's why they make them and why their tax deductions.

But but nevertheless, we're having fewer and fewer of them because we're all sort of we all kind of intuitively get that we can kind of free ride a little bit. And children sometimes can hurt your feelings and dogs generally don't. So we're substituting other things for children.

So, you know, why have a baby when you have a boat? Why have a child when you can have a dog? And then even when we have children, we think of them almost like pets or possessions because we're not really sure what they're good for. So we lavish ourselves on them. We know for maybe 17, 18 years, we we sort of pour resources into them.

And then we want and we sort of launch them out into the world to do their thing. Whereas in the ancient world, it was very different way of thinking. You saw your children in nature, you know, as as helpers in the family enterprise, for one thing.

So children were right off the bat, you know, as as early as they could be put to work, put to work. Now, I know that sounds terrible because we tend to read that anachronistically through or hear that through the Industrial Revolution and, you know, terrible abuses and, you know, big machines, little kids and all that kind of stuff. But that tells the tale right there, because when the Industrial Revolution got underway, whole families moved in to the factories to work because they'd always work together.

And it was only after people sort of recovered a sense of loss or had a sense of loss for the old domestic economy that children and women were sent home. So women were in the workforce, always have been in the workforce. Children had always been in the workforce.

And it was only with industrialization that we ended up with this sort of division where men go to work and women don't, or they stay home and are relegated to the domestic sphere and became almost exclusively consumers rather than producers. And, of course, that's a very dehumanizing thing. So it's almost inevitable that feminism would rise up as a movement.

And it's understandable that I think we ought to be sympathetic, even conservatives like us ought to be sympathetic to the need for everybody to be productive. So, you know, when we think about children, you know, we tend to think about the exploitation of children in the industrial economy. But we fail to recognize or fail to note that children felt important in the domestic economy when they were doing things to help the household in its work.

Now, of course, every kid wants to have some free time. Every kid wants to play and things like that. But that's also, I think, you know, we fail to appreciate that parents would have recognized that and would have been sympathetic to at least good parents and provided that kind of space for children.

So, anyway, I kind of gives a big, you know, sort of quick snapshot. But I often joke, you know, when people ask me, what's your 401k? I say my kids. That's my retirement plan right there.

I grew up in a house where my dad started his own business to support his missionary and pastoral work and started a one man publishing business. Although it was more of a family business and I was very strongly involved, as were my brothers at various points. And it gave us a sense of connection to our father that we're not just it's not just his presence there.

It's not just that he's a nurturing presence within the house. He's someone who leads the house out into the world that we are learning skills. We are gaining dignity and his respect as we learn to stand in his shoes to do what he's done and to gain the set of abilities and to be able to represent the house to the world as well as we work on his

behalf.

Now, that is something that had I not had that my relationship with my father would be very different. I wouldn't have the same sense of a connection with him. But that was a very important part of it.

And I wonder whether you'd be able to speak about you talked about the relationship between the sexes a bit. But some of the broader ecology of human relationships that have been that have suffered as a result of the loss of the household economy. Right.

Well, I think your your illustration in terms of your own family experience, I think it makes it possible for you to understand the New Testament household codes in a way that perhaps a person who grew up in the typical suburban environment with a dad went to work nine to five. And maybe even the mother went to work nine to five and that kind of thing. And you're like a lot of people just don't have that sort of experience that you had raised where you know, what was this all about? Why? Why is this guy get to push everybody around? Why? I kind of think, you know, because you're not really doing anything significant when you get home, you know.

So when you get home, it's time to relax. So what's this business about? You know, submit to your parents. Why is the father the head of the house? What's he in charge of? His chair? You know, what's on television? That kind of stuff.

But when you when you have a productive concern, it all kind of falls into place. And the the relationship between the sexes goes from what we have today, which is competitive to cooperative. So husband and wife are working together.

And this is where Xenophon is so helpful, you know, in terms of helping people understand. He's he's treated very poorly by most people who who cite him. So you actually have to read him and you have to read this dialogue yourself to get, you know, just how humane Xenophon is.

And in this dialogue, Socrates, I can't remember his name, his interlocutor off the top of my head. But but there's this person or two people in the in the dialogue. One is sort of a failed head of house.

And Socrates is sort of chiding him and doing his gadfly thing. You know, and then the second half of the dialogue, you've got Socrates with this other fellow. And I've never seen this before.

Of course, Plato didn't sort of treat Socrates in quite the same way. But Socrates almost becomes a fawning acolyte. It just asking questions and genuinely interested in this guy's success.

And in the course of it, this guy, he describes his his work with his servants, even his

slaves, and talks about things like, you know, profit sharing and things like that. Things that you just never any you discourages physically harming your slaves. You know, you don't want to beat them.

You don't want to abuse them in any way. And then when he talks about his wife, this is particularly interesting toward the end of his discussion of his work with his wife. He says to her, you know, he's recalling a conversation he had with his wife as he talks to Socrates.

He said, my dear, someday when you look back on, you know, our work together, you may have have higher standing in our household than I do. Now, do you ever hear that, you know, when you hear it by ancient thinkers? No, no, they're supposed to be boogers, stupid, all that kind of stuff. But they were very, you know, sort of, I think, aware of the state, you know, certain things that we don't think that they were like justice and fair treatment and humane, you know, treating people humanely and things like that.

But getting back to the household, within the context of the household, if a man and a woman share all things in common in a household, then the success of their enterprise is a joint success. They both enjoy the fruits of it. Her standing in the household and her standing in the community are going to rise and fall with the household just as his do.

Something I've noted in the context of the Book of Proverbs, the Book of Proverbs begins with the young man under the teaching of his father and mother. And the honor that he shows to them is something that will help him as he goes out into the world. And the book is framed around the choice between the wise and the foolish woman, whether that's Lady Wisdom or the woman folly, or on the other hand, whether it's the adulterous woman or the good wife of his youth.

And at the end, what you have at the climax is the wife who, within herself, she embodies all the traits that are characteristic of Lady Wisdom, of wisdom more generally. She's the one to pursue. And in a very concrete way, she represents the wisdom or the harvest of the wisdom that the man has pursued from his youth or failed to pursue in some cases.

And what we see in that acrostic poem at the end of that book is a vision of a woman who is at the center of a productive household. And so it's very different from the modern egalitarian vision of the woman who's just an equal worker within the general workforce. And it's also different from the common complementarian vision of the woman who just stays at home.

The woman who is at the heart of this great household. And I'd love to hear more about just some of the very practical ways that we can actually realize this. Because many people hear this vision and they think, this is something, I'm starting to see what we've lost.

I'm starting to see that we need to regain this somehow. What are some of the first steps that we can take? Yeah. Yeah, I've experienced what you have.

Initially, I was just in Idaho, as you know, and I was at a smaller church and a gathering of men came together on Sunday night. And it was a pretty fair range. And there were white collar guys, blue collar guys, professional types and so forth.

I could tell initially that some of the blue collar guys were a little apprehensive. Here's another egghead. No guy's going to talk to them about abstract things or whatever.

But as soon as we got into productive household, everybody, the professional guys, the blue collar guys were on the edge of their seats, leaning in, wanting to talk about how do you make this work? So and they all had an intuitive sense of how it could work. But they also were aware of the challenges because we know what we're up against. We're up against an industrial economy.

So we have to, I think, be realistic about how we work with that. So I'm not a Wendell Berry type. I'm not saying go back to the farm, plow out the mule.

In fact, my sense is that today, because of the tech, we are in a spot to bring things back, just like we're doing now. People are, you know, we have a mutual friend, Peter Escalante. He was telling me about some of the things he wants to do.

And some of the things that he's going to be able to do are made possible by this technology that we're using. So, you know, we have the ability to work from home in the information economy and even connect to the industrial economy. So in our area, we've got a lot of manufacturing in connection with aerospace here in the Hartford area, Pratt & Whitney and so forth.

And I have friends who are engineers there. And I asked them about 3D printing technology and what it's doing to manufacturing. And they revealed to me that it's bringing back the mom and pop shop.

So you've got people who are out of their garages contracting with Pratt & Whitney to supply materials and parts for jet engines. Stuff like this, crazy. But so there are lots of things to be encouraged about.

And it's happening more and more. I mean, people in my church, we have a woman in my church who lived across the street for years in a house that was built in 1750. So I live in an area that was a town that had been incorporated while it was still part of the empire.

So but she worked from home and she had a great job. But every day I would I knew when her work was done because she'd go out and start gardening about two o'clock in the afternoon every day. And so we have that ability to do that now.



And so getting productive property is, I think, something that's not a sort of a single there's not a single approach to it. It all kind of depends on what you're kind of getting into. So for me, you know, a lot of it has to do with there's basically two or three forms of productive property that we hold in our house.

One is we do own real estate. We have, you know, rental properties and those kinds of things are great for getting kids to work with you on. You know, when you get more into the cerebral stuff, it becomes harder and harder to find ways to get kids involved.

Unless they're very bright and precocious and stuff. You know, maybe they can work with the accounting when they're teenagers and maybe they can work with approved for eating or whatever. But but then, you know, there's there are business ventures and publishing ventures that I'm involved in.

My wife is involved in. My wife is a professional piano teacher. So she has a studio here at home and we've got a steady stream of people coming through the house.

And then, of course, as a pastor and wife, the sort of the parsonage is still kind of still kind of works on the old model. If you think about most of the most conservative Protestant churches, when they're looking for a new pastor, this the second question, the question that comes right after where'd you go to school is tell us about your wife, because everybody knows that it's a team, you know, that this is a. So, you know, you don't want a pastor, generally speaking, whose wife just is annoyed by, you know, by people in the church and doesn't want anything to do with them. You want to you want a woman who sees her ministry as being bound up with the pastoral calling.

So so anyway, those are some some thoughts on that. But but when I get this question from particular guys, I generally begin with asking them what they're good at, but, you know, what what what their thoughts are on maybe what they could get into, what you know, how they might make the transition from corporate employment to owning their own business, that kind of thing. Within the modern world, we're very much individualists.

And when we're thinking about these sorts of questions, that's often the first foot that we lead with. How can I as an individual tackle these problems? How can we join together as groups? How can we develop social virtues that make these goals more realizable? Well, that's a great, great question. I've got a number of people in my church from what we used to call third world countries.

And it's been a fascinating thing for me to sort of watch how they go about this. So in many of those cultures, you know, it's not, you know, getting the son into business is not sort of like, OK, let's throw some money at him and watch him go or, you know, hope for the best. There is often a kind of a collaborative effort to get the business off the ground.

So I've got a young man in my church who is he's ethnically Indian, but he's actually originally from the West Indies. And he and his wife came to the States and they own they're both involved in other things. But they but they own an Indian grocery store.

So and then his uncle, it's always fascinating to talk to him about how things are going, you know, because it's like it's like right out of like a soap opera or something, you know, because, you know, it's like or Genesis. Because there's the uncle, there's the cousin, there's the father, you know, there's all this stuff going on. And and but it would never have happened if it wasn't for those family connections.

So he's like the the heir apparent. So, you know, he's the one to to lead the charge. And he's always interacting.

He's he likes it. He's always thinking about ways to sort of present products, you know, and, you know, he's reading about things and stuff like that. But he's also interacting with extended family and his wife and so forth.

He's got a couple of he's got twin daughters. I can imagine them both working in the business before too long. And they're very small at this point.

So there's that. But I think, too, that in a church, particularly, well, we're both familiar with Moscow, Idaho. And one of the things that was really a marvelous thing for me to sort of discover on the ground when I got out there was that there are all these businesses that have been started by people in that community.

And we think about, you know, people with big names, you know, Douglas Wilson or Peter Lighthouse or those guys. But that doesn't impress me so much because I've been in lots of places with guys, you know, who have famous names and people. What impressed me was this community, this community of very talented people that no one knows about.

And all the businesses in there, there was a brew pub, there was a coffee shop. There are other things going on in terms of construction businesses and different things that, you know, publishing house, you know, that we both know about that are all privately owned, but not really in a sense, you could say, because it wasn't just like a vacuum. You know, all this stuff came out of a community.

So every time, you know, one of these businesses get off the ground, you have all these people who are like customers, you know, who want to help you out, that kind of thing. So a couple of thoughts. So maybe go a bit more into detail on some of the models that we can look to.

You mentioned certain ethnic communities and you mentioned somewhere like Moscow. I've often seen these virtues, the virtues of the household, very much within immigrant communities, within contexts that are not in the mainstream of American or UK life. But

context where you can really see things that we could learn from.

What are some of the other, I mean, you talk in your book about the Amish community and social security without a middleman. Can you say something more about that? Well, yeah, I think kind of elaborating on these ethnic communities. You know, I worked in Boston for years in the inner city and I was a part of a church.

It was a very ethnically diverse place. It was in Cambridge. We had six congregations.

They were all language based congregations. The English speaking congregation had people from like 30 to 40 different countries. It was just wild.

It was like the United Nations every Sunday. But one of the things that you noted when you were part of that, if you had eyes to see it, was that most of the ethnic folks had more in common with each other than the folks who were American or European had with them. So, you know, in spite of all of our political correctness and our, you know, there was a kind of a basis for these folks to understand each other in ways that those who were from the West couldn't understand.

So an example would be arranged marriages. I had a chance to see. We had, for example, here's a fun story.

We, you know, a lot of young people from the local college scene, because, you know, you get a lot of colleges in Boston, like 30 colleges. And so they would discover our church and they'd want to participate because it was just so cool to be in this very diverse setting. And we had one young woman who taught a junior high class of girls.

And in her class, there were all these Indian girls. So she was, you know, from the Midwest or something. And she's sitting there.

She had this curriculum on dating. So she teaches this class on dating and the girls are kind of shy, but they just keep giggling and looking at each other the whole time. And then she finished her lesson.

I said, any questions? They said, well, not a question, just a statement. You know, we don't date. We already know who we're going to marry.

And she was appalled and chagrined, you know, at the same time. But what I witnessed was that in that setting, because the household was so important, you couldn't leave this matter of who your mate is to the wisdom of a teenager or a 20 year old. You know, mom and dad are going to depend on you in their old age.

They have a voice. They should have a voice in who you marry. You know, that doesn't.

No, not now. We think about, you know, you know, the matchmaker and in, you know, on the roof and in the horror of having to marry the butcher and all that kind of stuff. But

the parents are often in these situations, very sensitive and knowledgeable about their children and their strengths and their weaknesses and what would be good.

And they want they want their children to be happy. You know, they work at that. So I have had a chance to watch this whole sort of thing play itself out.

I'm not saying that we need to do that in the West, but I do think we need to revisit these things. But this is just one example of how a household economy affects things that maybe we wouldn't anticipate it affecting. Recently was reading a book by William William Vandenberg, where he was talking about just the effect of technique on modern society and the increasing way in which a society built around technique alienates people and leads to a situation where we're ramping up technique to deal with the damage caused by technique and the way it disrupted our social structures.

And so we have technique doing the tasks that households and communities previously would have done. And so social and individual existence suffer alienation and dysfunction. And then we have human techniques that are brought in to deal with that, whether that's progressive forms of education, whether it's the artificial sort of integration achieved by mass media, whether it's the secular myths that we tell of progress and of pursuing a career, these sorts of things.

One of my favorite parts of your book was this fairy tale, as it were, of Gak and the Giant. And the way in which a certain set of stories that we have really taken on board can lead to us being swallowed by these giants in a way that is destructive of our well-being. But often that seems to us to be the only solution that's available.

We can only ever think the technical solution to our technical problems. How do you break through that sort of imaginative impasse? Yeah, that's, yeah. Your comments reminded me of Jacques Ellul a little bit, you know, and his, and also Ivan Ilyich a little bit.

I think we have come to think of human beings as just another tool. And so we apply the tools to the tool, you know. Like my son is in the garage right now.

My son is a blacksmith. He's a steelworker, but he's working on a dagger right now. And so he's got his forge out and his anvil and all this kind of stuff.

And we kind of think about human beings in that way now. We kind of just think about them as tools. We even think of language that way.

And we don't think of language as sort of reflecting reality or being a window on reality. We think about it as a tool to get our way. Or a weapon, as Nietzsche famously said with the mobile army of metaphors and stuff like that.

But getting back to this whole, how do we engage people imaginatively? I think, you

know, the Inklings were great at it. You know, what they did is they said, okay, we're going to tell some stories that you can kind of, if I care, you can kind of enter into. And that was my strategy there.

I tried to take a jack and the giant. Okay, we know that story. And work with it a little bit to show you that we are up against.

And I had multiple purposes with that little fairy tale or that little fable I told. One is I wanted people to recognize this isn't easy. We really are up against giants.

It's not as though you can just go out there and expect to succeed. Failure is going to be, you know, part of the pop. You know, you might fail.

And that's okay. I mean, you're up against giants. You know? But also, the sort of ethos that we live in now, sort of the common sense is that giants are our friends.

You know? And you want to be with the giants. So what I was trying to do is trying to show that no, giants aren't your friends. And they're taking advantage of you.

And it may be, you know, it may be you may find yourself in a situation where you have to be, you know, kind of in this giant, sort of this world of giants for a period of time. But maybe you should aspire to get out of it. In fact, in terms of my own experience with people who get into the industrial economy, and again, I don't want to make this sound like I'm a kind of a Luddite in the sense that I think that only bad things have come out of the industrial economy.

I don't think that's the case. I think we've got a lot of good things that have come out of it. In fact, I think it's, as I noted earlier, I think the industrial economy has created an escape route in a weird sort of way.

But I think if we if we can help people sort of call into question the myths they've been told. So, you know, I think that the first step in evangelism is disillusionment. You know, you want to disillusion people because illusions ought to be dissed.

You know, and I think that's one of the reasons why Ecclesiastes is a great sort of pre evangelism book, because it's all about sort of dealing with realities of the world. And and I've noticed that when young men and young women actually get out into the industrial economy, all those sorts of illusions that they that they had believed are, you know, through the hard reality of their disappointments. You know, by the time generally they're about 30 ish, maybe even a little before, they're all just like jaded and jaundiced and whatever you want to call it.

And they want out. And then my little story there, I tried to show a guy who wanted out, but was so sort of bound up as Jack and the farmer's daughter are climbing out of the giant. And there's this guy says, take me with you.

And Jack says, I can't. You need to you need to free yourself, you know, and the guy can't bring himself to. So, so often I see that, you know, people who want out, but it's almost too late.

You know, they've got a mortgage, they've got commitments, they've got this and that. And it just they can't find their way out. So I think people need to be disillusioned a little bit without becoming Luddites or going, you know, sort of becoming sort of falling for another illusion, you know, going back to the farm, you know, becoming too Wendell Berry-esque.

You know, I'm not I'm not advising that because that's a different kind of illusion. I don't know if I don't think that's we don't want to romanticize that too much. But but trying to work with the realities on the ground, but also sort of expose the lies, you know, that we've been told not only by the industrial economy, but by, you know, welfare state, those things.

Your book is called Man of the House. And within it, you talk a lot about the way that masculinity and fathers and husbands are tied up within this larger structure of an economy, the polity of the household, things like that. And within our current context, I think this sense of the rudderless character of young men, they're listless and just not knowing where they belong in society.

And also the sense of the pressures arrayed against them and the antagonism towards them in certain quarters has led to lots of things being written on the subject. How do you think the sort recovering the good soil of the household can enable men to grow to their full stature? What are some of the particular ways you see that happening? Right. Yeah, that was a very central concern for me when I wrote the book.

You know, when you when you look at some of the things that are going on, you know, basically, there are two ways that guys are sort of responding to the things that you just noted. One is a kind of capitulation to the pressures of the culture and sort of guys discovering their feminine side and that kind of thing. And I've got nothing against guys being nurturing or anything like that.

You know, so I don't want to take this the wrong way, but but it seems like guys are almost embarrassed to be men in some respects. The other side of it is sort of the alt right thing where you see all these guys going hyper kind of crazy with, you know, anything about a guy like Jack Donovan, you know, you know, and you're probably familiar with him and just kind of gets goofy. What's this all for? Live action role playing as men.

Right, exactly. Or you go to like these events for men, you know, that are sponsored by churches and things like that. Everybody's wearing their football jerseys or their whatever, you know, you say, you know, to me, that all demonstrates that you're really

insecure.

You don't really know what you are. And so you put on these these things. But what you discover when you get back back home, this is the paradox.

When you go back home, you discover, ah, that's what this was for. You know, so what we have are virtues that we recall and we want to honor. So let's take, for example, gravitas.

You know, gravitas is a virtue that, you know, you know, means weightiness, means being taken seriously. And it's a great thing if you want to execute justice. In other words, apply standards, discipline, those kinds of things.

Now, when you don't have a standard to apply, if it doesn't serve justice, then it's just like bullying to get your way. But when you have a household, you say, OK, we have to get some things done today. And if we don't, we die.

That kind of thing. Then you say, OK, I need some gravitas here to get the message across that this needs to happen. You know, we'll talk later.

We'll hold hands later. I'll hug you later. But get it done now, you know, because it has to be done now.

Then you realize, OK, all these things that we are many of them, at least that we associate with traditional masculinity, had a function. They have and they served the interests of other people, including women. You know, so it wasn't sort of like, hey, look at me, pound my chest, that kind of thing.

It was like this is a way that I have been equipped by God to be of service to other people. My children, my wife, my parents, my community, those sorts of things. And so you have to sort of recover this context in order for everything to kind of fall into place and make sense again.

But it also gives you a freedom to be tender, to be affectionate, to be nurturing, because none of those things call into question, you know, you're, you know, threatening to you because you're like, well, this is just not the time for that. Now is the time to pick up the kid and hug the kid, you know, that kind of stuff. You talk about the way that productive property ties you down and gives you a clearer context.

And I get the impression that many people are very wary of being tied down, whether that's being tied to a marriage, being tied to a family, being tied to a location. And as a result, they're not investing themselves in productive property in the same way. Things like the question of you can raise your kids in your house, but what's the chance that they're going to stay committed to you in your old age? How can you, in the current context, believe that your children will continue in the faith? And these sorts of things

can often discourage us from investing ourselves in our marriage because we're in our family or in our location.

We could easily be uprooted. The economy could change. What are some of the words of encouragement and hope that you could give to people to actually make that investment? Well, the first word of encouragement is get over it.

Because there are no sure things in life. I mean, your 401k is not a sure thing. Social security is not a sure thing.

In fact, maybe that's a bad thing. Maybe it's far less secure than you assumed. So life is risk.

Life comes with disappointments. And you may find yourself having invested yourself in people and you find yourself let down. So I think it's important to just be perfectly frank about it up front.

But I think the other thing is if you really kind of buy into this and talk about it with your kids, they kind of see the sense of it. Your wife sees a sense of it. And I was just at a conference where the title of the conference was Keep Your Kids.

And one of the things I stated there, and I have plenty of evidence for it, because in this particular community, it seems like they do keep their kids pretty well, better than in many other places. But what I said is get your kids working with you. And what they'll do is they'll be the bond that you form will be a functional and not just an exclusively emotional bond.

It'll be a bond where there's a clear point that you both are working toward a common goal. And they'll see you in your good moments, your bad moments and so forth. But they'll also get a sense that this is kind of the way the world works.

We need each other. In that book, I criticized Thoreau early on for giving the impression through his writing on self-reliance that he was just able to pull even what he did off on his own. But it's not even the case at multiple levels.

He was operating on borrowed land, borrowed tools. And there's no recognition that even the tools were invented by other people. So the more you take responsibility for your own well-being, the more you realize how indebted you are to others in really significant ways.

And so consequently, I think when your family is involved with that, it's going to be more likely that they're going to buy in and understand their need to make a contribution to your well-being and so forth in the long run. So one joke that kind of gets passed around when we talk to guys about this, we kind of noted it before, but if we think of our kids as a retirement plan, then we can actually talk to the kids like they're the retirement plan. I



do all the time.

I say, someday when you're rich or something like that. But I also, with the assets, the things that we own, I tell the kids, these are my hopes. So that if these things do prosper, I'm not just going to present myself or my wife to you as a burden.

I'm also hoping to give you the resources that will make it possible for you to look after our interests and that those resources will go on to serve you when I'm gone. I will die someday. And then maybe those resources will be there for you when you have to take care of your children or they need to take care of you.

You mentioned the distinction between a society built through love and a society built around money. Another thing you mentioned that really stood out to me, it was a surprising but I think very perceptive point, was about the separateness of the head of the household and also the way that the head of the household separates people. So it's just not this stifling, sort of emotional plasma that everyone's caught up within.

And people can grow within that context. People can mature and grow up into their own persons. But without having that tearing them away from the household.

Would you be able to speak to both of those points briefly? Yeah, sure. I mean, I think, you know, we shouldn't think of our children as simply carbon copies of ourselves. You know, they're their own people.

And so, you know, when I and my wife, we saw our children growing, we realized, you know, these are real people. They're little strangers that have come into our homes, our home. And we're kind of learning who they are as we go along.

I think, too, once you realize that you want to make sure that in a household, there's a kind of ecology that allows each person to flourish as themselves and not sort of be oppressed by sort of a set of expectations. Now, there are justifiable expectations, you know, like honor your father, mother, you know, stuff like that. But what I'm getting at is you don't have to be just like me or sort of carry on, you know, my particular calling or whatever.

So like with our three kids, each of them have a set of interests that we've tried to recognize and honor and encourage. And sort of the demarcation of the boundaries has to do with, you know, their identities, but also the kinds of expectations and the application of constructive relationship between the father and the children in particular. And I think that's what you're probably getting at with regard to separating yourself as a father.

So as a father, because of the nature of the work, needs to be a little more emotionally distant than the mother. And I think this is completely lost on people today. You don't separate yourself because you don't love them.

You separate yourself because you do, so that you can apply standards and call for, you know, members of the household to sort of rise to the occasion, that kind of thing. Because there's real work to be done. This isn't just make dad happy or stay quiet in the backseat of the car while we're on vacation or something like that.

There's real things to do. And when that happens, children can have a sense that standards are not arbitrary standards, and that authority figures should be honored and respected and not taken for granted. Or, you know, you shouldn't try to manipulate them, things like that.

I hope that makes sense. Yes. You have a book that's forthcoming, going to be out in the next few weeks, called *The Household and the War for Cosmos*.

Could you tell us something about what is the book about and why should people buy it? Right. Well, with regard to the title, the book initially was inspired by my conviction that a household can't just sort of exist in a mechanistic universe. So, in a sense, the cosmos, I love the way you put that, you know, we say cosmos over here.

But the cosmos, the so if we think of the cosmos as a kind of mechanism, then we're going to approach our understanding of human beings as mechanisms and institutions as mechanisms. You know, that is. But if we think about the cosmos as an order, which is what it means, you know, and then we'll think of ourselves as a kind of order and our households as a kind of order.

So I realized that, you know, what I described in *Man of the House* needed to be situated in a bigger structure, larger structure. So I had an opportunity to speak for Touchstone at their annual conference in Deerfield, Illinois, at the Trinity University. I think that's what it's called, Trinity University.

And so I thought and the theme was patriarchy, believe it or not. They owned it. It was great.

And I was asked to speak along some really great people like Alan Carlson and Tony Essel and Nancy Percy. So I thought about it. I thought, well, I want to do what I do is I want to take that.

And then if you think about the cosmos historically with regard to, you know, the first century, particularly the Romans, Romans really understood a piece, a pietas, you know, where you get the origin of the word piety, as the way in which a person sort of honors his relations, not only to his parents and his magistrates and his city and even the empire, but to the big picture itself, the cosmos. So I thought, OK, I'm going to take the story of Aeneas and explore it and then compare him with Abram and show that there are two households that are, have sort of a universalizing or universal aspiration. And eventually you get conflict in the houses.

And it looks bad for the house of Abraham to start with. Maybe it's crushed, but they win in the long run. And so it's because they, they, the Christians believe that Christ is Lord and he's ascended on high.

And they, they, and there's this through his victory. And this comes out particularly well in Ephesians. Through his victory, we now live in a cosmos that is governed by him.

And we are waging ongoing pious war and to reflect his rule. And the ways that we do that are through the colonies, which are the churches, you know, and then through our households, which was sort of the fulcrum. And it's because of that two-prong, those two stratagems, that eventually after a long war of attrition and guerrilla piety, guerrilla fighting, you could say, you know, the Christians won.

So what I try to do is I say, OK, we have a very different situation on the ground today. But in one respect, because Christians and their pagan neighbors shared a common understanding of the cosmos in the sense that they believe that it was a, what I call a colonial-style house as opposed to a ranch-style house. So, but today we have just outer space.

We've got no points of reference, you know, really chaos and mechanistic understandings. But I still believe that the strategy applies, that we need to rededicate ourselves because the cosmos 2.0 is Christ and the church. You know, that's the new heavens and the new earth.

So it's not as though we're just sort of like living in this cosmos and saying, OK, this is the way things are. We're actually have our eyes pointed toward the new heavens and the new earth and our households and our churches reflect that new reality. I've been reading through the story of Abraham lately, and that theme is just so prominent that God says that he has chosen Abraham in order that he might teach his children after him, that God might fulfill everything that he has said.

And as you look through the story, it's the story of a family legacy. It's not just individuals and the separate events that happened to them, but you can see the way that one generation succeeds the next, succeeds the one that has gone before. And they're passing down a legacy of God's dealings with them and the legacy also of sin that God is dealing with in each generation.

And it's also alongside the gathering of the wealth of the household and the decisions that have fateful consequences for people in the future. And that sort of adventure and challenge and calling is, I think, one that should resonate with us in our moment in time when we really have to, maybe we have to be like Abraham and leave a certain sort of culture and establish something new. Another thing that you were mentioning was the relationship between the colonies and the household.

Within The Man of the House, you discuss the dangers of some churches that assume certain of the roles of the household, of the functions of the household, with the result that the household is weakened. How can we have a relationship between the church and the household that strengthens both? Yeah, I've been thinking a lot about that. And I think the danger that it kind of goes back and forth.

You know, when you look at the sort of the house church movement, they don't have any place for the church. And then if you look at sort of this over-realized eschatology that sometimes you run across, which seems to be becoming more popular with a kind of post-familial way of thinking about the church and the Christian, you end up with an over-realized eschatology. And you end up taking the path that the Shakers took.

And we saw how that worked out. We got a lot of nice furniture out of that. We got the flat broom and the circular saw.

But we've got all these empty villages, Shaker villages here in New England that are just museums now. And that's where some of these people seem, in my opinion, are trying to take us. So there has to be now another way that this manifests itself is with sort of like the megachurch kind of thing where marketing and market segmentation sort of divides everything up.

So, hey, we got this great church. We got the best children's program, the best youth program. And we've got the best women's thing.

And so everybody just goes to church and goes their separate way. And then they never really do anything together. We did our church thing.

Now let's go home. And our approach to church becomes like the industrial economy. It's like, okay, we do our religious thing over here.

We do our work thing over there. And then we come home and we watch television, that kind of thing. Or not even television.

Everybody's in the room doing their smartphone thing. So I think that there has to be kind of a kind of reciprocal relationship. I did a thing on baptism here recently.

And what I tried to talk about infant baptism, tried to show is that the church doesn't confer paternal authority on parents. We recognize it. So if we didn't, we could go into houses and steal kids and take them out and baptize them.

So, no, we recognize there's a boundary there. So we recognize the authority of parents. But when parents bring children to church to be baptized, we give them a task.

We say, okay, this is your job. Catechize your children. Raise them up in the nurturing and the admonition of the Lord.

Work with the elders. Submit to the elders in this whole process. So we need to have that kind of symbiotic relationship.

And when we think about the church, we use the language of the household to describe it. So we're, in a sense, dependent upon it in that respect. So this is one of the things that concerns me.

Another thing that concerns me is the household has become weaker and is compromised and is being pulled apart. And households are not forming. And we use the language of like brother and sister with regard to church.

We talk about father, only begotten son, bride prepared for her husband, all this language. We don't have any actual basis and actual lived experience to know what we're talking about. And so the church as an institution depends on the household even at that level.

But the household depends upon the church because households were never understood to be sort of hermetically sealed things. They participate in a larger community and have to have some kind of openness. There's got to be windows.

There have to be doors for it to be a healthy household. You've probably come across this where houses are too inwardly turned. They've just become so emotionally sick.

And you know, you got it. You got to open the windows. People need to get out.

That kind of thing. So it's good for women and wives and mothers to have friends who aren't at home. Fathers the same, you know, children the same.

We're part of a bigger thing. So anyway, and the church ought to be that place or one of those places where that bigger sort of thing happens. Could you just before we finish show viewers the book and also tell them where to get it? So Man of the House, this book right here, is available on Amazon and just about anywhere.

Better books are sold. You can order it through your local bookstore. I do believe because of the nature of its distribution, you can get it in other parts of the world.

I believe people in Australia and New Zealand have read it, Germany and other parts of Europe. So there's that. And then my new book is not available yet.

This new book, they've asked me to do a little additional work on it. So this is like an advanced copy that was available at a conference I spoke at. But I'm hoping that this will be out before too long.

But you can find this on Goodreads and, you know, sort of state that you want to want to read it there. I guess you can't remember what they call that. But anyway, and then that'll allow me to sort of let folks know when it's available.

You know, I can just say, hey, it's out there now. But it'll be available on Amazon and other places too. Excellent.

Pastor Wiley, thank you very much for joining me. It's been a pleasure to have you. Thanks, Alistair.

I really enjoyed it.