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Families vs Individuals (Part 3)



Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture - Steve Gregg

In this message, Steve Gregg discusses the biblical perspective on the roles of husbands and wives within a family unit. Gregg refutes the idea of individualism and emphasizes the importance of the family as a God-created unit. He argues that according to scripture, husbands are called to be the head of the household and to love and care for their wives as Christ loved the church. Wives, on the other hand, are called to guide the home, manage the household, and care for the children.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to continue on a theme that we've been working on the last few times. Our overall theme is, of course, Toward a Radically Christian Counterculture. A lot of these different weeks we've been talking about how the counterculture of Christianity, when it exists, is different in many respects from the dominant culture of the land that we live in.

One of the ways we're considering most recently is how a Christian culture is a culture of families. We're talking about how the culture of families confronts the culture of individuals. Now, I said this the previous times, but in case you weren't here, I need to repeat it.

Christianity does not eliminate individuals or individualism. It's an interesting thing that the Bible indicates that we are a body, and Paul talks about the church as a body, all one and so forth, and yet we're many members. Paul makes a point of commenting on the broad differences that exist among individual members.

We have different gifts, we have different callings, we have different offices and functions, and so forth. And that being so, we can see that Christianity doesn't obliterate individuality, but it does obliterate individualism and every other ism. Individualism is, of course, the idolatry of the individual or of being an individual.

We need to recognize that God has made us individuals, but He has also, as it says in the Scripture, He has placed the solitary in families. And one of the principal ways in which people historically have been identified from other people has been by reference to the

family or their father, in most cases. You know, so-and-so, son of so-and-so, is how a person's identity was established or referred to.

Now, we've had a couple sessions on this already. I want to move along to new material tonight. Last time, we were talking about some of the things in the dominant culture that are the ways that Satan makes war on the Christian family or on the family in general.

Because family is a basic structural unit in God's kingdom, and the devil doesn't like families. It's a powerful unit for preservation of the knowledge of God and the passing along from generation to generation of the knowledge of God. Godliness can be transmitted, as it were, from one generation to another through intact families, if those families are operational in the biblical pattern.

On the other hand, a family that is corrupt, or as they would say today, dysfunctional, is a family that perpetuates its own style. So that we see that my generation, perhaps, or my parents' generation, maybe, was the first to really begin to consider divorce to be a not-too-shameful thing. And then the people my age, I'm amazed how many people my age, even Christians, get divorces.

It seems like a week doesn't go by that I don't get one or two calls on my radio program from somebody asking what the Bible says they should do next because their wife has left them or their husband has left them. And in many cases, both parties are in church, both parties are professing Christians. And in most cases, there's not any grounds for divorce at all in the situation.

And I think, man, it's an incredible thing how the families, even of Christians, are on such a weak foundation. They're so fragile. They're deteriorating.

And the ramifications that will have on their children and their children's marriages and so forth is really hard to think about. It's not very encouraging. I want to talk tonight about godly households in order.

God is a god of order. We can see that by what he's created. He created a very orderly universe.

He has created orderly arrangements in the cellular and the atomic level of things, as well as the macro-cosmic astronomical level of things, that everything is very orderly. And, of course, there is some disorder that has come into the world because of the fall. But that which is original, that which God made, is orderly because God is a god who cares about order.

It says that in 1 Corinthians 14, God is not a god of confusion, but of order or peace, of things harmonizing and working together properly. And when God established family, he intended for it to function in a certain orderly way. And there is an order to be observed.

You know, some months ago we were talking here about issues related to church. And we were talking about women's roles in the church and elders and things like that. And in saying that Paul, for example, did not let women be elders.

There's all kinds of motives that have been attributed to Paul by people who don't like what he said. They say, well, he was still speaking from his old Pharisaic prejudice from his pre-Christian days, or he was just wimping out and accommodating the views of the culture around him or whatever. But really, when Paul made statements like that, he always appealed to the same basic thing as his reason for giving these instructions.

It's because God is a god of order and God made things a certain way. Man was first and woman was made second to be the helper to man and so forth. And Paul considered that we don't tamper with God's order.

God has exhibited a concern for order in human relationships. And that is, of course, something that exists in family relationships as well. So what I'd like to talk about, there's three different sub points I'd like to talk about tonight under the general topic of households in order or families in order.

I want to talk about the position of the head of the household, which is the husband. I want to talk about the position of the woman in the home and the position of or the roles of children in the home. Now, we are, this series is called toward a radically Christian counterculture.

And yet much of what I have to say is not very radical. There's a lot of good books on Christian family out there. But there's a lot of books out there, Christian books on family that aren't so good.

There's a lot of them that buy into the world's idea and the world's paradigm of family much more than I think they should. Depending on which books or teachers you may have been exposed to, you may have heard teaching very much like what I'm going to share already. In fact, you may be very familiar with it.

On the other hand, if you've heard some of the more cycle babble type Christian teachers on the subject, it may be that what I have to say will seem unsavory. It's not my desire in these lectures to be particularly unsavory. I do think that radical, uncompromised Christianity will go against the grain of much of our general sympathies that we are raised with in this culture.

But I really don't think that it's the way of the Christian that's odious. I believe it's the way of the transgressor that's hard. However, the way of Christianity does go against our grain.

It goes against our fallen nature. It calls us to a more orderly way of life with others that will lead to more peaceable relationships and more peace within, too, if we follow God's

ways. However, initially when we hear them and we try to implement them, they do go against our conditioning.

They go against our social training and, of course, against our carnal nature. So, I think that's true no matter which category we talk about. If we talk about the roles of husbands, what the Bible says about husbands, I don't think that most husbands much like it.

Frankly, I must confess, I don't much like it. Now, you might say that's not a very good thing for a Christian to say. I'm just saying in the flesh I don't like it.

If I was writing the book, I would write it differently. If I was going to write it according to my tastes. I've never been one that much liked being in positions of authority.

Most women I don't an awful lot like the roles that God has laid out for wives. And most children don't much like the roles that God has laid out for children. So, God's an equal opportunity offender.

He can offend all categories by telling them what he made them for. And it's interesting how it is that there's not one of these categories, with the possible exception of some men, and maybe a few women, who in general like by nature what God has said. But like I said, when you find that people submit to God's way, it does bring peace.

It does bring fulfillment. Basically, it's like getting the right part in the right place on the machine, and things run smoothly, instead of trying to innovate and make things the opposite way. Let's talk first of all about the position of the head of the household.

That's not just a traditional label for the husband of the home. That's a biblical label. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and verse 3 is where we'll begin.

In 1 Corinthians 11.3, Paul said, But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, the head of Christ is God. Now, I think most scholars would agree, that since the word woman in the Greek can be translated either woman or wife, and the Greek word for man can be translated either man or husband, that when Paul says, the head of the woman is the man, what Paul intends, and what the translators could have written there, would be the head of the wife is the husband. That's a very important distinction to make, of course, because it would not be true, biblically, nor would it be desirable, to say that the head of the woman is the man, and to mean by that, that every man is head over every woman.

That just doesn't work out well. The Bible never tells women to submit to men. It often tells a wife to submit to her own husband, and at least twice in the Bible, when those instructions are given, it is emphasized, own.

Wives, submit to your own husbands. There is not a teaching in Scripture that women in

general must submit to men in general. Or that men in general are superior, or in authority, or have headship over women in general.

Paul is reflecting here on the relationship between married parties. Although, as I say, in our versions, it probably says in your translation, the head of the woman is the man, the word woman is the same word that is translated wife in other contexts, and could be here. And the word man can be translated husband.

I believe that would be more in keeping with Paul's general teaching. That the head of every man is Christ, the head of the wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Now, the word head here has come into dispute in the last 20 or 30 years, as to its meaning.

It shouldn't, it's a very plain word. Of course, when we say that somebody is the head of something else, the word head is being used metaphorically, because the word head literally means the leading part of a body, of a human or an animal. An animal has a head, a human has a head.

That's that part of the body above the neck. And that is, of course, the literal meaning of head. But the word head is throughout history, and in most cultures has been used metaphorically as well, to refer to the chief, the leader, the one in authority, the head of the armies, the head of a nation, heads of state and so forth.

The word head generally means the one who is in charge, the one who is the leader, the one who has authority over others. Now, you certainly must know, even though you live in Northern Idaho, and have perhaps insulated yourselves from some of the worst of this, and more power to you if you have insulated yourself entirely from it, but out there, out there in the world, there is this thing called the feminist movement, and it's in the churches too. Actually, it's probably not far from this valley either, but it's probably invaded here.

Satan doesn't like to leave any refuges from these widespread errors. But feminism in the church has reacted to the many places in the scripture that speak of the husband being the head of the wife. And in many cases, feminists want to be identified themselves as evangelicals.

There are people who call themselves biblical feminists. There are people who call themselves evangelical feminists. And these people, of course, in order to have both labels fit, evangelical and feminist, or biblical and feminist, they have to find some ways of making their feminism seem like it's taught in the Bible.

And so they always bump up against these places where Paul talks about the husband as the head of the wife and things like that. And this is not the only place that says that. So they have come up, the feminist scholars in the evangelical circles have come up with a

new theory as to what the word head meant when Paul used it.

In fact, I've read these authors. They say Paul's readers would never have understood the word kephali, the Greek word for head that's used here. They would have never recognized the word kephali to mean the one in authority because, they say, the commonest meaning of the word kephali in the times of Paul in the Greek language was that of a source, like the head of a river, like the fountainhead, the source of the river.

And they say that when the Bible says that the head of Christ is God, that it means that the source of Christ is God. When it says that the head of the wife is her husband, it means that the woman has come from the man. I mean, like in the Garden of Eden, the rib comes out of the man and the wife.

So the source of the woman is the man. But it doesn't have any connotations about position and authority and hierarchy and all that stuff, they say. And so they say that throughout history, Christians have misunderstood the meaning of this Greek word kephali, which is the ordinary word for head.

In Greek, kephali literally means what the word head literally means in English, the head of a body, the head of an animal or a person is called a kephali. But in Greek, as well as all other languages, the word is used metaphorically as well, like the head of a river, the source of a river, but also head of state or head of whatever, group of people. David was the head of the tribes of Israel.

Now, he wasn't the source of the tribes of Israel. He may have had a lot of wives, but he was not the source of all the tribes of Israel. He was the head of the tribes of Israel, the Bible says, though.

And it's important for us to know whether the claims of the feminists are correct or not about this, because it has a great deal to do with defining what Paul, what the Holy Spirit through Paul is trying to tell us about families. Now, I don't think anyone will deny, who's an evangelical, that man in general was the source of woman in general. That is to say, the first man was here before the woman was, and she was taken out of the man.

But it would not be correct to say that every woman here came out of a man, not any more than they came out of a woman. Every person since Adam and Eve came out of two people, a male and a female. And it's not the case that a man's, I am not the source of my wife.

I am the head of my wife, but I'm not her source. Her father and her mother are her source. She didn't come out of me.

So it's awkward right at the outset to suggest that Paul meant source. There was a man named Wayne Grudem, who wanted to check on the scholarship of these feminists. And he did research throughout all the literature over a span of about 400 years, before and

after the time the New Testament was written.

And the Greek writers, the Greek philosophers, and then of course the New Testament, and then the Greek church fathers who all used the word Kephali. He found over 4,000 instances where the word Kephali was used in the Greek literature he considered. He found one instance or two where the word might have meant source.

For example, the head of a river was called a Kephali. But unfortunately for the feminists who wanted to say it means source, the mouth of the river was also called the Kephali. In fact, both ends of the river were called the Kephali.

So obviously it didn't mean the source. It just meant both the end at one side. But that was not the most common usage.

In all the Greek writings that were considered, and he considered all the writings that were available, in that 400 year space of time, he said the vast majority of the cases, the most obvious instance of metaphorical use of Kephali was of someone who was a leader, somebody who was in charge, the king or the commander of the armies or whoever, you know, whoever was in authority. So I wish we didn't have to take the time to go off on this tangent, but if you have not already, you probably someday will hear somebody say, well, you say that the husband is the head of the wife, but don't you know that the word Kephali, the word head didn't mean authority. Well, that is not true.

It is not true. It does mean the one in authority, and one could prove it without even going outside the scripture. We could find exactly how Paul meant it.

If you'd look over at Ephesians chapter 1, one wouldn't have to study the Greek philosophers and the church fathers and their writings to see how they used it. We could find out how Paul uses it simply by looking at his use of it. In Ephesians chapter 1, it says, I'll start reading at verse 20, which God worked in Christ when He raised Him up from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

And He put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head, Kephali, over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Now, is Paul discussing Christ as the source of the church? Or is he talking about Him as the authority of the church? Well, it's in the context. He's talking about how He's put Him above all power and might and dominion and every name, which speaks of authority in itself.

And it says in verse 22, He's put all things under His feet, figuratively speaking, He's the ruler over all things, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church. Obviously, the word head here goes along with these other words Paul's using. He's talking about the authority of Christ, not making a reference to the fact that He's the

source of the church, which would be true too, but it's not what he's saying, not what he's talking about there.

If you look at Ephesians chapter 5, we can see it again without any, it's not even ambiguous. In Ephesians chapter 5, verses 22 and 23, it says, Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body. Now, here's the word kephali twice.

The husband is the kephali of the wife, just as Christ is the kephali or the head of the church. Does this speak of source, or does this speak of a position of authority? Well, if verse 23 stood by itself, we might say it's a toss-up. Although it's not really, because I, the husband, am not the source of my wife.

It is true Adam was, in a sense, the source of Eve, but that hasn't been true of any couples that's come along since. But, look at what he says in verse 22, Wives, submit to your own husbands because the husband is the head. Now, if Paul thought the word head meant source, it would not follow.

Submit to your husbands because he's your source. That's not an argument for submission. To say someone's my source, my parents are my source, but I've long since left their home.

I don't submit to them. My grandparents are my source. I don't submit to them.

My great-grandparents are my source. I don't submit to them. Now, the fact that someone is your source is not proof that you must submit to them.

But the fact that someone is in authority over you is the argument for submitting to them. And, obviously, Paul is using the word head the way it was typically used throughout the Greek world as the one in authority. Now, this really shouldn't be a problem to us.

It's just that the spirit of our age is so anti-Christ. And so, anti-family. And part of that is due to the fact that there has been much abuse.

There's been abuse of authority on the part of many heads of households. In fact, there have been many a Christian man, I'm told. I don't think I know any of them.

Maybe I do. But there have been many a Christian man who has wielded his authority like a rod of iron in his home. And, you know, just exploited and abused and whatever his family.

I remember I saw an article back. I don't remember how many years. It's been many years ago now.

Five, six years. There was a conference in Chicago of two different groups that called

themselves evangelicals. One was the group of evangelicals that put out the book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, which are more conservative and take the traditional view of what the Bible says on this subject.

Another was, I think it was called the Evangelicals for Equality or something like that, which obviously took a different view about the roles of men and women. And they were having a conference to kind of give speeches and talk about this and try to bring it up. And the main major media picked up on it.

And I remember it was, I think it's the Portland Oregonian when I was living in Oregon, had a big headline about it, about this conference. And it had a quote from a woman who was an elder of a Mennonite church. And she was at this conference and her quote said something like this.

Until we get rid of the concept of male leadership in the home and in the church, we will not be able to end wife abuse and child abuse in the home or in society. And I was so annoyed at reading that quote that I spent a whole radio program discussing it, because it was such a stupid statement. I mean, think about it.

Until we get rid of the whole concept of patriarchy, of male leadership, we're not going to get rid of wife abuse and child abuse. Does that mean that if we do get rid of this concept of male leadership, we're not going to have any more wife abuse or child abuse? I'll tell you something. Christians have historically taught what the Bible teaches, that the husband is the head of the home.

He is in authority over his wife and his children. But historically, Christians have not beat their wives or their children. There seems to be a fair bit of wife abuse and child abuse in our society in general, and apparently there's some of that in the church too now.

But I don't believe it's related to the Christian teaching on this subject of husbands being the authorities. After all, husbands who beat their wives and children aren't paying too much attention to what the Scripture says anyway. The Scripture probably could say that the wife is in charge and the man would still beat her up.

Because he can. That's the point. He's bigger than her.

The people who abuse other people do so because they're carnal, they're sinners, they don't care what God has to say about the subject, and they can get away with it, they think. And they've got the muscle for it. That's all it gives.

It has nothing to do with the biblical teaching about males in authority that causes wives to get beat up by their husbands or children to be abused by their fathers. It has to do with sin. It doesn't have to do with the biblical truth on the subject.

For centuries, Christians have believed and practiced the pre-feminist view of male

headship in the home, and there certainly hasn't been very much wife abuse or child abuse that has come to light. And I know that all the families that I fellowship with pretty much believe the biblical doctrine on this. I don't think any of the men I know beat their wives or their children or abused them at all.

So, this idea that patriarchy, the idea that men are the ones who should take the lead in the home, the husbands, that this is somehow connected with abuse in the home is, to my mind, a vacuous statement in the extreme. I mean, the church could have all their councils decide that from now on the children are in charge of the home, or from now on the wives are in charge of the home, and the husbands have to submit to them. I don't think it would reduce the number of wives that get beat up or children that get beat up, because the children are still not going to be bigger than their dads, and in most cases the wives aren't going to be bigger than their husbands.

So, if there's violence in the home, the husband is usually going to win, unless the wife has a gun. And sometimes wives win for that reason. But the fact is, it has nothing to do with following biblical teaching.

It has to do with people rejecting biblical teaching in general, and not because they follow the biblical guidance. Now, the husband, according to scripture, is the head of his wife. It doesn't actually say he's the head of the home.

I'm using the term head of the home partly, or head of the household partly, because that's a traditional title, and it really, if he's the head of the wife, as the Bible says, and the children are under both parents, then I guess that makes him the head of the home too. But principally, when it talks about him as head, it says he's the head of his wife, just as Christ is the head of the church, and God the Father is the head of Christ. What does the head of the household do, or what is he supposed to do? Well, we'll go back to where Jesus and Paul both went back, when they were asked questions about marriage, and divorce, and other marriage-related issues.

Both Jesus and Paul quoted the same scripture from the Old Testament, which is one of the earliest statements in scripture on the subject of marriage. Paul and Jesus both indicated that at the very beginning, before man and woman fell, the way God made the relationship between male and female was the way that God wanted it, and still wants it. And in Genesis chapter 2, we have a verse that is quoted by Jesus in Matthew 19, and it's quoted by Paul in Ephesians 5. And that statement is, Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Now, the man leaves his father and mother. It's interesting that it would say that, because actually the wife also leaves her father and mother. Generally speaking, she usually leaves her father's home, and comes to live with her husband.

Why does it mention the man leaves his father and mother, and takes a wife? I believe

because, biblically, it is the man who takes the initiative in forming a family. And I believe it's proper that it be so. Modern feminism actually has as one of its goals, the elimination of any differences socially between men and women in this respect.

That women should be as aggressive toward seeking men as men are toward women. And of course, a lot of feminists think that women shouldn't seek men at all, but should just seek other women. But the idea is that if a woman wants a man, she ought to be able to go after him, just as readily as a man can go after a woman.

I mean, why not? There's an equality of the sexes. Well, biblically speaking, the norm still is that the man pursues. The man leaves his parents, and goes out and embarks to start a new family.

It's probably also the case that the man is mentioned here, because the man gives identity to the family. Before a man leaves his father and mother, and before a woman leaves her father and mother to be married, both of them bear the identity of their fathers. They have their father's last names, and the wife changes her last name when she gets married.

The young man retains his father's last name, and therefore the identity of the father continues. However, there is the formation of an autonomous family initiated by the young man, or maybe an older man, if he's getting married, that's separate from his father's family. He has the name, there is some continuity, but there's still a breaking off, I believe.

Now, not everyone agrees with this. I have a good friend who goes around teaching seminars about children and family. I highly respect him.

He believes that even when a man leaves home and gets married and starts a new family, he should still basically submit to his father's authority. He in particular gives an example of how he always wanted to get a pilot's license, but his father didn't want him to. And so he didn't.

Now, his father has been dead for many years now, but he still does not feel the liberty to get a pilot's license because his father didn't want him to, and he feels that he should honor his father and obey his father in these matters. I think it's very commendable to honor your father, even when you're not in his home anymore. In fact, I think there's an obligation to honor your parents, even after you start a family.

But to honor them doesn't necessarily mean you're still under their authority. I believe that that is what is being suggested here. A man leaves his father and mother.

He's under their authority in their home until he starts his own autonomous family. Autonomous is not the right word. Sovereign family.

Sovereign is a word that we sometimes apply to God. Although the Bible doesn't use that word with reference to God. There is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, which is a true doctrine.

But the word sovereign simply means that which does not have to answer, is not accountable to outside persons or things. God is sovereign because he doesn't have to give account for anything. He's got total authority to do what he wants in his universe, and no one can say, why have you done this? That's none of our business.

Likewise, a family is a new sovereign unit, it seems to me. And when I was single and living in my parents' home, I was under my father's sovereign family. But I left that sovereign unit to start a different sovereign family.

Now my father and my mother can still be involved. They can still be, obviously, we can still be part of an extended family. But my parents are not, I believe, in the role any longer of dictating in an authoritative way, you know, how I will live, or how my children will live, or how my wife will live.

This is very important, if I'm correct. Of course, as I said, there are some who don't believe that. But I believe this is implied in the scripture.

A man leaving his father and mother and takes his own wife and starts his own family. That's important because there's a lot of times when, especially in our generation, my generation, where some of us who come from Christian families, or maybe some come from non-Christian families, have, as Christians, convictions about how to raise our children, and what we don't want to expose our children to. We've chosen to homeschool instead of put them in public school, though most of us went to public school because our parents didn't have these convictions.

Some of us have decided not to have TVs in the home, although we were raised in homes with TVs, and our parents don't have convictions against it. Some of us have tried to protect our children from the bad influences of other children who don't have good families that they come from. And there are times when the grandparents, that is, my generation's parents, do not appreciate the standards and the policies of my generation who are trying to do these things differently than their parents did.

And I know a lot of people my age who have children they're trying to raise, and their parents, the kid's grandparents, don't agree with the standards, or don't agree with the protectiveness, or whatever, and intimidate the parents into doing things they wouldn't ordinarily do because they feel like, well, I've got to honor my parents. Well, you do need to honor your parents, but I don't believe that your parents, after you've started your own sovereign family, can dictate to you how you spend your money, how you make your money, how many children you have, how you educate your children. These are things they had their shot at that when they had children.

And now it's your turn, and you have responsibility before God. The husband is the head of his family. His head is Christ.

He's no longer under his father's headship. The head of every man is Christ. Children have to obey their parents, but the head of every man is Christ.

And the man is, I believe, sovereign over his home in the sense that other families, including his parents' family, no longer dictate policy and so forth for him. Now, that doesn't mean that a man's not supposed to honor his older parents, and we're going to get to that. That is required.

But that's not the same thing as saying the man is still under their sovereign headship. He's left one entity to form a new entity. The entity that spawned him has launched him.

That's what we parents are here to do. We're not here to smother our kids for the rest of their lives. We're here to launch them, to prepare them, to follow God in a responsible way as adults, and to launch them into their own adult lives where we have one chance at it.

And once we've launched them, they may still listen to our advice the rest of their lives. They may ask us for advice if they respect us, but if they don't, we can't force it on them. And so a man leaves his father and mother's house, and he goes out and he establishes a new home.

So the family is created, as it were, by the man who leaves his former family to start a new family. Now, his role is explained in a number of passages, but probably none so thoroughly as that of Ephesians 5, a chapter we were looking at a moment ago. Ephesians chapter 5, verses 25 through 29, Paul said, Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she should be holy and without blemish.

So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. And we can see, of course, in verse 31 through 32, he quotes the passage we looked at in Genesis, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

And then Paul says, This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. The husband and wife relationship is to be modeled after that of Christ and the church. And so Paul tells the husband, In your relationship with your wife, you need to relate to her the way Christ relates to the church.

Now, how does Christ relate to the church? Well, Paul gives us some information about

that. He says you need to love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her. So the husband has to love his wife and he has to give himself for her.

He needs to be able to sacrifice for her. He should lay down his life for her in any way that is truly for her benefit. Now, sometimes, you know, I think there's been a pendulum swing in popular teaching on Christian families due to certain Christian psychologists and stuff who talk a lot about families.

And the impression seems to be given that, you know, the woman's been downtrodden an awful lot. It's time to start picking on the guy. And really, he needs to learn to be a post-90s sensitive male, you know.

He's got to love his wife means doing whatever she wants. What does that mean when Christ loved the church? Does he do everything we want him to do? Anyone here had Jesus not answer one of your prayers? Even when you really wanted him to answer really bad, did you decide he didn't love you? Because he didn't say yes to you? Because he had an agenda, he had a vision, he had a plan. And what you asked for didn't fit into his plan, so he said no.

And he was under no obligation to say yes. Did you ever think he was under obligation to please you? Now, Christ is an amazing Lord because it says in Luke chapter 17, Jesus himself is talking about how lords and servants are with each other. He says, if a man has a servant out plowing in the field or working in the vineyard or whatever, and he works all day and he comes in, do you think that the master is going to say, here, sit down and let me serve you food? He says, no, that's not what servants and masters do.

He says, the servant comes in from a day's work outside and he has to do some more work inside until the master has been fed and goes off to bed. Then the servant can find something to eat for himself. Jesus said that's how it usually is with servants and masters.

But in another place, Jesus talked about how he's given responsibility to his servants. He's going away and he says he's going to come back and he says, blessed is that servant who when his master comes finds him so doing. He says, surely I say that he, the master, will gird himself and serve them.

The very thing that Jesus said in Luke 17, masters don't do to their servants. Jesus, our master, does do and we know he washed his disciples' feet in order to show that he was not above doing even the most menial tasks of service. That love does serve.

But to say that Jesus loved us and serves us does not mean that he serves our every whim or that he serves us according to our agendas. He has a plan. He knows what is good for us and he pursues that.

He loves to give us what pleases us if it goes along with his plan. But he's not supposed

to sacrifice his plan in order to keep us happy. It seems to me like a lot of what I've read about husbands loving their wives, it's mainly about clues about how to keep your wife happy.

And that's not always possible. A lot of people want to know how to keep their kids happy. Well, we're not obligated to keep our kids happy.

It would be nice if we can keep them on the right path and keep them happy too. But given a choice between the two, we're obligated to keep our children on the right path whether they're happy about it or not. To guarantee somebody else's continuous unbroken happiness is not what the Bible teaches love is, although it is what our culture tends to think love is.

As soon as somebody is not making me happy, it's my position to react and say, well, I don't think that person loves me. And Christ loved the church, but that doesn't mean that he turns the church into the leader over himself. Christ still is the Lord.

He still has the agenda. And he serves us and he supports us and he does all kinds of wonderful things. What does it say that he does for us? Well, in verse 26 says he gave himself for the church that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.

Christ, in other words, has as his prior objective to sanctify the church, to see to it that his wife is holy is even more important than finding out if she's happy. Now, of course, Christ knows very well whether we're happy or not and is very inclined to make us happy. But again, he didn't say Christ gave himself for his wife to make her happy.

He gave himself for his wife to make her holy. That is his goal. And the husband has as his first priority to work toward the sanctification of his family, his wife and his children, really.

We find this taught also in Ephesians 6, just a chapter over. Ephesians 6, 4 says, And you fathers, this also be the husbands, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. The father, the husband, the man of the house has the obligation to do what Christ does for his wife, what the father does for his children.

And that is to pursue and give every opportunity for the members of his family to be sanctified. You might remember that Paul was giving instructions in 1 Corinthians 7 to Christians who are married to non-Christians. And they were apparently wondering whether, since they're married to non-Christians, whether they should get out of those marriages.

And he says, No, if a believer is content to dwell with you, stay with them. If they leave, if they depart, you're not under bondage. But he said, If they're content to dwell, stay

with them.

And he says, For how do you know but that you might win, O Christian woman, you might win your husband to the Lord by staying, or, O man, that you might win your wife? He says, Also, if you bail out, your children might be unclean. But now, because you're there, they are holy. In other words, the presence of the Christian husband, or in that case, even a wife, if the husband is not a Christian, is to be a sanctifying influence on both the spouse and on the children.

And so Christ loved the church and gave himself that he might sanctify and cleanse her by the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. Now, this doesn't necessarily mean that the husband has to do all that he can to contribute to his wife's physical beauty. Obviously, the wrinkles and spots and so forth of which he speaks are metaphors for sin and for uncleanness.

That's why he says that she should be holy and without blemish. Being without blemish is being holy. It's not necessarily being beautiful.

After all, people don't stay beautiful. And if a man felt like it was his duty to keep his wife beautiful, then when she gets up around 70, 80 years old, it's going to be a real chore. But then he's going to have a hard time keeping himself beautiful at that age, too.

So that's not the task. That's not what he's responsible to do. So what else does Christ do? He says in verse 29, For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just as the Lord does the church.

So the man of the house has to nourish and cherish his wife. That's what Christ does for us. He nourishes us.

He gives us all things necessary for life and godliness. A husband is obligated to feed his family, to provide for his household. The wife should not have to go out and find work to help provide for the needs of the family, nor should the children have to do so necessarily.

Now, in subnormal situations, if the father gets paralyzed or sick or dies or something like that, obviously sometimes these subnormal situations have to be resorted to. But where there is an able-bodied man, he is to be feeding his family, his wife. He's supposed to nourish her.

And he's supposed to cherish her. Now, again, I don't know if it's always possible. I think it is not always possible for a man to make his wife feel cherished.

It's nice if he can do it. I think a man is wise if he attempts to do it the best he can. But it's possible for a man to cherish his wife without her feeling cherished.

Christ cherishes the church. But I suspect that some of those churches in Revelation that Jesus wrote letters to wondered. You know, when he said, you know, repent or I'll remove your candlestick from its place.

Or, you know, repent or I'll come and fight with you with the sword that proceeds out of my hand. He's writing to a church. He's writing to someone that he still calls a church.

Still part of his bride. You know, there are times when Christ is a bit, well, says things that are not what we want to hear. But that doesn't mean he doesn't cherish us.

It's because he cherishes us that he corrects us. And correction is something that most of us, men and women alike, don't really like a lot. Although most of us are more willing to receive it from Christ if we recognize that's where it's from than from a spouse or from anyone else.

And the reason for that is we figure Christ is perfect. If he says I'm doing something wrong, I guess he's got a right to say so and I have to listen to him. Whereas, you know, if it's the husband saying it, the obvious reaction that comes naturally is, well, you know, he's not perfect.

You know, why should he tell me what to do? Well, that's, you know, that's a good question. Why should he? He should because that's his assignment. His assignment is to take the lead.

His assignment is to train. His assignment is to correct. His assignment is to sanctify.

His assignment is to wash, to cleanse the family. And sometimes that means taking an unpopular role. Now, I think most wives that I know who are godly can appreciate the fact that sometimes the husband has to take an unpopular stance toward the children.

I mean, he has to say no to the kids. He has to, you know, make them do things they don't really want to do and sometimes be unpopular with them. We need to realize that that sometimes goes for the wife too.

It depends. It depends on how much, you know, the wife's already doing the right thing and how much correction is needed. But we have to realize that the husband is the head over the wife as well as over the children.

And if it is often the case that he has to correct the children or displease the children because of, for their own good or for the sake of bringing the family into order, there are times he may have to do that with his wife too. Now, I haven't talked about the wife's position yet, but I'm just trying to say this is what the husband is called to be. He's supposed to be like Christ in the relationship to the wife.

He's got to cherish his wife, which means that he values her like something priceless. So,

he'd be somewhat jealous over her, it seems to me. Now, the New Testament does not necessarily say that the husband should be jealous over his wife.

And there are times in the New Testament that talk about the need to put away all jealousy and envy and all so forth, which is true in general. But there is, I believe, and you can test this yourself, but I do believe there is a jealousy of a husband over his wife that is biblical. God is jealous over his wife.

He's not ashamed to say so, and he says it many times throughout the Old Testament. He's jealous over Israel. When she was fornicating or committing adultery with other gods, as it were, he got very jealous.

It is stated by Solomon as if it is an axiom. In Proverbs 6.34, he says, For jealousy is a husband's fury. Now, he's talking about a case where his wife has committed adultery, and Solomon is warning his son not to get involved with another man's wife, because he's going to get a wound and dishonor if he does.

And he says, For jealousy is a husband's fury. Therefore, he will not spare in the day of vengeance. Now, Solomon didn't say it's good, and he didn't say it's bad that a husband gets jealous over his wife.

He didn't say a husband should or should not. He just said that's just the way it is. You go after another man's wife, and he's going to get angry.

He's going to get jealous. And if God's any model for us, which I believe the Bible says he is, I don't think it's wrong for him to. Now, some of you might say, well, how can it be right for a husband to get jealous over his wife when in general we're told to put away all jealousy and envy and all that kind of stuff? How can it be right to be jealous in one situation when we're told to put away all so forth? Well, consider this.

Christians in general throughout the Scripture are instructed to defer to others, to submit to one another, to not insist that others do things their way and so forth, to die to themselves and all that. But there are times when a husband or a parent has to, for the sake of the order and the maintenance of the proper control in the family that he has jurisdiction over, he cannot defer to his children all the time. There are special defined relationships in the Scripture where sometimes the way I relate to all the other brothers, I can't relate that way to my sons and daughters sometimes.

Because if I'm with a bunch of brothers and sisters and they want to do something I don't like, but I just don't want to push my way, I'll just defer to them. But I can't necessarily always do that with my children. I have an obligation to take authority there that I don't have in other relationships.

And likewise, there's a special possessiveness that a man and wife are properly supposed to feel toward each other that is the basis of jealousy when either of them is

perceived to be unfaithful. Remember there's that ordeal of jealousy in the 5th chapter of Numbers, ever read that? It says if a spirit of jealousy comes on a man because he suspects that his wife has been unfaithful, but he can't prove it, he's supposed to bring her to the priest. And the priest does this elaborate ritual with putting dust in the water and doing these strange things.

And the woman has to drink it and if she's really guilty, her thigh will rot and her belly will swell. But if she's innocent, it'll be okay. One of the strangest chapters in the whole Bible, Numbers chapter 5. But it's interesting, it takes it for granted that there are times when a husband is going to be jealous.

And it's a spirit that God may have sent. God may have sent the spirit of jealousy to him, it says. And he's supposed to go to the priest and find out if it is a genuine thing or not, if it is really real or not.

Now, I don't believe husbands are to be insanely jealous. And some people just hearing me say that I think that jealousy on the part of a husband is sometimes appropriate. You may have seen people whose jealousy is a really ugly thing.

And it can be. And I don't think that a husband has any right to be insanely or violently jealous. Maybe when people think of jealousy, they think of someone they've known who threatened to kill their wife if they ever caught them with another man or something like that.

Or was a violent person who didn't have any self-control. Obviously, this has to be put together with everything else the Bible tells us about self-control and about gentleness and so forth. A man can be very jealous over his wife without being violent or abusive or without shouting.

The jealousy is a good thing. It is simply his possessiveness. If he is not jealous over her, he doesn't cherish her as Christ cherishes the church.

Because Christ is jealous over the church. And Christ is not abusive or harsh on the church, but he cherishes the church. He is jealous over it.

When we begin to drift into idolatry of any kind, he is jealous over that. And it's the exact parallel in Scripture to a wife drifting into unfaithfulness against her husband. Now, God is not insanely jealous.

He is rational. He knows when there is really something going on and he knows when there is something to protect his wife from or to pull her out of or whatever. I think a lot of husbands don't have the guts to be biblically jealous over their wives.

For instance, if a wife feels like she wants to go out and work outside the home. And the husband feels, well, I don't know if she should be out there. If she works in this office as

a secretary or as a receptionist, there is going to be a lot of men hitting on her and stuff like that.

It's not like I distrust her or anything. I just don't feel comfortable with my wife being out in that situation. And so he says, no.

But will he? Are there very many men who will say no in that situation? I don't know if there are or not, but it seems like an awful lot of men just let it happen. And don't show the protectiveness and the jealousy that a man should show over his wife. If he will expose his wife to dangers, spiritual dangers, just because she wants it, it will make her happy or whatever.

I don't think he is cherishing her like Christ cherishes the church in my judgment. You can judge that yourself. But make sure, of course, you judge according to scriptural categories, rather than, of course, what our culture would say is more normal.

The head of the household is the guide of the family, just like the head of a body is the guide of the body. It says in 1 Timothy 3, 2, a bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach. And then in verses 4 and 5 it says, one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence, for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God? Now the word rule here is actually, would better be translated manage or guide or lead or something like that.

In fact, some translations have changed it to, if he doesn't manage his household well. He needs to manage the resources in his household, just like a manager in any kind of a business has to take the, you know, if he is an owner of a business, makes you the manager. You have to organize in some way, you've got to control in some way, you've got to direct in some way the human resources, the financial resources depending on the kind of business.

You're the one who's in charge and you're the one, you're in management. You're supposed to be telling people, okay, this is where you fit in, here's what you should be doing and so forth. And that is the role that a husband has in his home.

A man who doesn't do that well can't be an elder in the church, because the elder has to be able to do the same kind of thing in terms of helping a broader family, guiding people more generally. If he can't do that in his own home, how can he do that in the church of God, Paul said. So this is sort of a short survey of what the Bible says about the head of the household.

We need to move along and talk about the other two positions that the Bible talks about. And that, the second is the position of the woman of the home. Now, in Genesis 2.18, we have God musing within himself about certain concerns he had, which led to the creation

of the first woman.

And it might be good, when we looked at the role of the head of the household, we looked back at Genesis, it might be good to do so again here at this point. In Genesis 2.18, it says, And the Lord said, It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper, comparable to him.

Now, the King James says, I will make a help meet for him. And from that strange archaic King James language came the strange word, help mate or help meet. Women have talked about, or men have talked about how a woman is the help mate of the husband.

There is no such word, help mate or help meet. It comes from a misunderstanding of the old English. I will create a help meet, the word meet means comparable or appropriate to.

It is an old English word for something comparable or corresponding to or appropriate for, meet. As you know, it talks about a vessel of honor whose meet for the master's use, means adequate or properly fitted for the master's use. When God said, I will make a help, that is a shorter old English word for a helper.

Meet would be comparable. So, the new King James actually renders it less confusingly. I will make a helper comparable to him.

So, the woman was made because it was not good for man to be alone and he needed a helper. Now, if a person is in management, well, a person can manage, I guess a man can manage business all by himself. But if there are certain things he can't do by himself, then he needs some help.

He needs helpers. Now, the question is, what was it that man was supposed to do that he needed help in? What kind of help did God feel needed to be provided? In saying it is not good that man should be alone, many people feel that this was indicating that man was lonely and that God made the wife to solve the problem of man's loneliness. Now, I dare say that marriage can be the solution to loneliness, but I don't think that that is a correct understanding of this verse because it doesn't say anything about man being lonely.

It says it's not good for man to be alone, but it doesn't say because he's lonely. There might be a lot of reasons why it's not good for someone to be alone and I think we can discern from Scripture what it is that makes it not so good. There is no indication man was lonely.

How could he have been? He'd only been created an hour or less ago. The woman was created the same day he was. And between the time Adam was created and the woman was created, he named all the animals.

He was too busy to get lonely. And then God was with him there. Do you think Adam was starting to feel lonely by the end of the day? I don't think so.

I mean, he's like a child with an adult's mind, brand new in a world full of wonders, naming these animals, talking to God and so forth. You think during the daylight hours of that day, the first day of his life, he got lonely? I doubt if he had a chance. I doubt if that had anything to do really with God saying it's not good that man should be alone.

Now, God never says it's not good for man to be lonely. It may not always be good for man to be lonely, but sometimes it is. Solitude can be a very good thing.

Sometimes God, I'm sure Jesus was lonely out in the wilderness. Those 40 days he was out there with the wild beasts, but it was good. The Holy Spirit led him out there for good purposes.

It can be good for man to be lonely, but in the context of what God had in mind for Adam, it was not good for that man to be alone. And God made a helper comparable to him. Now, God's a pretty smart God, and if he wants a job done, he says, I'm going to create a worker, I'm going to create a helper who can do this job.

He will design that helper with all the equipment necessary for the job that that person is made to do. Wouldn't you think? Now, when you look at man and woman anatomically, they're mostly the same. They both have two eyes and a nose and a mouth, and they grow hair on top of their head and under their arms.

They got, you know, generally an upright posture, unlike the animals. I mean, man and woman obviously are the same species. They're very like each other, but they're unlike each other in a few ways.

And those ways are very significant. Now, it seems to me like if Adam just, you know, needed more hands to make the work lighter, God could have made him another man, could he not? I mean, look, Adam's got an awful lot to do around here. This is a big garden.

He needs more help. I'll just make him another guy to help him out here, another workman. But God didn't make him another workman.

He made a helper comparable to him, comparable enough that that person was clearly of the same species, but different in a few ways. And those ways, I believe, reasonably define the help that helper was supposed to give. Now, if you think for a moment, what is the difference between a man and a woman? Well, there are psychological differences, and there's been a lot of articles written about that lately.

You know, men and women do have some differences psychologically. The Bible doesn't really talk about those as near as I can tell. It might, but it doesn't focus on them here.

I believe that when God made woman, He designed her physically for the help that she was supposed to give. Now, what was man supposed to do that required a helper? Well, if you'll look at Genesis chapter 1, we have an earlier account of the creation, and actually it goes, it's not chronological in relation to this chapter 2 that we've been looking at, but we read that God created man and woman on the sixth day, and it says in verse 28 of Genesis 1, God blessed them, and God said to them, Now, this is what God gave humanity as their task. First assignment, be fruitful and multiply.

If you'll notice, the few parts of the woman that are not the same as the part of the man, all have to do with that particular function. Women are anatomically mostly the same as men, with the exception of some very significant changes, modifications that are all related to reproduction. I'm not making this up.

It may not be popular in our society to point this out, but a child can see it. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure this out. It just takes someone who's objective enough to let the truth shine forth.

Really, the Bible says it too. Because when God made the man and the woman, put them together, He said, Okay, here's your job, be fruitful and multiply. Well, no wonder God didn't give man another man to help him.

Another man would be no help at all in that task, because another man would be too much the same. He'd be comparable, but he wouldn't be a help, because there'd be no possibility of being fruitful and multiplying if there were merely two men. And so God made a corresponding member to the human race to correspond to the man in order to be a helper to the man.

Now, this sounds like maybe the next thing I'm going to say is that the role of the woman is to be barefoot and pregnant all the time, which the Bible doesn't say that, but it does indicate that to divorce womanhood from motherhood, which is definitely a tendency in our culture to say that womanhood has its own set of specialness that's not related to motherhood, is to emphasize at least something the Bible, I think, would discourage us from emphasizing. The Bible makes it very clear that God made the woman in order to help man in his task of being fruitful and multiplying. And the only thing that He made the woman different and modified from the male body is those things that have to do with that function.

Now, of course, women are capable of doing many other things. In fact, they're able to do almost everything a man can do. Interestingly enough, a woman can do virtually everything a man can do, but a man can't do everything a woman can do.

She's specially designed. Man's job is so generic that even a woman can do it, and sometimes they can do it better than a man can. You name anything that men do, there are some women who do that thing better than most men.

And there may be some things men do that you'd find a woman who does it better than any man can do, because man's job description is so generic. But woman has a very specific function that a man can't do. He may want to desperately.

Most men don't want to, but if he did, he couldn't. If he wanted to, he couldn't do it, because only a woman can do what a woman is made to do. And that makes her have a very special and easily definable role.

Now, we could deduce all of that if we had no Bible whatsoever. We wouldn't even need a Bible to come to this conclusion. All we have to be is objective.

All we have to do is look at does not nature itself teach you. But we do have the Bible. We do have a revelation from God, and we do know, you know, because He's told us a lot about His purposes here.

Look at the last book of the Old Testament. We were just looking at the first chapters. Let's look at the last chapters of the Old Testament.

Malachi chapter 2. God, through the prophet, is rebuking the people who have divorced their wives. And He says at the end of verse 14, Malachi 2.14, about the middle of that verse, says, With whom your wives, with whom you have dealt treacherously, yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He, God, not make them one? Now, He's referring to the fact that God made a man and woman, made them one flesh.

That's a reference back to Genesis 2.24. Having the remnant of the Spirit, and why one? Well, why did God do that anyway? Why did God make a man and woman, make them one? Why did God create marriage, in other words? Well, it says because He seeks godly offspring. That agrees well enough with what Genesis says. God could have made two men, but they could never have been one, in the sense that a man and woman are designed to be one.

And why did God make it that way anyway? What was He after? He was after godly offspring. So, God Himself says that His reason for creating marriage was very largely, I will not say entirely, but certainly His principle stated reason for it is to have children, to start a family. Now, the husband starts a family by leaving his parents home and taking a wife.

Then together, the two of them build a family. And therefore, the wife's role becomes to nurture and bear children. Not in that order.

She bears them first, then nurtures them. Psalm 128 says in verse 3, Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, producing a lot of fruit, in the very heart of your house, that's where the woman is, in the house, your children like olive plants all around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.

The idea that the man who fears the Lord will be blessed in these ways, these are the things that are really the blessings of God, is that he'd have a fruitful wife in his house. She's in the house. Why? Because that's where the children are, that's where they are cared for.

And he's got children all around his table. Now this, of course, like many other passages in the Psalms and the Proverbs, is a generic statement that is, you know, there are exceptions to it. There are women who are barren.

In fact, all women become barren after a certain age. That doesn't mean that there's no longer any purpose for them, or no longer any purpose for marriage, but certainly all women go through youth, and most women in youth do go through what could be called childbearing years, and can bear children, and most women actually do. And it's a blessing, the Bible says, if the man has a very fruitful wife, who bears lots of children.

In fact, the previous Psalm, Psalm 127, is even better known for saying the same thing. In Psalm 127, verse 3, it says, Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but shall speak to their enemies in the gate.

A man having many children, and of course that comes from his wife, is a blessed man. They are like arrows in his hand. He's a warrior in this world.

By the way, we're all warriors. We're all involved in spiritual warfare. And we have a sword.

We all know what the sword is. What is the sword in spiritual warfare? The Word of God. Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, it says in Ephesians 6-17.

You take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. When I was younger and didn't have children, I was already in the ministry and I traveled a great deal, internationally and so forth, preaching the Gospel. I loved it.

It was very romantic, very glamorous life. And then when I got married, my initial thought was, I don't think we want to have children. Because children will tie me down.

I won't be able to travel as much. I won't be able to reach as many people. And children will be more or less an interference in the warfare.

And I had this attitude for some years, once I exchanged my single life for married life. And one child got through anyway. And she's 27 years old now.

But for years later, I remained childless. Part of the reason was because I was single a lot

of those years after that. Because my first wife divorced me.

So that helped keep me childless for a long period of time. But when I remarried, I still wasn't really of a mind that I thought it was a good idea to have a lot of kids. Now, I was in a church service once, where a pastor was talking about something.

I don't remember what. And one of the many scriptures he used was this one in Psalm 127. He didn't even comment on it as far as I know.

He went on to another scripture after that. But as I was looking at it, from him having turned our attention there, and then he went off somewhere, I lingered there, and I felt like the Lord spoke to me. He doesn't speak to me all the time in ways that I could quote him.

But there are times when I really believe he spoke to me in ways that I just couldn't miss it. And he said, Steve, you and I don't agree, do we? And I said, come again? And he said, I said, children are like arrows in the hand of a warrior. Blessed is the man who's got a quiver full of them.

Now, you think blessed is the man who avoids having a quiver full of them. So, we don't agree with each other, do we? And I had to admit that I didn't agree with God at that time. And I believe that he reasoned with me at that time, because I know I left that meeting that day, although the pastor didn't say anything along these lines.

I left that meeting with a totally different attitude, because he said, listen, you think you're so good with a sword, but with a sword you can do damage to an enemy only at close range. You can only do good in spiritual warfare with a sword with an enemy who is right there in front of you. With arrows, you can do damage to enemies at a distance.

Now, if you were in a war, and it was a war that was fought with bows and arrows rather than modern weapons, and the supply sergeant came to you and said, how many arrows would you like? And you're going out on the battlefield. What would your answer be? How many can I have? As many as are available, please. The Bible says that children are a blessing, and they're like arrows in the hands of a mighty man.

And that the man who has many is blessed. Now, I don't have many. I don't.

My wife and I have been married not too short of 20 years, almost 19 right now. We have only four children between us. Now, that hasn't been because we've taken any steps to prevent it.

We actually wanted a big family, but God hasn't given us more. So, I realize that it's not always the case that you get blessed with a lot of children, even though if you want to accept them. But a lot of Christians ask me my opinion about birth control.

And I have an opinion about birth control, but I don't believe I have any business in imposing it on anyone else. But since people ask, and since you were wondering, I might as well tell you what my opinion is. My opinion is that everything a Christian does should be agreeable with biblical principle.

I also believe that even if something is in itself not bad, it can be bad if it's done for bad motives. Isn't that taught in Scripture? Even the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination of the Lord, especially if he does it with a wicked heart. If you do even that which would otherwise be good or neutral, if you do it with bad motives, it becomes a bad thing.

So, the question I would have if someone says, what do you think about birth control? I would be, well, what motives do we have? The Bible doesn't say birth control is wrong. I found nothing in the Bible that says birth control is wrong. So, let's consider the possibility that it's neutral or even good.

But the question is, what are my motives for it? If I use it, why? Why am I doing it? Well, I believe the Bible teaches three things on this subject that are very important. And I think Christians throughout history mostly knew them. Our culture has rejected them.

One is that marriage, God created marriage for the purpose of godly offspring. God made a man and woman instead of just a man or two men because he wanted them to be fruitful and multiply. So, God created marriage because he wanted there to be children.

Okay, that's number one. Two, God is sovereign over the womb. God opens the womb and God closes the womb.

I don't think anyone is going to have a child that God didn't want them to have. Because although we can talk about the biological mechanics of having children, we can't make children. We contribute the genetic material.

God makes a child or doesn't. And, I mean, we're proof of that. We wanted twelve.

We've got four. There's nothing we can do. I mean, we didn't go to a doctor to find out if there's anything we can do because we don't think doctors should be involved in this business.

But, I mean, we leave it to God. God is sovereign. God, in the Bible, opens the womb of people who were once barren, or closes the womb.

And so, we believe that God is the one who creates people. Parents work together with God. And God uses parents to create people.

But it's God who creates them. It's He that sovereignly creates or doesn't give babies. Then the Bible also says that children are a blessing.

And the man who has more of them is happier and more blessed than the man who doesn't. Now, some might say, well, I've seen very large families where no one seemed very blessed. You know, the husband seemed to be haggard and overworked, and the children were under-cared for, and the wife was totally exhausted.

It didn't seem like a blessing. Or, you know, I know a lot of people who had children, and the children just grew up to be a grief to them. So, how can the Bible say that children are a blessing? Well, would you agree that money is a blessing? In a sense, it certainly is.

If God blesses you with money, that's quite a stewardship. But it's not always well stewarded. And poorly stewarded money can become a real curse.

Or bad attitudes toward money can become a real stumbling block. Money itself can be a good thing. It can be a blessing from God.

But depending on how we react to receiving it, it may not always come out to be something that is as blessed as it might otherwise have been. Children are also a blessing. If God gives them 12 children, and they neglect to disciple them, they all turn out to be raunchy kids who bring grief to their parents.

That doesn't change the fact that they were a blessing that God gave them. They just didn't steward it well. And children are a blessing.

And a man is blessed to have many of them, the Bible says. I've often thought, I use this illustration sometimes, that if I came into a home, if I bought a home, a new home, and after I bought it, I noticed in the attic there was this chain coming out of the roof, out of the ceiling. I thought, what's this chain here for? And I pulled the chain, and a bag of gold fell out of my feet.

I thought, whoa, this house has a value that I didn't know about when I bought it. And I pulled the chain again, and another bag of gold fell out. Let's say I got yanked in that chain a lot of the times, and it didn't always happen that gold fell out, but occasionally it did.

What would you think of my sanity? If I tried to figure out a way to yank the chain without gold falling out, you'd think I didn't appreciate the value of gold, wouldn't you? And just for the fun of yanking the chain, I think that there are people who reject God's blessings. I don't think they're going to go to hell for doing that. But I think that people who don't want as many blessings as God wants to give them need to be renewed in the spirit of their minds to think the way God says we should think.

Now, I don't say that to condemn anyone, but then I don't say anything to condemn anyone. People get feeling convicted sometimes, but I'm just trying to be true to Scripture. If anyone can find anything in the Bible that says something different than this, or see where I'm missing it, I'm always glad to the person who can correct me.

I'm thankful for it. Now, the wife then, we read, if she can, if God blesses, if God grants and opens the womb, grants children, then her role is that of a mother principally. In 1 Timothy chapter 2, in the place where it actually says that Paul doesn't allow women to be in the roles of eldership, he says in verse 15, Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with self-control.

Now, this doesn't mean that a woman actually gets saved and goes to heaven because she has children. The word saved is used a lot of ways in Scripture. Later on, in the same book, in chapter 4, 1 Timothy 4, the last verse Paul says, or the last two verses, no, verse 16 will do, Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine.

Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. Now, Timothy didn't go to heaven because he took heed and did his work good, but Paul said you'll save yourself and those who hear you by being diligent in your calling. He's talking not about getting saved.

He's talking about working out his salvation. He's talking about the ongoing process of salvation in his life. Timothy will be saved, as it were, or will work out his salvation by doing what God gave him to do.

He says women will be saved or work out their salvation in their role of childbearers and mothers. Not always. Paul acknowledges that not all women are to be mothers.

Some of you are relieved. Yeah, he says it over in 1 Corinthians 7 where he says that some women shouldn't get married. He said some women are called to be virgins.

He doesn't say some women are called to give up their virginity but still avoid motherhood. That's where our society contributed that. The Bible was silent on that point, so our society decided to help out, help us to understand that it's not only okay to get married and have children, or to remain single and not have children, but it's also okay, well, nowadays it's okay to not be married and have children, or to get married and avoid children.

But those latter two options are not really presented in the Bible as something God has in mind. Now, clearly, there are people who get married and either the husband or wife is simply not capable of having children. It might be because of their age.

It might be because of some other biological situation. We live in a fallen world and everything God designed to work just right doesn't always work just right. And that's okay.

No one has to feel guilt about that. I don't feel guilt that I only have four children at home when I wanted twelve. I don't feel any guilt about that.

I feel like we've done, we've cooperated with God as best we could and God, you know,

He gives the results. That's all that's important. It's not important for us to judge each other or ourselves by how many children we've had or our ability to have or not have children.

The main thing is to know that we are doing what God has called us to do as best we can. Our conscience is clear. We leave the results with God.

But the main thing is there's an awful lot of Christians as well as non-Christians in our society who think it's a wise thing or a good thing or a righteous thing to deliberately reject the role of parenting. And I say this because I have family members, extended family members who are Christians who've been married for thirty or more years from the time they were young and they deliberately have avoided having children. And I don't understand it because they've been Christians since their childhood.

They got married to Christians and they just live in a different, they live in Southern California where mentalities are different than mine, I'll tell you that. And they just feel that marriage is for, I guess, for fun. I don't know that God made anything just for fun.

I think life is supposed to be enjoyable. And I don't think there's anything wrong with having some fun. But I don't think God made things just for fun.

The things that are the most enjoyable to the godly person are things that are also fruitful. And that includes the process of having babies. Not so much the birth process, that's not real comfortable.

But the fact of the matter is that eating and reproduction and things happen to be some of the most enjoyable things God created. But they also happen to be profitable. They're not just for fun.

And to say that God created sexual relations just for fun and didn't have any other purpose in mind for them, you might as well say God made eating just for fun. Well, eating is fun. Eating is enjoyable.

It's supposed to be enjoyable. God wants it to be enjoyable. But if someone says God made eating just so we can enjoy the taste of food, they'd be missing the point.

Eating has a much more basic function than that. Enjoyment is a byproduct. Enjoyment is a fringe benefit.

Eating is something essential for the purposes of God for your life. It has to do with nutrition and nourishment. And likewise, marriage is that way too.

It can be a lot of fun and God wants us to enjoy it. But that's not all there is to it. It's not just for that.

Now, the woman actually, under the headship of her husband, is the guide and the ruler

of her own house, under her husband's authority. But it says in 1 Timothy chapter 5, 14 and 15, it says, In the Greek, the word widows is not there, it's just the younger women, but he is in the context talking about widows. That they marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully, for some have already turned aside after Satan.

Now, he said, this is what he would think would be the general calling of most young women, including young widows, to get married, to bear children, and to manage the house. And in this role, they will stay out of a great deal of trouble and give the devil less opportunity to make havoc of the testimony of the church. I cannot blame the entire results on this one cause.

I would say that the church in our day is full of reproach. I believe the modern evangelical church is full of reproach. I don't think it has any respect whatsoever from the world.

I don't think the world is convicted at all by contact with the church. I don't think the church strikes onlookers as a group of really, really holy people. I'm talking about the evangelical church in general in America.

It also is the church that has thrown out the Bible's teaching and gone with the feminist teaching. I can't say that it's the feminism itself that bears all the blame for the reproach, but it certainly is interesting that Paul indicated that the word of God might be reproached and the adversary would get a chance to blaspheme the church and so forth if women did not embrace the roles that God gave them. Another passage on the same thing is in Titus 2, verses 4 and 5, speaking of that the older women should admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, that means of course sexually pure, homemakers, literally the Greek says workers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

Both passages that say the woman needs to concentrate on taking care of her home, her children, her husband, she's a homemaker, she manages the home. Why? So the word of God would be not blasphemed. Now, sometimes we think we're wiser than God and we think that we can just modify things a little bit, a little wiser above what is written.

We think, well, you know, it might be to the glory of God if women would just kind of get out in the workplace more, not have so many children, not be at home so much, not let these women get out in these various ministries and so forth. Well, that certainly is wise above what is written, but I'm not sure that wise is the right word for it. I would say that while again I cannot justly blame the whole thing on the presence of feminism in the church, it is, I think, not coincidental that the same generation of Christians that wholeheartedly embrace feminism is the generation of Christians that nobody respects the church in that generation anymore.

Now, I don't know, there are probably other factors too, but that cannot be ruled out since Paul indicated that was one of his greatest concerns. The word of God would be blasphemed, the adversary would speak reproachfully, if what? If the women give up their God-given roles. And that has to a large degree happened.

In fact, look over at Romans chapter 1, there is a very interesting thing here. We are all familiar with this passage, but I don't know if we thought of it all in the right way. God in Romans is talking about how, Paul is talking about how sin takes over society and spirals downward and God gives people over and so forth.

But it says this, in verse 26 of Romans 1 and 27, For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another.

Men with men committed what is shameful, etc. We all know this is one of the classic passages about homosexuality in the Bible. But it indicates something really interesting.

It says that women gave up their, they rejected their natural use and then men gave up the natural use of women and started going after each other. Now, it's interesting, we usually think of that in terms of women became lesbians and men became homosexuals. But it doesn't say the women became lesbians here.

And it isn't usually the case that men became homosexuals because women become lesbians. In fact, most societies, it's the men who go homosexual before the women do. When homosexuality takes hold in a society, it's usually among the men first, not the women.

Women's lesbianism is not the cause of men's homosexuality. But it's interesting, it says the women gave up their natural use and then men gave up the natural use of the woman. What is the natural use of woman? Motherhood.

Motherhood is the natural calling of woman. And when women gave up that role, which they have in our society to a very large extent, men no longer see women as mothers. They see them as sex objects.

And once a man begins to see a woman merely as a sex object, he begins to think of sex as merely something that has to do with pleasure and it doesn't have anything to do with procreation, doesn't have anything to do with fruitfulness. And once in your mind you've got sex divorced from fruitfulness, hey, why does it have to be a woman? You know, I mean, if it's just all about pleasure, some people find pleasure other ways. I don't relate to that.

I can't imagine why it would, but obviously some people do. If women say, well, you know, we don't need to be mothers anymore. You know what? That's not going to make

men have less sexual desire.

It's just going to have men have less respect for women and not tend to see sexual desire as connected as it always historically has been with the whole idea of starting a family, having children, fruitfulness, something honorable like that. It just becomes something men seek pleasure in. And once motherhood is no longer considered to be an essential part of heterosexual relations in marriage, then men lose sight of what sex is all about.

And once they've decided it's just for pleasure, then they don't stay within God's boundaries at all according to this. So the Bible indicates the wife's role is essentially to guide the home, to manage the home, take care of the children. That doesn't mean the wife can't go out, obviously, and do things.

The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, she went out and considered a field. She had some business. She had a cottage industry in the home.

She made scarves and sashes and stuff. And then the merchants came and picked them up and they went out to the marketplace and sold them. She wasn't out running a shop.

She considered a field. She was not a realtor. A lot of people take Proverbs 31 and say, Oh, see, the virtuous woman was a real estate agent.

She bought and sold property. No, she considered a field. One, she bought it for the family and planted a vineyard for the family.

She's not a speculator. She's not a realtor. She's not a businesswoman.

Everything she's doing is related to managing and increasing the benefit of her home. She's feeding her children. She's clothing her children.

She's making clothing at home. She's bringing honor to her husband and her children. And her husband and her children rise up and praise her and call her blessed because of that.

And she gets all the satisfaction she needs from that. Now, it may be, I don't know what's first, the chicken or the egg. Maybe women started wanting to go out of the homes because their husbands weren't praising them and their children weren't praising them.

I really don't know what came first. But the fact is, things are messed up in our culture. And I believe the Christians are the ones who have light from the word of God and are in the position to, at least among themselves, restore biblical order in the households.

You know, I don't have time to go into the roles of children tonight. I'll tack that on to what I wanted to say in concluding this whole section next time. One thing I did not say,

and which I really ought to, in talking about the position of the woman in the home, I haven't said much about her submission to her husband.

I did comment on that when we were talking about husbands being the head and so forth. But there is, of course, a teaching in Scripture about that as well. And no sense only reading the husband's part and not reading the woman's part too.

In Ephesians chapter 5, and we'll close with this point. Ephesians 5, 22-24 says, Now, the wife's submission to her husband is likened to the church's submission to Christ. In fact, it's essentially equated with it.

Be subject to your husband as the church is subject to Christ. In everything. Now, of course, the question arises, would there never be any exception? Wouldn't there be some times that a woman ought not to obey her husband? And I think there are.

I think there are. But they're not as often as the wife would like them to be. I think.

The fact of the matter is, there is no man or human being on earth who has the right to command you to sin against God and expect you to do it. Although the husband is the head of the wife, his authority comes from his submission to God. And if he is commanding his wife to do that which God has forbidden, I believe he's outside his sphere in that respect.

Now, I will say this though. This does not mean that the wife is in a position to judge everything her husband says that she doesn't like and find some way of saying, well, I don't know that that's really what God wants me to do. Because God has said what he wants her to do.

He wants her to submit to her husband as unto Christ. And I would say, I can think only of a few exceptions where that would be the case. And that would be, if what the husband tells her to do is so clearly a violation of what God clearly says to do, she shouldn't do it.

Where God is clear. But I would say this, I have known a number of wives who have disobeyed their husbands on many points, even though God didn't clearly say to them, I've known women whose husbands are not Christians, and the wives say, well, my husband has told me not to go to church, but I'm going to church anyway. Well, wait a minute, the Bible does say submit to your husband, it doesn't say go to church.

Do you know that? Oh, doesn't it? It doesn't say do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together? It does say that, but it doesn't say go to church. You should assemble with Christians as much as you can. But the Bible doesn't say you have to go on Sunday morning, it doesn't say you have to go to a church building, it doesn't say how often you have to do it.

You know? But it does say submit to your husbands. And I have known many women who thought themselves very spiritual because they snuck out to go to church, even though their husbands had forbidden them to go. I don't think the Bible supports that.

They are violating a clear command of Scripture in order to do something that the Bible does not clearly command. Now, if the husband said, go out and bring in some extra money prostituting yourself on the street corner, then she would have to say, can't do that. That's against clear teachings of Scripture.

But if a wife feels that she must not submit to her husband in some particular thing, let me ask her to put this test to it. Is the thing that she thinks the Bible requires her to do stated as clearly as the command is given to submit to your husband? That's pretty clear. And it's given more than once.

It's given repeatedly. Not only Paul gave it, Peter gave it. If you read 1 Peter 3, verses 1-5.

Paul gave it twice, he gave it in Colossians as well. And, you know, if he said the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, how much is the church supposed to submit to Christ? Frankly, I think all the time, that's the term Paul uses, in everything. He says, be subject to your husbands in everything, even as the church is to Christ.

So, this is not popular teaching today. And not only do women not like it, a lot of men don't like it, believe it or not. I think a generation ago, a lot of men liked the macho idea of being the boss and, you know, everyone's supposed to obey them and so forth.

But I think we've got a different kind of male that's been produced in the past 40 years. And I think a lot of guys want to wimp out and don't want to take charge and don't want anyone to have to submit to them. And they don't want to have to submit to anyone else.

They just want to be individuals. It's that highly individualistic spirit that's part of the dominant culture. But it's not part of Christianity.

In Christianity, we are individuals. But we are individuals that God has placed into family units where he defines roles for us. Now, next time, I'm going to talk about the roles of children.

And I'm also going to take the last bit of the notes. If you still have the notes, you can anticipate what that is. And that's strengthening the home or family by home-instead, a term that I use for doing a lot of things at home that people often do elsewhere, like home birth, home education, home business, home church, home outreach, things like that.

We'll talk about some of those things. Those things I just mentioned are not demanded in Scripture. They are treated as fairly normative in Scripture, but they're not commanded.

The Bible doesn't say you have to home school or home birth or anything like that. That's not a command. But I'm talking about things that are fairly normative in Scripture, though not commanded, which I believe have a tendency to strengthen the home and the family, which I think Christians should be concerned about doing if they can.