

BLUEPRINT Luke 14:26 for Biblical Families

The Heart, Mind, and Practice of Godliness in the Home



blue•print [blōo-prints] — noun

A detailed outline or plan of action: a blueprint for success.

Please join us for the first of our 2011 Grace seminars.

Our burden for this seminar is that all who attend would leave with a clear understanding of what God has called them to do and be within their family, a detailed plan of action, and a joyful eagerness to go after it for the glory of God and the good of their family.

Friday, March 4th from 6:30-9:00pm
Saturday, March 5th from 8:30am - noon.
Childcare is provided.

Grace Evangelical Free Church | 26680 Faxton Ave. N.E. | (651) 462-6677 | www.gracewyoming.com



BLUEPRINT FOR BIBLICAL FAMILIES

What a Biblical Family Must Be – Session 1

David VanAcker, Pastor of Discipleship

Grace Church, Grace Seminar

March 4th, 2010

INTRODUCTION

Over the years there have been a number of recurring conversations that I've had with men in the church. One of the more common exchanges has centered on the specific roles of husbands and fathers. Over and over men have come to me earnestly wanting to honor God in the way they lead their families, but without a clear understanding of what that means. These men simply wanted to know what's required of them--what they're supposed to be and do.

This seminar is meant to answer this question for the men and women of Grace: "What does God call me to be and do within the context of my family?" Or, to word it in a slightly different way, "What does God require of me as a member of my family?"

We've done some more theoretical seminars in the past. This one's meant to be very practical. There'll be a bit of theory (or, better yet, theology) in order to make sure that we're well grounded (building on the right foundation), but overall the goal is to give you some plain truths from Scripture so that each of you can leave here with a clear understanding of what God has called you to do and be within your family, a detailed plan of action, and a joyful eagerness to go after it for the glory of God and the good of your family. In other words, we want you to know what you're called to be and do and to leave here with a plan or action, specific to your individual families, but based commonly on the Word of God.

The point here is to provide you with some fence work; to provide you with a clear set of boundaries, inside of which you can operate freely and confidently.

Here's how each of the sessions are going to be structured:

1. We'll start with universal, biblical principles—common to everyone in this room. Within the blueprint metaphor, this is the framing stage.
2. Then we'll move to more specific application. I'll offer a few suggestions as to what this might mean in your homes and then you'll have some time to discuss specifics; first around your tables and then as couples (or individuals). Again, within the blueprint metaphor, this is the stage where you decide on color schemes, siding, carpet, and the like.
3. Finally, I'll offer you some tools to finish the process on your own after you leave here. This is the stage where you're picking out fixtures and accents.

Here's what I'd like to avoid: Seeing you feel more beaten up than you already are, seeing you feel like failures with no real hope of ever getting things right, and seeing you try (perhaps once again) to just pull yourself up by your bootstraps and give it another skeptical go.

This has no view to the gospel, promises nothing but discouragement, and is doomed to failure.

Instead, here's what I'd like: to see each of you recognize that you're not where you ought to be, to confess these shortcomings to God and your family, to experience forgiveness in Christ and the opportunity for a fresh start, and to leave feeling equipped and eager to pick one or two areas to begin working on immediately in the power of the Spirit. I want you to feel hope and encouragement.

Amen!?

FIRST THINGS FIRST – THE ORIGINS AND NATURE OF BIBLICAL FAMILIES

As we consider the origins and nature of a biblical family, I believe that there are five key elements that we need to look at. Let's begin at the beginning.

1. Creation (Genesis 1-3).

Families themselves begin in Genesis and in Genesis we see God's plan for families.

Genesis 1

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 2

⁵ When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up- for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground- ⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. ^{ESV}

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ *The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* ¹⁶ *To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."* ¹⁷ *And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."*

²⁰ The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Biblical families begin with the beginning of all families: God's creation of Adam and Eve. Köstenberger helps us to see three primary "clusters of principles" from the creation account (Genesis 1-3): "1) the man and the woman are created in God's image to rule the earth for God; 2) the man is created first and is given ultimate responsibility for the marriage relationship, while the woman is placed alongside the man as his "suitable helper"; and 3) the fall of humanity entails negative consequences for both the man and the woman" (p.33).

In other words, God made Adam and Eve (the first family), as a paradigm for all future families, with specific natures and responsibilities. God created Adam and Eve alike in His image. God created Adam to lead his family in ruling God's creation. And God created Eve to help Adam rule God's creation. However, as the result of the fall, it will be harder—indeed, impossible—for men and women (families) to do and be what God has created them to do be.

2. The gospel (Romans 8:1-4).

Immediately the gospel comes in. It is indeed impossible for us to do what God requires of us on our own. None of us are or have done what we're made to do within our families. All of us have already failed. Apart from the gospel, we have no hope (Romans 1:16).

Hear the gospel.

Romans 8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Apart from surrendering our lives—by grace, through faith—to Jesus, in order that He might forgive us of our sins and empower us to live in a manner pleasing to God, we will never, indeed could never, be a part of a biblical family.

Additionally, the gospel does not simply save us and empower us, it must also shape us. If the gospel doesn't flavor every aspect of your family, it can never be a truly biblical family. This good news must shape the way that you talk to, look at, argue with, date, pray with, eat with, sleep with, vacation with, and ... your spouse. This good news must shape the way that you disciple, discipline, train, talk to, play with, put to bed, and ... your kids.

The gospel is the foundation of all biblical homes.

3. The Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

We know the gospel because we have the Word of God. In addition to the gospel, however, we read in the bible much more.

Kostenberger says this, "Marriage and family are good gifts from a great God. Unfortunately, in our day the Master's Manual is often neglected and even rejected. Ignorance, apathy, and antagonism abound in our culture when it comes to God's blueprint for the sacred institution of the home.

God's Word alone is able to equip us for every good work (1 Timothy 3:16-17). It alone is the standard by which we must live and, therefore, it alone defines godliness in the home. We simply cannot hope to honor God in our homes if we do not immerse our homes in God's Word.

4. The Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:7; Philippians 4:13).

John 16:7 I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

We will always lack the wisdom, will, and strength to do what God requires of us apart from the active work of the Spirit. But with the Spirit we will always have all that we need (and more) to joyfully live in the way that God requires (Philippians 4:13).

5. The Church (Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12)

God has not designed you to pursue godliness in your homes on your own. God has gifted His people differently and complementarily. Simply put, we're meant to need the gifts of those around us to do what God expects of us.

WHAT CHARACTERIZES BIBLICAL FAMILIES?

With all this having been said, please consider the following description (“10 biblical axioms”) of a biblical family or a healthy home¹. In all my reading, this is probably the best fence-work (biblical families will always operate inside these parameters) that I’ve found.

1. Family is not simply a good idea. Family is a God idea. Since marriage and family were instituted by and originated with God, He gets to set the guidelines for how it should be defined and how it should function in the world today. How you “do” marriage and family are not simply questions of your preference, your opinion, your family traditions...it is ultimately a question of authority. Either we accept God’s authority, embrace it, obey it, and enjoy the benefits or we refuse it and suffer the consequences.
2. Godly families start with godly marriages. Godly marriages start with godly men. Many of our families and marriages are not where they should be today, because men are not where they should be. God has given men the unique role of being a humble, servant-leader to your wife and your kids. Loving her, sacrificially, as Christ loved the church. Men need to stop being selfish and start being selfless. Ephesians 5:25 says: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...”
3. God designed the family so that husbands and wives would both compliment and complement one another. Life is tough enough by itself, your spouse does not need you tearing them down also. God has put you together to build one another up. The Bible teaches us that men and women are different by design. Let me give it to you one sentence: Men and women are 1) of equal value, 2) have different roles, and 3) have equally valuable roles.
4. God’s primary objective for your family is not your happiness, but your holiness. Happiness does not come from pursuing happiness, it comes from pursuing God. Make an effort to pursue God together as a family and it will change you forever.
5. Our family is precious to God, when our God is more precious than family. Marriage and family are good gifts from a great God, but if we are not careful we can value the gift above the giver. Even family can become an idol if we let it.

[Again, this is a seminar on the heart, mind, and practice of godliness in the home. You’ll hear a lot about families and their priority and importance in your life. It must first be said, however, that despite the high (and even essential) priority given to families in Scripture, a biblical family will always be marked by individuals with a primary commitment to Christ. Shockingly, it must be as if we hate our families compared to Jesus (Luke 14:26). We must be willing to leave our earthly families in order to follow Jesus (Mark 1:16-20). Truly following Jesus will, at times, cause division within families (Matthew 10:34-36). And the highest familial priority in Scripture is the family of the people of God (Mark 3:31-35). In other words, the clear New Testament teaching is that families can never be biblical when one or more of the members has become an idol.]

6. The church is not the primary means of discipleship, the home is. Parenting IS taking the initiative with your kids education (public or private), physical development, and spiritual discipleship. Again, simply put this means that: Every family should be actively involved in two churches: a local church and a “domestic church”. Neither one is a replacement for the other. A “domestic church” is when a family gathers, under the leadership of a godly father, to worship, read the Bible, pray, and love Jesus.

Let me ask you question: imagine that your church canceled all of their children’s and youth ministries/classes and events. There was no more Sunday School, Children’s Church, Youth Group, VBS, etc.? Would your kids still learn the Bible and still learn about Jesus Christ? The church’s role is not primary, it’s secondary. When it comes to learning about Jesus and the Bible, the church should be supplementing what happens in the home.

¹ Taken from an article by Tyler Scarlett called, “10 Biblical Axioms for a Healthy Home.” The entire article can be found at <http://forestbaptistchurch.org/blogs/?p=218>.

7. "Honor thy father and thy mother" is a biblical prescription for little kids and big kids. Exodus 20:12 says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you." This is a command that is never revoked, even as you grow older. Children are called to honor by obedience. Adults are called to honor their parent, not by obedience, but by respect.
8. The primary relationships in the family is not parent-child, it is husband-wife. Genesis 2:24 tells us: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." In other words, the parent-child relationship is only temporary, the husband-wife relationship is permanent. The former is secondary, the latter is to be primary.
9. Biblical parenting does not emphasize discipline at the expense of emphasizing discipleship. Parenting that focuses primarily on behavior modification will produce little Pharisees. Children will grow up to think that since my parents love me because of my performance and obedience the same must be true with God. Parenting should focus primarily on heart formation. Don't just beat your kids black and blue with punishment, nurture them, talk to them.
10. Don't aim at being a good family. Don't aim at being a great family. Aim at being a gospel family. It all begins and ends with the gospel. Men, model the gospel by loving your wife as Christ loved the church. Ladies, model the gospel by submitting to your husband as the church does do Christ. Parents, model the gospel by relating to your children as our heavenly Father relates to His children. Your home should be an undeniable, clear-cut picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

So, biblical families are ones that acknowledge God's intention for their families, embrace the roles that God has assigned to each family member, realize that things will be more difficult because of sin, and build their families on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION

Here's what I'd like you to do:

1. *Take a few minutes to just talk around your tables. What stood out to you? What was new? What seems hard?*
2. *Take a few minutes to, by yourself, rank the 15 points above in order of significance for your family. Consider both the relative importance of the point and the unique place that your family is in right now.*
3. *Take a few minutes to compare your ranking with that of your spouse.*
4. *Take the remaining time to identify the top two priorities for your family and talk about what you might do about them. (Provide example for people)*

BREAK

BLUEPRINT FOR BIBLICAL FAMILIES

What a Biblical Family Must Be – Session 2

David VanAcker, Pastor of Discipleship
Grace Church, Grace Seminar
March 4th, 2010

WHAT IS A BIBLICAL MARRIAGE?

Our families can never be more biblical than our marriages, so let's look now at what a biblical marriage is like.

Biblical marriage is a covenant relationship between God, a man, and a woman, intended to reflect the gospel to the world.

From this, Köstenberger suggests five key traits of biblical marriage (most of the words below are his):

1. Marriage is permanent (Matthew 19:6).

Matthew 19:4-6 "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Marriage is permanent since it was established by God. And marriage is permanent because it's meant to reflect the union between Jesus and His bride, the Church. When marriage gets hard we are called to look to what Jesus endured on the cross for His church—to the gospel.

Consider what Köstenberger says here, "When questioned about divorce, Jesus affirmed the permanent nature of marriage in no uncertain terms. Adducing both foundational Old Testament texts, Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, he asserted, "So they [husband and wife] are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matt. 19:6 NIV).

You must resolve that your marriage will last until God takes one or both of you home. You are meant to experience the kind of security and peace in your marriages that you experience in your relationship with Jesus. Your eternity is secure so long as you are in Christ. Your marriage is meant to be secure because it reflects this reality. You will not get divorced because Jesus will never divorce you.

I didn't know anyone who was divorced until I went to college. I cannot imagine how much that has helped me to love my wife well and to experience the security in Christ that I'm meant to experience.

Biblical families thrive because they are made from marriages that are permanent.

2. Marriage is sacred (Genesis 2:21-22).

Genesis 2:21-22 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Marriage is a relationship before and under God. It is not merely an agreement between two willing individuals.

Again, Köstenberger is helpful when he says, "Jesus considered marriage to be a sacred bond between a man and a woman, established by and entered into before God." He then quotes John Stott who says, "The marriage bond is more than a human contract: it is a divine yoke. And the way in which God lays this yoke upon a married couple is not by creating a kind of mystical union but by declaring his purpose in his Word."

We must have a kind of reverence for the very institution of marriage. All of us who are married are taking part in something that is much bigger than ourselves. Marriage doesn't originate with us, it originated with God.

Biblical families thrive because they are made from marriages that are sacred.

3. Marriage is intimate (Genesis 2:23-25).

Genesis 2:23-25 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Marriage is the most intimate of all human relationships. This means a lot of things.

It means that you should not be closer to anyone else on earth than you are to your spouse. You should pray with (and for), play with, talk with, laugh and cry with your spouse in a way that is deeper than in any other human relationship.

It means that dating shouldn't be something that was left in courtship.

It also means that you should have a vibrant, exciting sexual relationship with your spouse. At the Desiring God conference in 2004, Al Mohler boldly declared that your sex life tells an awful lot about your relationship with God. Read over the Song of Songs as you mull this over. We'll talk more about this tomorrow.

All of these things are grounded in the fact that our marriages are meant to be expressions, tangible images, of our relationship with Jesus.

Biblical families thrive because they are made from marriages that are intimate.

4. Marriage is mutual (Ephesians 5:25-30).

Ephesians 5:25-30 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body.

Marriage is a relationship of free self-giving of one human being to another. Here's what I think you need to hear. Neither spouse should be left to work on the marriage alone.

Too often, husbands, it's the wives who read the books on marriage. Too often, husbands, it's the wives who realize the need to get help for some particular marital struggle. You must not only engage in strengthening your marriage, you must lead in it. Your wife and kids need to see you working on your marriage.

On the other hand, too often, wives, it's the husbands who initiate physical intimacy. Too often, wives, it's the husbands who want to be physically playful when the kids are young. You must engage your husbands. Your kids need to see you hug and kiss.

Let there be a beautiful mutuality in the pursuit of each other: communication, intimacy, fun, romance, family, and faith.

Biblical families thrive because they are made from marriages that are mutual.

5. Marriage is exclusive (Genesis 2:22-25; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Proverbs 5:18-20).

Proverbs 5:18-20 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, ¹⁹ a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. ²⁰ Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

No other human relationship must interfere with the marriage commitment between a husband and a wife.

We already talked about this one also. It means that, as we said above, we cannot let our kids come before our marriage. It means that we cannot let our friendships creep up in priority over our marriage. It means that no hobby or pastime can be allowed to take priority over our spouse. There should be no worldly competition between your spouse and anyone or anything else.

Biblical families thrive because they are made from marriages that are exclusive.

6. Marriage is evangelical (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Ephesians 5:31-32 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

I added this one to highlight the simple fact that biblical marriages are always speaking of and based on the gospel. Your marriage simply can't remain silent concerning the gospel. You are either painting a true and accurate picture, to each other and the world, of Jesus and the Church or you are lying deceiving. The husband always reflects Christ and the wife always reflects the church. Biblical marriages speak wonderfully concerning the gospel in the way the husband and wife interact, argue, forgive, parent, date, etc. So your marriage is always speaking—either truthfully or falsely—about the gospel. May it be true.

Biblical families thrive because they are made from marriages that are evangelical.

Köstenberger also makes the point that, like families, a marriage can never be truly biblical if it out of God's assigned place. Marriages are always meant to be secondary. That is, a biblical marriage must always come in importance after one's relationship with God, but before all other earthly relationships. Nothing must come before God in our devotion and allegiance. But we must not let children or friendship or other family relationships come before our spouses (122).

So, godly marriages, like godly families, recognize and embrace the nature and purposes that God has assigned to them.

BLUEPRINT FOR BIBLICAL FAMILIES

What a Biblical Family Must Be – Session 3

David VanAcker, Pastor of Discipleship

Grace Church, Grace Seminar

March 4th, 2010

WHAT IS A GODLY PERSON?

Our families can never be more biblical than our marriages and our marriages can never be more biblical than we are as followers of Jesus. Let's look quickly now at what a follower of Jesus looks like.

1. A worshiper/lover of God - One who is satisfied in God alone. To worship God is to express your satisfaction in God. To love God is to understand that He is the greatest thing for all things (Matthew 22:37-39)
2. A debtor/lover of people – One who desires others to be satisfied in God alone. To be a debtor is to recognize that you owe the grace that you received. To be a lover of people is to truly want what is best for them – God (Matthew 22:39).
3. One who sees God and His Word rightly - Understanding God rightly means knowing Him as He truly is and not as we (or others) have made Him to be. Understanding God's Word rightly means knowing what it is, what it says, and what it calls us to do (2 Timothy 3:16).
4. Godly character – One who is becoming like Christ in his or her character. A disciple is marked by a pursuit of Christ's character: holiness, love, faithfulness, obedience, etc (Matthew 5:48).
5. Part of the Body of Christ – One who recognizes his or her role as a believer in the body of Christ. A disciple recognizes the importance of finding and using gifts to benefit the body, understands Biblical Stewardship, and the need for unity (Romans 12:4-5).
6. Recognizes dependence on God – One who lives based on the knowledge that he or she relies on God for everything. As such, a disciple will commit himself or herself to expressing their dependence on God to God individually and corporately through desperate prayers (for God's will, not theirs, to be known and done) and regular fasting (to arouse their awareness of their dependence) (John 15:5).
7. Suffering servant – One who recognizes Jesus call to serve and suffer. A disciple recognizes that Jesus' offer of salvation does not include an offer to escape the trials of this life, that it does not include an offer to gain worldly peace and prosperity, and that it does not include an offer of earthly comfort and security. Instead, it is a call to serve others as if we were serving Jesus and to expect suffering (in the form of persecution and hardship) because of it (Matthew 20:25-28, John 15:20, John 13:1-17).

Our families can never be more biblical than our marriages and our marriages can never be more biblical than we are as followers of Jesus and we can never be more biblical as followers of Jesus than we are as men and women of God. Let's look quickly now at what a men and women of God look like.

- a. What is a godly man?²
 - i. Glory-bearer - Men are the glory of God (1 Corinthians 11:7). Men must learn how to bear the specific kind of glory that God has called them to. This means being *representative, responsible, and holy*.
 - ii. Lord - Man was created to exercise dominion in the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). God has designed men to want to conquer and subdue. This means being *adventurous and visionary*.

² The five aspects of a godly man were taken from Douglas Wilson's book, "Future Men".

- iii. Husbandman - Man was created, not only to discover and conquer new worlds, but also to make those worlds flourish. After conquering and subduing, men are designed to settle down (Genesis 2:15). This means being *patient, careful, and hard-working*.
- iv. Savior - Men also have a deep desire to deliver or save. The great example of a savior is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:14-15). Men are meant to have a deep need to have something to defend, something to represent in battle. Men must realize that they are called to fight in a great war. This means being *strong, sacrificial, courageous, and good*.
- v. Sage - The sage is a man who is great in wisdom. Wisdom is personified in Scripture (Proverbs 1-9). Men are to listen to wisdom, learn from wisdom, and be disciplined by wisdom. Men must, therefore, learn to learn, study, read, and engage in intellectual discussion. This means being *teachable, studious, and thoughtful*.

b. What is a godly woman?

- vi. Glory-Bearer – Women were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28) and are called to reflect His greatness and splendor (Psalm 144:12). They are made to display the worth of their designer to those around them. Women must bear the specific kind of glory that God has called them to. This means being *obedient, purposeful, pure, respectful and confident*.
- vii. Helper – Women were created to be helpers (Genesis 2:18). They have a God-given desire to support, serve, and befriend (Proverbs 31:20). This means being *kind, caring, helpful, thoughtful, and trustworthy*.
- viii. Life-Giver – Women are life-givers (Genesis 3:20). They are called to bear fruit (John 15:16) in all that they do. They are called to mother, model, and teach other women to lead Godly lives (Titus 2:3-5). This means being *nurturing, fruit-bearing, considerate, and responsible*.
- ix. Lady – Women are called to adorn themselves with the imperishable beauty which is found in devotion to Christ (1 Peter 3:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:9-10). They need to learn that this kind of beauty flows out of a quiet and gentle heart. This means being *prayerful, gentle, gracious, careful, and modest*.
- x. Manager – Women should consider home as the center of ministry and be devoted to the well-being of their household (Proverbs 31). This means being *industrious, competent, creative, wise, and prepared*.

BLUEPRINT FOR BIBLICAL FAMILIES

What a Biblical Family Must Do – Session 4

David VanAcker, Pastor of Discipleship

Grace Church, Grace Seminar

March 5th, 2010

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF BIBLICAL FAMILY MEMBERS?

Last night we spent a good deal of time going through what biblical families are to be. Today we're going to spend our time looking at what biblical families are to do. We're going to start with the duties of husbands.

1. What are the specific duties of husbands?

- a. To lead his family (Genesis 2:18, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:9; Ephesians 5:23).

Ephesians 5:22-24 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Köstenberger says, "The apostle Paul's comments on Genesis 1-3 repeatedly root the man's primary responsibility in the family (as well as in the church) in the fact that he was created first. Not only does Paul draw attention to the fact that the man was created first, but he also notes that it is not the man who was made for the woman, but the woman for the man" (GMF p.24).

It's important to note that the headship of the husband is not the result of the fall; the husband's headship was part of God's original and good creation. However, it's also important to note that fulfilling his role as head was made much more difficult as a result of the fall. Because of the fall the earth itself was made more difficult for man to subdue. Additionally, man's helper in this task was made to struggle in her helping role by desiring to dominate, rather than submit to, her husband. A wise man will realize this in his prayers and actions as he seeks to lead his family.

Men, here's my five part definition of leadership in the family:

- i. Knowing where you're supposed to go (not where you want to go) in any given situation.
- ii. Knowing how you're supposed to get there (the Word of God is your guide).
- iii. Knowing how these two things fit with the big picture (God's Word and your family's vision````).
 - Our vision for our families must always be shaped and directed by the Word of God.
 - Our vision for our families must always have the glory of God as its ultimate aim.
 - Our vision for our families will be unique to us.
 - On a practical note, it seems to me that vision comes from a combination of the work of the Holy Spirit, a recognition of our gifts, and a special burden for a particular aspect of obedience that God calls us to.
- iv. Clearly communicating all of this in an understanding way to your family.

- See 1 Peter 3:7. “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”
- A big part of communicating and leading in an understanding way has to do with making sure that your whole family is on board with the larger vision (or standards for decision making).
- A big part of communicating and leading in an understanding way has to do with succeeding and taking responsibility when you don’t.
- A big part of communicating and leading in an understanding way has to do with understanding how hard it can be for women to trust this (Genesis 3:16).

v. Boldly and sacrificially going there first.

Leading well rarely means making a decision and then demanding that your family obey, but leading well always means casting a godly vision for your family and taking responsibility for all the decisions of your family (RM p.47 – Numbers 30:13-15).

Most of the rest of the seminar will make little sense and have very little chance of being practically helpful if the men in this room don’t take this responsibility seriously. Many, if not most, of us have failed to lead our wives and families well. This is sin and we need to address it as such. Douglas Wilson has some very helpful words on how to do this. Please take heed of his advice.

SEE NICE-GUY SYNDROM DOCUMENT

b. To love his wife (Ephesians 5:25-28).

Ephesians 5:25-28 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

This means affectionately desiring what’s best for your wife. This means asking Jesus to give you affections where they are not and the Spirit to illuminate the Word of God for you where there is ignorance. You need to delight in your wife and know what’s best for her. She shouldn’t be the one planning all the dates and reading all the books on godly womanhood.

Ephesians 5 gives two clarifying comparisons regarding the kind of love with which a husband is to love his wife. The first is found in 5:25. Husbands are to love their wives “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” The second is found in 5:28 (and 5:33). Husbands are commanded to love their wives “as their own bodies”.

Husbands, Ephesians 5 is the great small-love-for-your-wife killer. Small love is not an option.

c. To be a living picture of Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1).

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Husbands, you must be able to echo the apostle Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 11:1. Your wife should think of Jesus when she sees you talk and work and read and forgive and date and parent and play. As difficult as it sounds (and is) you are to be a living picture of Jesus for your wife.

There are two main components to being a living picture of Jesus. The first main component is knowing and loving Jesus. You'll never be an accurate picture of Jesus if you don't know and love Jesus above all things. For this, your personal quiet times/devotions are essential. You need to spend time meditating on God's Word and communing with God in prayer. Be intentional about this. Have a plan for this.

The second is putting yourself in a position to present this picture to your wife. It's not enough to love Jesus in private. It is your duty (and delight) to love Jesus in front of your wife. You should consciously and constantly be doing this in informal settings (as you walk and talk and work and ...). But you should also consciously and constantly be doing this in formal settings. The most important of which is probably during a time of daily family devotions (yes, even before there are kids in the home).

We'll talk more specifically about how in a bit.

- d. To be a husbandman to his wife (Ephesians 5:25, 29).

Ephesians 5:28-29 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church...

This means that it is your duty to make your wife flourish. You're wife's spiritual growth, physical health and beauty, and emotional contentedness are all in some respects your responsibility. Your wife's sanctification is a duty that God has assigned to you.

Tom Nelson talks about this in a very helpful way in his Song of Solomon DVD. He talks about how your wife shouldn't feel like she had to give up herself to marry you. Encourage her to use her gifts and pursue hobbies. Support her in the burdens that God has placed on her heart. Arrange your schedule so that she'll have time to exercise and stay healthy.

- e. To be jealous for his wife (2 Corinthians 11:2-3; Exodus 34:14).

2 Corinthians 11:2-3 I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

In this passage Paul expresses a godly jealousy for the church in Corinth. He likens this jealousy to that of a marriage. Men, God has designed marriage in such a way that no one else on earth should have your wife's affections like you do. You must be jealous for those affections because your wife's affections for you are inescapably linked to the gospel and her faithfulness to Christ. This is not a selfish jealousy (the kind prohibited by 1 Corinthians 13), but a selfless jealousy. It has your wife's best interest in mind.

- f. To meet his wife's sexual needs (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).

1 Corinthians 7:3-5 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵ Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Men, sex is not only for you, it's not even mainly for you, even if your wife has convinced herself of this in order to protect herself. The notion that sex is mainly for men is a lot of things, but biblical isn't one of them. You might appreciate climaxing more than her, but sex is far more than the climax. Your duty is as much about helping your wife to connect with you in a loving way as it is about giving her any

particular physical pleasure. Don't be selfish, don't presume that you know what your wife wants from sex (ask her), and don't think of sex as merely physical.

- g. To be content with his wife (Proverbs 5:15-23; Matthew 5:28; Exodus 20:17).

Proverbs 5:18-20 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, ¹⁹ a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. ²⁰ Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

Men, please listen carefully here: your wife is your standard of beauty. All other women on this planet are measured by your wife. There is no place in the heart or mind of a Christian husband for comparing your wife with other women, as Douglas Wilson says, "silently or aloud, whether with words or actions...involving beauty, cooking, intelligence, imagined sexual responsiveness, whatever." You are to be content with the wife that God gave you. This is your duty.

- h. To supply his wife/family with the things that they need to survive (1 Timothy 5:8; Exodus 21:10-11).

1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

If husbands know and accept any of their responsibilities or feel the sting of falling short of any of them, it's usually this one.

Providing physically for your wife and family certainly is important, but please understand that your wife will freeze far quicker from a lack of spiritual leadership than she will a lack of heat in your home. Understand that your wife will starve much quicker from a lack of your love than she will a lack of food. Understand that your wife will be embarrassed by a lack of Christlikeness in you before she will from a lack of a particular kind of clothing. Understand that your wife will lose sleep much more often because you don't pursue her holiness than she will because you can't afford a fancy vacation this year.

If you provide everything that your wife would ever need physically, but a small picture of Jesus, she'll die (at least inside) much quicker.

2. What are the specific duties of wives?

- a. To help her husband (Genesis 2:18).

Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

Köstenberger suggests that the context teaches that this means at least five things: 1) that the woman was congenial [agreeable, suitable, or pleasing in nature] to the man (Genesis 2:19-20); 2) that she was created by God to be the man's associate or assistant; 3) that she was made for his companionship (Genesis 2:18); 4) that she was a suitable partner with her husband for procreation (Genesis 2:24); and 5) that she was to help her husband domesticate the earth (Genesis 1:28).

"In the case of the woman, Genesis 2 does not teach that she merely act as the man's 'helper' when she chooses but rather that serving as the man's 'helper' sums up her very reason for existence in relation to the man. Being the man's 'helper' is the purpose for which the woman was created, as far as her wifely status is concerned" (GMF p.26).

Women, this isn't popular, and I have no doubt that it will ruffle some feathers even in this room, but it's important for you to understand that God has oriented men towards a task and you towards a man.

One of the primary reasons that you should be attracted to a man and chose him as a husband is because you love and respect the vision that God has given him and rejoice at the thought of helping

him in it. This almost never happens because so few men have a clear vision and so few women like to have their ambitions “restricted” to that of a helper. I don’t know very many women who not only accept this teaching of Scripture, but also rejoice in it. Women, I encourage you to do a bit of digging/soul work here. Ask God to reveal to you where your heart and mind are in this.

I’m thankful that many of you, at Grace, do joyfully embrace this privileged responsibility.

- b. To respect her husband (Ephesians 5:22, 33).

Ephesians 5:33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Douglas Wilson says this about the biblical mandate, “Women are fully capable of loving a man and sacrificing for him, while believing the entire time that he is a true and unvarnished jerk. Women are good at this kind of love, but the central requirement given to wives is that they must respect their husbands. As Christian women gather together (for prayer? Bible study?), they frequently speak about their husbands in the most disrespectful way. Then they hurry home to cook, clean, and care for his kids. Why? Because they love their husbands. Now it is not wrong for the wives to love their husbands this way, but it is certainly wrong to substitute love for the respect God requires.”

“When a wife is respecting and honoring her husband, the transaction is quite different [than when she’s loving him]. Instead of concentrating on the security of the relationship, respect is directed to his abilities and achievements—how hard he works, how faithfully he comes home, how patient he is with the kids, and so forth. “

Wilson continues, “The specifics may cause problems with some because he thinks he might not come home, and she thinks he doesn’t work nearly hard enough. But love is to be rendered to wives and respect to husbands because God has required it, not because any husband or wife has earned it. Paul does not say, “Husbands, love your wives if she ...” He does not say, “Wives, respect your husbands if he ...”

While there is remarkable and beautiful harmony whenever husbands render to wives and wives to husbands what God requires (love and respect), God tells husbands what to do independently of what the wives are doing, and He tells the wives what to do independently of what the husbands are doing. Our obedience is not to rest on the obedience of our spouse. “And it is always good for us to remember that God requires our spouses to render to us far more than any of us deserve.”

- c. To bear and nurture children (1 Timothy 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:7; Titus 2:4).

Titus 2:3-5 Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Köstenberger says, “Except for those who are called by God to a life of singleness, God’s ideal is that of a monogamous, lifelong marriage crowned with the gift of children” (129).

I don’t know how to get around the fact that in our society women are often made to feel condescension (at best) and outright hostility (at worst) for bearing (more than 1 or 2) children and for staying home with them (for more than 1 or 2 years) to nurture them. That this is diametrically opposed to the picture and mandate of scripture should be obvious. Women, what makes me nervous is that often times, even within the church, it isn’t obvious. Many Christian women struggle to feel the kind of satisfaction and worth and contentment and pride that they’re meant to feel in mothering. Many Christian women struggle to recognize the high calling of motherhood. When it comes to bearing and nurturing children (and I’m not saying anything about the number of kids that you have) there seems to be a general air of embarrassment.

But God's Word, paints a different picture: that bearing and nurturing children is a very high and noble calling. May we joyfully and unashamedly embrace that picture.

- d. To be industrious in the home, keeping it well supplied with food and clothing (Titus 2:3-5; Proverbs 31:14-21).

Proverbs 31:10-27 An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. ¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. ¹² She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. ¹³ She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. ¹⁴ She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. ¹⁵ She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. ¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. ¹⁷ She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong. ¹⁸ She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. ¹⁹ She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. ²⁰ She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. ²¹ She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. ²² She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. ²³ Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land. ²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant. ²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. ²⁶ She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. ²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

While it is the husband's responsibility to work hard to provide the family with the money needed to purchase the supplies necessary for the home to function, the picture in Scripture is of the wife using this money responsibly to keep the home well supplied with food and clothing.

Consider Proverbs 31. What a remarkable picture this is of a godly woman.

- e. To meet her husband's sexual needs (1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Song of Solomon 2:3-7).

1 Corinthians 7:3-5 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵ Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

This topic can get weird fast. Here's the essence of what I think Scripture teaches here—there are two lines of reasoning in Scripture:

Line #1 (Song of Solomon 2:3-7)

- i. Sex in marriage is good and of God and to be desired as such.
- ii. Sex is meant by God to be a regular expression of a couple's love for one another.
- iii. This means that a lack of a desire to meet your husband's sexual needs either indicates a rejection or God's intention for sex or a love for your husband or both.

Line #2 (1 Corinthians 7:5):

- i. Men especially are more prone to certain temptations/sins when they are not having regular sex.
- ii. God has called you to be a protection for him against these types of temptation, in love and out of concern for his soul.

- iii. This means that there will be times in which you are called to have sex even when you have a “headache”.

The point here, hopefully clearly, isn't that the bible teaches that women are to be sex slaves. Rather it is that sex is good, of God, and to be joyfully engaged in as an expression of love and for protection from sin. It is not primarily for men and it is not to be desired as an end in itself.

- f. To avoid nagging or arguing (Proverbs 19:13; 27:15-16; 31:26).

Proverbs 19:13 A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain.

With all of the burdens that fall on women and with the failure of men to lead and love well it can be very easy for women to fall into the habit of nagging or arguing; so much so that the bible, on numerous occasions, gives nicknames to women who engage in such behavior (“dripping” is the most frequent).

Women you are called to fight against this, indeed to avoid it altogether. Find your contentment in Christ. Learn to echo the Psalmist's words, “The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance” (Psalm 16:6).

- g. To be a disciple of her husband (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

1 Corinthians 14:33-35 As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is a difficult passage in many respects. I confess that there are aspects of it that I'm not sure that I understand. What is clear, however, is that godly husbands are meant to disciple their wives and that godly wives are meant to accept and, as a part of God's good plan, delight in the discipleship of their husbands.

Of course there is a lot of wisdom required here. What if the wife is more spiritually mature than her husband? What if the husband refuses to disciple his wife? Etc. While those questions are legitimate and while their answers may not be obvious the important point here is the disposition of the husband to disciple and the wife to be disciplined (primarily by her husband).

- h. To work hard at charitable works (1 Timothy 5:9-10; Proverbs 31:20).

Proverbs 31:20 She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.

This is simple and much explanation will probably only muddy the water. It should be said, though, that this can be very difficult with younger children in the home. It should be said that this does not change the fact that a godly woman's priority (rather than place, as Douglas Wilson notes) is to be the home. And it should be said that working hard at charitable works is never a secular endeavor.

BLUEPRINT FOR BIBLICAL FAMILIES

What a Biblical Family Must Do – Session 5

David VanAcker, Pastor of Discipleship

Grace Church, Grace Seminar

March 5th, 2010

3. What are the specific duties of parents?

I love this quote from Köstenberger, “Fundamentally, children, like all people, ought to be considered spiritual individuals who are uniquely created by God and yet are fallen sinners, so that the task of parenting is not merely that of behavioral conditioning but spiritual nurture and training” (p.124).

Tripp, in “The Age of Opportunity” says the goal of parenting is to “raise children who were once totally dependent on us to be independent, mature people who...are able to stand on their own two feet. Parents should strive to be used of him [God] to instill in our children an ever-maturing self-control through the principles of the Word and to allow them to exercise ever-widening circles of choice, control, and independence” (p.151).

Signs of this type of maturity include: 1) An independent life of personal worship and devotion; 2) A desire for corporate worship and instruction; 3) A pursuit of fellowship in the body of Christ; 4) An openness to discuss spiritual things; 5) Approaching decision-making from a biblical perspective; 6) A desire to serve others and to share one's faith; and 7) A desire to give of one's financial resources to support God's work.

Ryle says this, “In every step you take about them [your children], in every plan, and scheme, and arrangement that concerns them, do not leave out that mighty question, ‘How will this affect their souls?’” (p.9). The souls of your children are to be your first concern. Too many dads spend too much time worrying about everything but the souls of their children.

Although both parents are instructed and expected to disciple their children, we cannot miss the fact that fathers are given ultimate responsibility.

Kostenberger: “Ultimately, fathers ought to realize that their fatherhood derives from the ‘one God and Father of all’ ‘from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named’ (Ephesians 4:6, 3:15) and who cares and provides faithfully for all his children and acts as a perfect Father towards them all” (p.108).

Köstenberger also says, “Like Jesus, we should treat children with respect and dignity, as unique and precious creatures made by God and valuable in his sight.” He goes on to say, “Ministry to children, therefore, should be conducted in a humble spirit of service rather than in a patronizing manner, and should be viewed as a privilege...” (p.114).

Having said all of this in the way of providing a biblical backdrop for our discussion, let’s look at the duties prescribed by God’s word for parents.

a. Love – Among the first duty of fathers/parents is to love their children (1 John 3:1; Titus 2:3-5).

1 John 3:1 “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”

Our fulfillment of our duty to love our children must flow from an awareness of the love that our Father has for us. God, the Father, loves us, His children, and so we are compelled to love the children that He entrusts to us.

Ryle says, “Love should be the silver thread that runs through all your conduct. Kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearance, patience, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a

readiness to take part in childish joys,--these are the cords by which a child may be led most easily,-- these are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart” (p.4).

Again, Ryle says, “It is a dangerous thing to make your children afraid of you. Anything is almost better than reserve and constraint between your child and yourself; and this will come with fear. Fear puts an end to openness of manner;--fear leads to concealment;--fear sows the seed of much hypocrisy, and leads to many a lie” (Colossians 3:21) (p.6).

Parents it is your privileged duty to love your children as your Father loves you. This means, once again, that you have as a primary responsibility to your kids, to affectionately pursue that which is best for them. Sometimes (often times when they are young) this will fly directly in the face of what they want and think is best for them. You will be faced with the choice, over and over and over again, whether to do what your children want you to do (which will usually be the path of least short-term resistance) or to do what’s best for them. Similarly, you will be faced with the choice, over and over and over again, whether to do what is easiest for you (in the short-term) or what’s best for your kids.

Love them well.

- b. Be an example – Demonstrate godliness for your kids (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Tim. 4:12; Ephesians 6:4).

1 Corinthians 11:1 “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” Paul’s words here must ring true to us. And if we are to echo them in any context it must begin in our homes.

Ryle says, “Instruction, and advice, and commands will profit little, unless they are backed up by the pattern of your own life. Your children will never believe you are in earnest, and really wish them to obey you as long as your actions contradict your counsel” (p.30).

D.A. Carson says, “If I have learned anything in 35 or 40 years of teaching, it is that students don’t learn everything I teach them. What they learn is what I am excited about, the kinds of things I emphasize again and again and again and again. That had better be the gospel.

If the gospel—even when you are orthodox—becomes something which you primarily assume, but what you are excited about is what you are doing in some sort of social reconstruction, you will be teaching the people that you influence that the gospel really isn’t all that important. You won’t be saying that—you won’t even mean that—but that’s what you will be teaching. And then you are only half a generation away from losing the gospel.

Make sure that in your own practice and excitement, what you talk about, what you think about, what you pray over, what you exude confidence over, joy over, what you are enthusiastic about is Jesus, the gospel, the cross. And out of that framework, by all means, let the transformed life flow.”

To tell your kids one thing while doing another is cancer. Your kids can smell hypocrisy way before they can say the word. The damage caused by parents who claim to believe the gospel while living like practical atheists is immeasurable.

It is your privileged responsibility to be an example of Jesus Christ to your kids.

- c. Training – Train your kids in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Kids, by nature, desire evil (Proverbs 22:15; 29:15). That is, they do not desire God or the things of God. Their allegiance is not Godward, it is inward (to themselves) and outward (to the creation). We must train them with and for a Godward orientation (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). We must train them to know and be and do good (Proverbs 22:6) for the glory of God.

Ryle says, "If, then, you would deal wisely with your child, you must not leave him to the guidance of his own will. Think for him, judge for him, act for him, just as you would for one weak and blind; but for pity's sake, give him not up to his own wayward tastes and inclinations...he knows not yet what is good for his mind and soul any more than what is good for his body" (p.3).

It's important to note that this does not happen all at once. Children are more like steel to be forged. However, the older that they get the more difficult the forging becomes.

Regarding children, Ryle says, "He gives them a disposition at the starting-point of life to believe what you tell them, and to take for granted what you advise them, and to trust your word rather than a stranger's. He gives you, in short, a golden opportunity of doing them good. See that the opportunity be not neglected, and thrown away. Once let slip, it is gone for ever" (p.7).

The fact of the matter is that you are training your kids—even if you don't know it. You may be training them for laziness or godlessness or sarcasm or to be shrewd business men or women, but you are training them. The idea here is simply that God assigns the privileged responsibility to parents the training of their children in godliness.

Ryle, "Many children, I doubt not, shall rise up on the day of judgment, and bless their parents for good training, who never gave any signs of having profited by it during their parents' lives" (p.34).

What specifically are we to train our children towards or for?

- i. Train to obey (Luke 2:51; Ephesians 6:1; 2 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 3:4, 12; Titus 1:6).

Ephesians 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Children have been charged by God to obey their parents and so, just like the husband must assume responsibility for the duties of their wives, parents have the responsibility of training their children to do so.

Ryle says, "Training them to a habit of obedience...is an object which it is worth any labor to attain. No habit, I suspect, has such an influence over our lives as this. Parents, determine to make your children obey you, though it may cost you much trouble and cost them many tears. Let there be no questioning, and reasoning, and disputing, and delaying, and answering again. When you give them a command, let them see plainly that you will have it done" (p.19).

Ryle also says, "Reason with our child if you are so disposed, at certain times, but never forget to keep him in mind (if you really love him) that he is but a child after all,—that he thinks as a child, he understands as a child, and therefore must not expect to know the reason of everything at once" (p.18).

I often tell my children that it's my duty to always have a (godly/biblical) reason for my commands, but it is certainly not always my duty share it with them.

Again, Ryle says, "Learn to say "No" to your children. Show them that you are able to refuse whatever you think is not fit for them. Show them that you are ready to punish disobedience, and that when you speak of punishment, you are not only ready to threaten, but also to perform...punish seldom, but really and in good earnest,—frequent and slight punishment is a wretched system indeed" (p.27).

Köstenberger reminds us that it's important to teach our kids that they are disobedient, at times, because they are sinful. Children, then, need ultimately to be saved, not trained to obey their parents. True, biblical obedience only comes from a redeemed heart (p.140).

Köstenberger says, "Parents who neglect to hold their children accountable for rendering obedience fail them in that they do not help them along the path of Christian discipleship, of which obedience is a central component. Hence the primary importance of obedience is not for parents to receive their children's obedience, but for parents to help children to learn to exercise obedience ultimately in their relationship with God" (p.106).

Voddie Baucham gives this practical definition of obedience (so that there is no doubt): Obedience is doing what you are told, when you are told, and with a respectful attitude. If children lack any one of these three components, they are disobeying.

BLUEPRINT FOR BIBLICAL FAMILIES

What a Biblical Family Must Do – Session 4

David VanAcker, Pastor of Discipleship
Grace Church, Grace Seminar
March 5th, 2010

- ii. Training in the Bible (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 1:8-9; Psalm 138:2;).

As parents we are to instruct our kids in the Bible, the instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

We're specifically charged to focus on the sovereignty and magnificence of God displayed in the bible and to do it constantly.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

And we are to do this because the bible alone is able to make our children competent, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

In addition to the natural opportunities that God provides in life, we do this in two main ways at our house: family worship and weekly discipleship.

One of the primary ways that we train our kids in the bible, the gospel, and sanctification is in a time of family devotions. Köstenberger says, "One important practice is that of family worship, devotions, or Bible study. While it is helpful for our children to be taught the Bible in Sunday school, Awana, or other similar programs, Christian parents must never abdicate or delegate to others the responsibility of teaching their children the Bible. As the head of the home, the father ought to assume responsibility for leading his children to Christ and of encouraging them on the path of Christian discipleship. This includes reading and studying Scripture together, singing and praying together, and facing challenges and adversity (as well as successes and triumphs) together as a family in a spirit of faith and trust in Christ" (163-4).

SEE FAMILY WORSHIP BOOKLET

SEE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Help your kids to see the big things in the bible like God's sovereignty, God's centrality, mankind's sinfulness, that everything points to Christ, etc.

But also help your kids learn some of the more basic things like what the bible is, where it came from, the differences between testaments, how to use the table of contents, what chapters and verses are, etc.

Parents, we're given by God the privileged responsibility of training our kids in the bible.

- iii. Training on the gospel (Romans 3:20-25; Ephesians 2:1-10).

Romans 3:20-25 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it- ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

Our kids are born sinners and in need of a savior. May the gospel always be placed in front of them. Parents, it is our privileged responsibility.

- iv. Training on sanctification (Ephesians 4:11-16; 6:4, 1 Corinthians 13:11; Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Ephesians 4:11-16 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

One of the main metaphors in the NT concerning spiritual growth is that of a child becoming an adult. The NT authors liken our spiritual growth after conversion to that of a child maturing. Babies require constant care and supervision. They know how to do almost nothing on their own. As they grow up they are able to do more and more on their own.

We must understand that our children need to be trained to know what Christian maturity is and looks like. This means that we must learn what Christian maturity is and looks like. We, as parents, must give ourselves to knowing Jesus and to growing up in Him.

SEE FOLLOW ME BOOKLET

Again, it is our privileged responsibility to train our kids for maturity in Christ.

- v. Training for life (Proverbs).

One day our kids will be outside of our influence. It must be our aim to train them well for this day. This means training in everyday things like how to cook, sew, use a hammer and nails, converse, groom themselves, have conversations with men and women, how to be on time, how to hold a job, how to read and think, etc.

- vi. Training on the pitfalls of this world (Proverbs).

Finally, it's important that we not only train our children in what is right, but also in what is wrong. Proverbs is packed with examples of this. Some of the more prominent pitfalls mentioned in scripture are loose women, fools, worldly wisdom, the love of money, gossip, the pursuit of popularity or the fear of men, and trendiness.

Regarding trendiness Ryle says, "A true Christian...must not be content to do things merely because they are the custom of the world; to teach them and instruct them in certain ways, merely because it is usual; to allow them to read books of a questionable sort, merely because everybody else reads them; to let them form habits of a doubtful tendency, merely because they are the habits of the day...He must not be ashamed to hear his training called singular and strange" (p.9).

Have conversations early and often with your kids about how to assess books, movies, conversations, video games, spending habits, etc. Help them to see common areas of temptation and struggle.

- d. Discipline – When kid's hearts produce bad behavior we must discipline them in love in order that their hearts would become more Christ-like resulting in more Christ-like behavior (Proverbs 3:11-12; 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15).

Proverbs 3:11-12 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, ¹² for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

Remember the point of discipline is never punitive and the motive is never vengeance. The point of discipline is corrective and the motive is love. We discipline to help kids get back on the right track, not to execute the kind of judgment that belongs only to God.

The term associated with corporal punishment in Scripture is "rod".

Köstenberger notes that the "rod" in Proverbs serves three primary purposes: "(1) as a means of disciplining a child based on parental love (Proverbs 13:24); (2) as a way to remove folly and to impart wisdom (Proverbs 22:15; 29:15); and (3) as a possible aid to the child's salvation (Proverbs 23:13-14)" (p.143).

Paul Wagner offers the following thoughts on disciplining children:

- i. As a general principle, "all children need some form of discipline (though not all may need corporal punishment). Wise parents use the least amount of punishment necessary to curb improper behavior."
- ii. Wise parents "use a variety of levels of discipline when encountering improper behavior ... in increasing severity until the behavior is curbed." This includes reasoning as well as age-appropriate disciplinary techniques that are applied consistently and diligently.
- iii. Wise parents encourage proper behavior in a variety of ways, whether by relating negative examples of the consequences of sin or establishing and communicating proper guidelines of behavior. They also strive to model proper behavior in their own lives, realizing the power of personal example.
- iv. Wise parents discipline in love, not anger, with the best interests of the child in mind.
- v. Wise parents recognize the God-given boundaries for discipline established by God, leaving the administration of certain forms of discipline to the church, government, or God himself.

Köstenberger offers an additional seven thoughts on discipline. To be effective, discipline must:

- i. Be Consistent.
- ii. Be Age-appropriate.
- iii. Adhere to the universal biblical principles of fairness and justice.

- iv. Be child-specific.
 - v. Administered in love and not anger.
 - vi. Be future-oriented and forward-looking.
 - vii. Be part of a relationship.
- e. To do all this without exasperating their kids – parents (especially fathers) must not engage their children in a way that causes unnecessary or prolonged frustration or anger (Colossians 3:21; Ephesians 6:4).

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Köstenberger notes that this can include “excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, unfairness, constant nagging and condemnation, subjecting a child to humiliation, and all forms of gross insensitivity to a child’s needs and sensibilities” (p.118).

Our kids seem to be most easily exasperated when we discipline inconsistently or when they struggle to understand what they did wrong.

4. What are the specific duties of kids?

- a. Honor (or respect) parents and all those in positions of authority over them (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Matthew 15:4; Ephesians 6:2-3).

Ephesians 6:2-3 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

Biblical honor includes both action and attitude. Your kids are honoring you well when their hearts are toward you and their actions

- b. Obey parents (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6; Mark 13:12; 2 Timothy 3:1-2; Colossians 3:20-21; Ephesians 6:1-3).

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

We already addressed this above, but it should also be noted that:

- i. Children are to obey as a result of a filling of the Spirit.
- ii. Children are to obey because this is right.
- iii. Children are to obey “as to the Lord”.