

Biblical Responsibilities of the Husband

Many men like contact sports. When I was in BIOLA University, the wrestling coach asked if I would join the wrestling team as I had done very well in his physical education class. I loved wrestling with different opponents, and I was able to beat all of my opponents. So he asked me if I would join the wrestling team. I could not join the team because my schedule did not allow for college, work, and wrestling. So I had to pass on joining the team.

I love football and basketball too! My two favorite teams are UCLA and the University of Arizona. When Arizona and UCLA play one another, I cheer for UCLA, one of my alma maters.

Other men like being a soldier, a policeman, or a firefighter. Some enjoy being a paramedic or a member of a rescue squad. Some men love hunting, fishing, and guns. Men are often like warriors. God made men like that.

I was rather surprised when I read this in Exodus 15:3. Did you know that the passage says the Lord is a warrior?

**The LORD is a warrior;
The LORD is His name.
Exodus 15:3 (NASB)**

Did you know God is a warrior? The Lord is His name. In sharp contrast, when you think about today's culture, some want men to be more effeminate. Some women complain that men are not more like women, affectionate, and expressive. Some men are naturally that way; that is okay. Yes, some men are too violent. But in general, there are those today who would like men to become weak, soft and not like warriors—more and more like women. God made men one way and women another way. Men are to be providers, protectors, guardians, and defenders. Elements in today's culture would move men away from those roles.

In Genesis 2:15-16, God told Adam that he was to be a tiller of the ground or a farmer. God designed men to fight the elements to provide food and to fight other men



Husband In Love With His Wife

if necessary.

When Adam sinned, unfortunate things happened. The man who was to be a warrior outside of the home became a warrior on the inside too! The curse brought conflict to marriage, as we discovered in previous studies. When both a male and female stand at the marriage altar, two warriors are standing there. They may not understand that truth. A wife may fight with words and emotions when she tries to control her husband. He might fight with his fists.

We have seen in our recent studies that the battle in the home is a battle over control, and the wife tends to do that through words coupled with a display of emotions. The man also controls through words, but he will also use emotions and at times physical strength. His strength is something God gave him. It is an advantage he has over his wife. If he controls with physical strength, he is abusive. His strength helps him win, and most women have no ability to win in that kind of an arena. The curse made husbands and wives warriors.

We have discovered in Ephesians 5:21-33 that God has told us how to undo the effects of the fall, that is, the curse. In the last study, we found that the wife should submit to her husband.

Ten Responsibilities of a Husband. In this study, we are going to explore the role of husbands in marriage. I want to look at ten responsibilities that a husband has toward his wife.

Walking in God's Ways. The first responsibility is in Psalm 128. Now you would not normally think that Psalm 128 would be a chapter dealing with husbands and their responsibilities, but I think you will find it rather interesting. Psalm 128:1 is the setup, and verses 2-6 then describe the benefit of following through and doing what this verse asks us to do.

Really, verse 1 is written to everyone, because it says,

How blessed is everyone ... Psalm 128:1 (NASB)

So when it says "everyone," the implication is that it is for everyone. That would be for men and women, husbands and wives. But we are told,

**How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways. Psalm 128:1 (NASB)**

In Proverbs, we are told that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7). We are also told that the fear of the Lord is to flee sin (Proverbs 16:6). That gives us an important biblical principle that is echoed in this verse. If we look at this verse closely, the first part of it says, "How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD." Then the next line says, "Who walks in His ways." The last part of this verse explains the first part of the verse. So, to flee sin is to walk in His ways, in other words, to obey Him. That is all that verse 1 is telling us.

Then verses 2-6 give a promise to those who fear the Lord or walk in His ways. Verse 2 says,

**When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands,
You will be happy, and it will be well with you.
Psalm 128:2 (NASB)**

So, the first part of this chapter says that if you fear the Lord you will walk in His ways. Then verse 2 says, "When you eat the fruit of your hands . . ." you will eat the benefits of all your labor, of all the things that you have done. "You will be happy, and it will be well with you."

Verses 3 and 4 say,

**Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
Within your house,
Your children like olive plants
Around your table.
Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the LORD.
Psalm 128:3-4 (NASB)**

Verse 3 describes various blessings, and verse 4 gives us the principle by which we are going to be blessed. Who is blessed? The one who fears the Lord. That is the one who walks in His ways.

Verses 5-6 add,

The LORD bless you from Zion,
And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the
days of your life.
Indeed, may you see your children's children.
Peace be upon Israel!
Psalm 128:5-6 (NASB)

These are great promises. They describe God's ways. He gives you the things for which you have labored, the benefits of all your hard work. There will be blessings on your wife and on your children. These are great promises! God says it all starts by walking in His ways (living in obedience).

I have remembered Proverbs 3 throughout my adult life. It always has special meaning to me. Verse 1 says,

My son, do not forget my teaching,
But let your heart keep my commandments.
Proverbs 3:1 (NASB)

The point of the verse is that we are to keep or walk in God's ways. That is the way Psalm 128 puts it. Then notice what the benefits are:

For length of days and years of life
And peace they will add to you.
Do not let kindness and truth leave you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart.
So you will find favor and good repute
In the sight of God and man.
Proverbs 3:2-4 (NASB)

I especially love verses 3 and 4. Over the years I have actually prayed verse 4, that I might find favor and good repute with God and with men. How does that come about? Verse 3 says to be kind and truthful and to bind His commandments around your neck and around your heart.

This is a promise, husbands, as to how to have length of days and how to gain favor. That includes with your wife and your children. Truth and kindness are like a scarf. You tie them around your neck and write them on your heart.

Now look at verses 5 and 6. They are a couplet that goes together:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6 (NASB)

Are you ever confused, not sure what to do? It tells us to first trust in the Lord with all our hearts and not lean on our own understanding. I have found that this verse is very important when dealing with problems in one's life. When something seems to be all wrong and not going the right way, we want to determine the solution on our own. We might read a passage of Scripture that provides direction, but what is our natural tendency? We do it the way we naturally think is best. The tendency is to follow our first reaction. So, we do it our way which is the wrong way.

But what does this verse say? Lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." It does not mean it will be easy. That is usually what we are looking for—the easy path. But "He will make our paths straight."

Verses 7 and 8 are also a couplet. Verse 7 says,

Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. Proverbs 3:7
(NASB)

This verse is mainly about turning away from evil. And verse 8 says,

It will be healing to your body
And refreshment to your bones. Proverbs 3:8 (NASB)

Did you ever know someone who was struggling with a disease? In this particular case, it tells you that the sin issue has resulted in the need for healing. So if we will turn away from evil and do what is right, it will be healing to our body.

Then look at verses 9 and 10. Here is another couplet.

It says,

Honor the LORD from your wealth
And from the first of all your produce;
So your barns will be filled with plenty
And your vats will overflow with new wine. Proverbs
3:9-10 (NASB)

One of the things we tend to do when financial problems occur is to stop giving to the Lord first, because we are afraid that we will not have enough money to provide for the whole month. We think that surely the Lord does not want us to be hungry. So, we hold back and do not give to the Lord. The Lord tells us that if we put Him first, He will take care of us. He will provide our needs. God is in essence saying to not be selfish. We need to walk in His ways by putting Him first.

Psalms 127:3-5 is about how to be blessed in your marriage. Psalm 127:3 reads like this,

Behold, children are a gift of the LORD,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
Psalm 127:3 (NASB)

Men, if you have children, they are a gift from the Lord. Verse 4 says:

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children of one's youth.
Blessed is the man
who fills his quiver with them!
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.
Psalm 127:4-5 (NASB)

Verse 5 says, "How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." A quiver is a container for holding arrows. This reminds me of Robin Hood, who had a quiver full of arrows along with a bow. This is warrior terminology. I was

emotionally moved by the fact that here God is talking about children, and He chooses to appeal to men with an archery illustration. He appealed to the heart of a man, to the heart of a warrior. Next, God says, "He shall not be ashamed when he speaks with his enemies in the gate."

Throughout this entire discussion, God is appealing to the warrior inside of each man. All three passages we have reviewed thus far are dealing with the fruit of trusting, seeking, and obeying God which come by walking in His ways.

Providing for Your Family. The second responsibility of a husband flows from this responsibility of walking in God's ways. 1 Timothy 5:8 says,

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

The Greek word for "provide" means "to actively care for." The idea is that a believing husband cares for the needs of his family by providing food, money, clothing, and the varied needs of the household. This verse helps us to understand how a husband provides for his family. We are told God provides for the husband. The blessings occur as a man walks according to the ways of the Lord. Then the Lord blesses the husband, and the husband in turn blesses his family. So the ultimate Provider is God, Who then enables the husband to be a provider. That is, provider with a small "p."

In sharp contrast, Proverbs 6:9 describes the sluggard, a lazy man. The verse reads,

How long will you lie down, O sluggard?
When will you arise from your sleep? Proverbs 6:9 (NASB)

The message is quite clear—if you are not working most of the day, then you will not be providing for your family. In Proverbs 22:13, we read this,

**The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside!
I shall be killed in the streets!” Proverbs 22:13 (NASB)**

In other words, the sluggard is saying, “There is a lion outside, and I am not going to go out there because I will be killed!” Therefore, what is the implication? The lazy person sees the need, but says someone else can take care of it. He is not going to go out and take care of the lion. Unfortunately, there are also some wives like that. They see a need they are capable of meeting, but they will leave it for their husband. I found it interesting that Proverbs 26:13 actually repeats this verse. Any time you see a verse or a thought repeated in Scripture, that means it is very important. The truth in both verses is that one way to identify a lazy person is to determine if he leaves a task for someone else to do it that he should do himself. Proverbs 26:16 adds,

**The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.
Proverbs 26:16 (NASB)**

Now we are told that the sluggard is wise in his own eyes and ignores the wise man. You can tell him that he is lazy. You can tell him that he needs to go out and deal with the lion. But this verse reveals he will usually have a reason for why he cannot or should not do that. He is wise in his own eyes, and no one can convince him otherwise.

So believing husbands are to not be lazy providers. They are to walk in God’s ways, and God will help them provide for their families. Over the years I have taken that to heart, and I have seen the Lord do some very amazing things.

On one particular occasion, God changed my vocation. He changed the work I was doing to provide for my family. It was rather amazing. I will summarize what happened. Most of us, when we want a new job, we contact an employment agency, post our resume, etc. On this particular occasion, I had a unique situation. I asked God to have the job come to me if He wanted me to change my vocation. That is exactly what happened—the job came after me. I was a school teacher and was asked if I wanted a job at Hughes Aircraft Company. I did not seek it and I did not ask about it. How

often does that happen to you? So after being offered a job, I applied for the position and what happened was rather amazing. I gave the employer every reason to not hire me, and the interviewer told me to he wanted to hire me! The Lord improved my financial standing with a better salary. It was a significant change in vocation. I had interviewed for it, not because I wanted it; but simply because I told God that if He wanted me to change my vocation, have a job pursue me. In the middle of the interview, when the interviewer asked why I was seeking a job with his company, I told him that I believed God wanted to do the interview. I thought for sure then that he would not hire me. But God moved him to hire me and I accepted.

Love Your Wife. The third responsibility of a husband is found in Ephesians 5. It begins with verse 21.

**And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.
Ephesians 5:21 (NASB)**

We explained last time that the word “subject” is *hypotasso* in the Greek. It means to place under. That is, the wife is to submit herself under the husband. If we look closely, we read that the verse says, “be subject to one another.” We tend to read the verse and think it is just talking about the wife. No! The wife comes in the next verse. But this verse says “to one another.” That means husbands need to submit also. Husbands are to also place themselves under their wives. The question is “How?” Verse 25 gives us the answer,

Husbands love your wives ... Ephesians 5:25 (NASB)

That is how husbands submit to their wives. They submit by loving their wives. Many husbands do not understand that God has made wives to respond to their husband as their husband loves them. 1 John 4:19 says we are to love Him [Christ] because He first loved us. Why do we love God? Because God loved us first. We respond with love to God because God first loved us. God also made wives to respond to the love of their husbands. God made wives to respond to husbands as leaders, as the provider (if you do not mind, as the hunter), as the spiritual leader. She will

respond in the bedroom and in spiritual matters. God made wives to respond in a variety of ways, depending upon the circumstances.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee, a Bible teacher, minister and broadcaster, has made a comment that I have remembered over the years. He simply said, “When problems exist in the home, the husband needs to first look at himself.” Ninety percent of the time, it is the husband’s responsibility for why there are problems in the home. Why? Because the wife is made to respond to her husband, because God made her to be suitable to him. So, in Ephesians 5:25, we read:

Husbands, love your wives, ... Ephesians 5:25 (NASB)

Why?

... just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, Ephesians 5:25 (NASB)

The word for “love” in this particular case is *agapao*, and it is the highest form of love that occurs in the Greek language. There are other terms that are used for love. There is *storge*, which is familial (parent-brother-sister) love. There is *phileo*, which is friendship love. There is *eros*, which is sexual love. But the word that is used here in, “husbands love your wives” is *agapao*. It is the verb form of *agape*. It is the highest form of love that is possible. It is the word that is typically used for God. So, husbands are to love their wives as God loves us. That is how a man submits to his wife.

Next, we are given Christ as an illustration. Christ loved the Church by dying for the Church. He died to provide forgiveness for our sins. That is how a husband should love his wife, to be willing to die for her.

Our nation honors our warriors because they give up years of their lives to serve the nation and to defend our lives. We honor and we praise Jesus Christ in a very similar way. He died for us. A husband should be just like Jesus Christ, willing to die for his wife. That is something that warriors do. We might be pushing the illustration a little, but you understand the point.

Provide Spiritual Leadership. Verses 26 to 29

say,

So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, Ephesians 5:26-29 (NASB)

Do you realize what these verses teach? They describe the fourth responsibility of husbands. Look at it closely. It says,

so that He . . .

This is talking about Christ.

. . . might sanctify her . . .

The “her” is the Church.

. . . having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; that she would be holy and blameless. Ephesians 5:26-27 (NASB)

What does Jesus Christ want to do with every one of us? He wants to make us holy. That is the role of a husband toward his wife. He should desire to make her holy. What am I trying to say? The role of a husband is to provide spiritual leadership for his wife. The highest outworking of his love is that he is concerned for her spiritual maturity. That is the highest form of love. Why? Because that is the thing Jesus Christ desires more than anything else for all of us.

The number one reason Jesus came to die on the cross was *not* to provide food on our table. It was *not* to heal us of our sicknesses. The number one reason Jesus Christ came

to this world, lived among us, and died on a cross was to provide us with forgiveness for our sins, to make us holy like Jesus Christ, and take us to heaven.

Now what is the highest form of love a man can show to his wife? It is that he is concerned about her spiritual growth. A husband who does not strive to do that has failed in his responsibilities and priorities toward his wife's spiritual development.

Look with me at Genesis 18:18 where God is talking about Abraham. It says,

The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." Genesis 18:17-19 (NASB)

Abraham was to teach his children and his household. In addition, he was to be an example of righteousness and justice. Like Abraham, husbands are to teach their children as well as their wife. Ephesians 6:4 says,

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

Now we are told that fathers are to teach their children and bring them up in the instruction of the Lord. That is a high responsibility for a husband that is often relegated to the wife. The teaching of God and the Bible is a responsibility of the husband first, and the wife second. Scripture actually says it is the husband's primary responsibility, and the wife is a teammate helping him to do that.

Proverbs 1: 8 states,

*Hear, my son, your father's instruction
And do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

Proverbs 1:8 (NASB)

So the husband's primary responsibility is love which includes being concerned for his wife's spiritual development.

Be Faithful to Your Wife. The fifth responsibility of a husband is to be faithful to his wife. Proverbs 5:1-21 explains that a husband is to be sexually satisfied with his wife, with the wife of his youth. He is not to be looking at other women. I like to put it this way—he is not to be a sexual traitor to his wife (see Malachi 2:14-15).

Be Understanding to Your Wife. The sixth responsibility is found in 1 Peter 3:7. In this chapter, we find a long discussion about the wife's responsibilities from verses 1-6, and then finally the husband's responsibility is described in verse 7, where we are told,

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way . . . 1 Peter 3:7 (NASB)

The explanation is given to us in 1 Peter 2:13. There the apostle Peter talks about submitting for the Lord's sake, to every human institution, whether it is to the king or someone in authority, etc.. Then he talks about a servant being submissive to his master. When we arrive at verse 1 in chapter 3, we read,

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands . . . 1 Peter 3:1 (NASB)

The entire passage is about submission! Finally, we come to verse 7 and read,

Likewise, husbands . . . 1 Peter 3:7 (NASB)

Notice the pattern of "likewise" in verse 1 and 7. What is a husband supposed to do? He is to submit to his wife. Verse 1 says the wife is to submit to her husband, and verse 7 says he is to submit to her. But in what way does a husband submit? Here is the entire verse,

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. 1 Peter 3:7 (NASB)

Therefore, the sixth responsibility that a husband has to his wife is to be understanding. It says, “live with your wives in an understanding way.” The point is that husbands are to use objectivity when things do not seem to go quite right. If your wife seems to be moody, or gets angry, then husbands need to be objective and not emotional. Stop and ask yourself, “What is going on? What triggered this?”

In the early part of our marriage, my wife could not understand why sometimes when I came home from work, I might walk through the door already upset. At first she took it personally. After a while, she concluded that something bad had happened at work and I was still struggling with it. She used logic to determine what was happening to me.

Men have the same issue. We come home and our wives might be upset. It is obvious that something is wrong. So, a husband needs to stop and ask their wife, “What is going on? Why are you upset?” Oftentimes a man tries to provide solutions before listening to the story. If you start providing the solution before listening to the entire story, it is like you just threw a match onto some kerosene because now she may become upset with you because you asked a question but did not take time to listen. Peter tells us to live with our wives in an understanding way.

I found out, after being married for some years, that my wife just wanted me to hug her and listen. Usually, just listening was the solution. That was hard to understand - how just listening solved the problem. That is part of understanding your wife. So husbands, the sixth responsibility is to live with your wives in an understanding way.

Show Your Wife Honor. Another part of verse 7 gives husbands a seventh responsibility toward their wives. The last part of the verse says

... 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. 1 Peter 3:7b (NASB)

Husbands are told to treat their wives as heirs of the grace of life. Husbands are to treat their wives as equals because they are believers too!

Over the years I have asked my wife for her input on important issues. I seek consensus between the two of us. Rarely can I ever remember a time when I have made a decision independent of her. But some husbands make a decision, and they ignore their wives, or they “bulldoze” their wives into agreement. In fact, I know a man who declared that he knew God’s will for his life, and then informed his wife how that would impact her. It is not very loving to surprise a wife with a major decision and state that the decision is final. I would like to make the point that major decisions should be worked out together. Yet, ultimately the Lord will always hold a husband responsible for the final decision. So, a husband should seek agreement if he can.

Over the years, the Lord has used my wife in the decision making process.. He has given her insight.

Seek the Salvation of Your Wife. The eighth responsibility of a husband is that he needs to pursue the salvation of an unbelieving wife if his wife has not accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. We had a man in our congregation who was hoping for a long time that his wife would believe in Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 talks about a husband sanctifying an unbelieving wife. The basic idea is that by living with her she might eventually respond in faith to Jesus Christ. Now that does not always happen, and the verse does not promise that it will happen, but it says so that it might happen. She might be sanctified in the sense of living a more holy life and learn about Jesus Christ and the faith. Similarly, an unbelieving husband might be sanctified by a believing wife.

Be a Wonderful Manager. The ninth responsibility of a husband towards his wife is that he is to be a wonderful manager. (I like the word “wonderful.” I inserted that!) Notice how 1 Timothy 3:4-5 reads. The

passage is actually a qualification of an elder.

He must be one who manages his own household well . . . 1 Timothy 3:4 (NASB)

I changed “well” to “wonderful.”

. . . with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? 1 Timothy 3:4-5 (NASB)

The word “manage” in the Greek is *proistēmi*. It means “to care of,” “to stand in front of.” The basic idea is that he has a shepherd’s heart. He is not a micromanager, managing every little detail of her life.

Our last study was about the wife’s responsibilities. We also read Proverbs 31:10-31. There we discovered many different things that an excellent wife should do. It is not possible for a husband to keep track of everything that the excellent wife in that passage would be doing all day long. Husbands, if you do keep such a close watch on your wives, I would like to encourage you to stop. It is not what God intended or implied. That is not God’s view of your role, to be a micromanager. Besides, you would be treating her as though she is a slave.

Instead, you ought to be seeking to work with your wife as a teammate, not as her controller. If you read John 13:5-20, you would find that Jesus was an example of a servant. He washed the disciples’ feet. He was the example of how to be a servant.

Husbands, if you put it all together, the big picture is that you are the servant to your wife. You provide food, a place to live, care for her spiritual life, you try to be understanding, and treat her as an equal. Yes, you have the leadership role; but probably the best way to think about your role is that you are the servant-shepherd for your wife.

Grow Spiritually. The last and tenth responsibility is a very personal one. Ephesians 6:11 says,

Put on the full armor of God . . . Ephesians 6:11

(NASB)

The passage describes the armor of God. Husbands and wives, especially husbands, are to do the following. Verse 14 says,

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 6:14-17 (NASB)

Once again God uses warrior terminology. Men are to be honest, righteous, believers, sharing the gospel, and reading the Word. If you look at verse 18, he is to be in prayer. So, men, what is our priority responsibility? It is to develop your personal relationship with the Lord. You are to put on the “Armor of God” warrior uniform so that we can be the leader, the provider, the helper, the defender, and spiritual leader. Each one of us is to be the warrior that God wants us to be to care for our wife, children, and home, but always putting God first.

These are the responsibilities of a husband. Men, we need to take them to heart.

Let us pray.