

Understanding headship

For a Christian man, the matter of headship towards his wife and family is an important part of his life. However, this vital subject is often misunderstood by both men and women. A man does not possess headship simply because 'he is a man', 'he is a Christian', and 'he is married'. A married man does not have an innate authority to rule and direct his wife and family. Nor does he possess any kind of innate intuitive perception to define all manner of things for his household. When a man tries to impose this kind of innate authority or intuition upon his wife, in the name of headship, she may feel victimised, robbed of her initiatives and even her sense of identity.

We can say from the outset that headship is not masculine intuition by which a man leads, guides, rules and protects his household. It is not a man controlling all things. It is not a man making his wife an extension of himself so that she serves his agenda. It is not a negotiated relationship with his wife where both have a say and then he sets a direction. Nor is it a publicly acceptable way of relating together that operates differently at home. Some wives will give public honour to their husband as head, and then proceed to manipulate him towards their own agenda. We are reminded of the humorous expression that 'the man is the head of the house, but the wife is the neck and turns him any way she wants'. Unfortunately, this may not be far from the reality of some marriages.

We may have many different ideas about the meaning of headship, but we need to return to the Scriptures on this most important subject. The Bible clearly defines headship and explains how it is given by Christ to each man for his particular wife and household.

References:

1Pe 3:7
Gen 2:24
Eph 5:33

1Th 4:4
Col 3:19
Mar 10:6-8

Further Study

Mal 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 28

Christ is the Head of the church

A man should not confine his understanding of headship to provision for, and protection of, his wife and family. Headship is not a man doing everything he can to provide whatever his wife and children want, and then finding some kind of appreciation and personal value from his endeavours. He may even call this 'laying his life down' for his wife and family. A man may use all the right terminology, but this does not make his natural mode the same as the expression of headship.

The most important point concerning headship is that it is 'formed' and then it is 'given'. It is a unique capacity and mode of relationship that is ordained by God and established by God. It is the way in which life and grace are abundantly supplied to every household. A man who presumes to possess headship outside of the mode which God has ordained and established will be deceiving himself. The natural mode by which a man relates to his wife and family will not be headship simply because he is a sincere and devoted believer. We need to consider how it is that headship is established by the power of God and given by Christ to each man for his particular wife and household.

Our consideration of the relationship between a husband and wife must be from the perspective of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His church. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul declared, no less than three times, that the relationship between Christ and His church is the model for every man's relationship with his wife. He said that a man is the head of his wife 'as Christ also is the Head of the church'. This is the critical point as we consider the meaning of headship. Paul also declared that a man's love, care and attitude towards his wife must be the same as Christ's love and care towards the church.

References:

Eph 5:23-29, 33
Act 20:28
Gen 3:16
1Pe 3:5-6

Further Study

1Co 11

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 29

Christ is the Head of every man

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul identified the order of headship. This is the relational order whereby the life and power of God comes to every household and to the church. Paul declared, 'I want you to understand that Christ is the Head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the Head of Christ'. Paul began this statement by clearly identifying the priority for every man. The Head of every man is Christ! This is a man's first commitment toward his marriage. A man must be submitted to the headship of Jesus Christ.

Let us make an interesting observation. Often when a Christian woman contemplates the subject of headship, she immediately considers her relationship with her husband. This is right and proper and in accordance with Paul's words. However, when a man contemplates the subject of headship, often he immediately considers his relationship with his wife. However, in the first case, a man's headship has nothing to do with his wife! The beginning point for every man in the pursuit of headship is to look toward Christ. In the same way a woman is subject to her husband's headship, *a man is subject to Christ's headship*.

The only measure a man has regarding his headship is Jesus Christ. He is not submitted to Christ if he confesses Christ as Lord but does not employ this in practice. If a man has a relationship with the Lord that he has defined on his own terms, his 'submission' exists only in his imagination. Being overly defensive or unnecessarily guarded concerning his wife or household, can be indicators that a man is referencing his headship in his own agenda. It is important to note that a man cannot expect any kind of response to his headship initiatives that he is not willing to give to Christ who is his Head.

References:

1Co 11:3
Eph 4:15
Col 2:19

Eph 1:22-23
Col 1:18
Rom 1:1

Further Study

Gal 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 30

Christ is among the brethren

How does a man show that his preoccupation for headship is indeed with Christ? He gives himself to a relationship with Christ that is found among his brethren. Jesus said, 'Where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst'. He was not referring to any two or three believers. A man submits himself among brethren who are, likewise, submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ and possess spiritual wisdom in the fear of the Lord. The prophet Malachi declared that when those who fear the Lord speak to one another, the Lord gives attention to their conversation. More than this, we could say that He joins the conversation. The mind of Christ is made known in this kind of fellowship. A man is submitted to Christ as Head when he is hearing, honouring and being obedient to the word confirmed by the mouth of two or three.

Every man who desires to know the mind of Christ needs to be 'known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land'. His commitment to be 'known' is the critical issue. There is quite a unique kind of relationship among men who are caring for the church and their families. The capacity for a man to be open about his life while listening for the voice of Christ among his brethren, dignifies each man in his own responsibility towards his family. This kind of relationship can be difficult for some men. It is the capacity to be open and share his life without becoming threatened by a sense of inadequacy. If a man can freely listen for the voice of Christ, the 'elders of the land' will provide insight into his headship as a man submitted to the headship of Christ.

References:

Pro 31:23 Mal 3:16
Mat 18:20 Pro 9:10
Mal 3:16 1Th 5:11

Further Study

Rth 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 1

Fellowship among brethren

It is important that a man is aware of his own preferences, inclinations, and default mechanisms when he seeks wise counsel. The book of Proverbs reminds us, 'Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand'. A man must know how to take heed to the voice of Christ without only listening for the input that affirms his own agenda. Every man must listen for Christ and hear His word among the brethren. But finally, he alone is responsible for his household. No one can make his decisions for him. That would be a treachery against the covenant of another man's house. A man should not 'get permission' amongst the brethren. He is finding fellowship, not obligation. Without being overly definitive, the following profiles may apply to a man and his relationship with the brethren.

The feminised man will err on the side of agitation and resistance when it comes to bringing his life and household into the fellowship of two or three. His preoccupation with the micro-details of his plans will lead to impatience when the way ahead is discussed conceptually. *The superior man* will seek out counsel, but err on the side of resentment towards the dynamic of fellowship. He is more likely to listen when the conversation is 'going his way' because he is relatively firm on the way he intends to proceed anyway. *The insecure man* will err on the side of over-dependence on the fellowship of two or three to strengthen his resolve and make his decisions. *The inferior man* will err on the side of needing the ongoing fellowship of two or three to confirm his personal validity. This can become a distraction and cause him to overlook or misread the presenting issues in his household. The inferior man also struggles to 'hear from the least'.

References:

Pro 19:21 1Co 6:4
 Ecc 7:29 Pro 21:30
 Gal 2:2 Act 20:28

Further Study

Act 6

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 2

A man is the head of his wife

Some men presume to think that headship is a masculine capacity towards women in general. This is not the case and where a man may presume this, he can easily be led to immorality. The point here is that there is no collective headship of men towards women. Paul said that ‘the man is the head of a woman’; he did not say, ‘All women’. Headship is from one man towards his own wife only. Paul also clarifies this matter in his letter to the Ephesians where he says, ‘For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is Head of the church’. It is a husband and wife relationship only. Paul continues to unfold this matter of the headship of a man towards his wife and finalises this discussion by saying, ‘Each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself’. Obviously, he is talking about a man and his own wife, and not anyone else. To all women other than his wife, a Christian man is to honour older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters in all purity, just as Paul points out to Timothy.

Every Christian marriage will be unique. However, there is only one order of headship, so the mode of *headship should be identical in every marriage*. The meaning of being head and helper is the same one marriage to another, but the expression of each marriage will be unique. Accordingly, one man’s headship toward his family will not look the same as another’s. The specific identities within a household, together with their circumstances, require a unique provision of grace. For example, the expression of a man’s headship in a serving household will be different from another man in a praying household. However, the mode of each man’s headship will be the same as Christ’s headship toward the church, and each man will be submitted to Christ as his Head.

References:

1Co 11:3
Eph 5:23
1Pe 3:7

Eph 5:28, 33
1Ti 5:2
1Pe 4:10

Further Study

1Pe 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 5

Not contrary to Christ

There are many things that a man may do in the name of headship, but genuine headship will never be contrary to Christ. We can be confident that any direction by a man that is contrary to the headship of Christ is not headship at all. Rather, it will be precipitated by some other motivation in the man. Christ will not bring any direction to a man for his wife or household that is contrary to His own headship in the church. An obvious example would be if a man brought a 'headship direction' to his wife that she should stop going to church.

A far more subtle example would be if a man opposes the Lord's messengers in the name of caring for his wife and family. In this case, his house will become what we could call 'a family fortress'. If a man presumes this kind of authority, he is not living in submission to Christ as his Head. The man's head is covered, and he has no access to Christ. His head will be 'covered' by some other loyalty, whether it is his own personal agenda, his wife's agenda, or his children's agenda. Let's say there has been a word of Christ commending a child to be trained as a musician in the house of the Lord. What happens when that child becomes a teenager and no longer wishes to play their instrument? There may be arguments, stand-offs, and parents left feeling exasperated. It would not be headship if the father was to say, 'For the peace of my house and so we can continue attending church without contention, my child will cease playing that instrument'. Such a directive would be contrary to the word of grace from Christ concerning the child. Grace is available for situations such as these, so it is important we remain steadfast and do not lose heart.

References:

1Co 11:4, 7

Rom 16:17

2Ti 4:3

Col 2:18-19

Further Study

3Jn 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 6

The surpassing greatness of His power

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul explained how Jesus Christ became the Head of the church. Understanding this process will be important for us, so that we understand how a man *becomes* the head of his wife. Paul wrote, 'I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know ... what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe ... which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead ... and gave Him as Head over all things to the church'. There are three elements in this passage which identify how Christ was established as the Head of the church and, therefore, how a man is established as the head of his wife. Every man needs to be illuminated by the word concerning these elements. Then, he can 'believe' to receive genuine headship from Christ as he joins the fellowship of His offering and circumcision.

The first element is the surpassing greatness of His power which was toward Christ and is now toward every man who 'believes' for headship. The power of God is the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of God. It is the full capacity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit which is given to us through the Holy Spirit. The *second element* is that Jesus Christ was raised from the death of sin by the power of God. Consequently, we will be raised from the death of sin in Him. It is the power of God which enables a man to join the offering and circumcision of Christ so that life is multiplied and sin is dealt with. The *third element* is that Jesus Christ was given to be the Head of the church by the Father. In the same way, each man must be given by Christ to be the head of his wife.

References:

Eph 1:18-23 Rom 1:4, 16
Eph 3:20 Act 2:24
Eph 4:15-16

Further Study

Col 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 7

Raised from the death of sin

When a man personally meets Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, he is joined to the process that has been established in His body. This process is effective for the complete removal of sin. We are reminded that the Father made Christ 'who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'. Jesus Christ became the Author of our salvation because He submitted Himself to the Father's will. He received the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of God to walk in complete obedience to the Father's will. This obedience was His pure and undefiled offering to the Father, from the garden of Gethsemane all the way to the cry, 'It is finished'. As He died the death of *sin*, He was dying *to sin* as He willingly laid down His life. With every drop of His precious blood, He was coming back from the death of sin. He was being made alive to God.

This is the process that has been established for us to overcome sin. The apostle Peter declared that He bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might *die to sin* and live to righteousness, for by His wounds we are healed. A man begins this process of healing by seeking the Lord with respect to any dysfunction in his own life, in his marriage, and in his home. Every fallen issue in his own heart must be conquered by participation in Christ's suffering and overcoming. These areas of sin will be exerting pressure on the culture of his home. Dysfunction is the result of sin. Sin, in this sense, is equal to the 'gap' present in the covenant of marriage. This occurs when a man and his wife are not of one heart.

References:

2Co 5:21 1Pe 2:24
Heb 10:9-10 Joh 19:30
1Pe 4:1-2 Isa 53:12

Further Study

Rom 6

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 8

Dying to specific issues

When a man is joined to the offering and circumcision of Christ, he finds faith to overcome every specific area of ungodly culture in his life, marriage, and household. It is important to recognise that every issue will not be resolved in one experience. A man will continue to join himself to the circumcision of Christ 'issue by issue' and 'time after time', as he sanctifies himself for the sake of his wife and family. In this way, he will continue to join the sufferings of Christ. The apostle Peter wrote, 'Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right'.

When a man does this, he learns the secret of 'dying' to the issues that are exerting pressure on his home. He will know a quietness of spirit and will not be drawn into fighting for or against the cultural discrepancies. Like Christ, he will make no response at all. The fruit of this process is that he can sanctify his wife and children. He can call his wife and children away from the culture of ungodliness and onto the pathway of sanctification.

We will briefly consider one example. A man's wife may have been raised in a culture where people are constantly put down and robbed of their sense of confidence and identity. The man could respond in a number of ways. He could seek acceptance by joining this negative culture. He could react against this negative culture in judgement against it. Or he could die to that culture in himself and have no interaction with it at all. The man would take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ in this matter. He would then seek to call his wife away from that culture, to a culture of honour and appreciation.

References:

1Pe 4:19
2Co 10:5
Col 1:24

Isa 53:7
Col 2:11
1Co 7:14

Further Study

1Th 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 9

Because of the angels

There will be a particular set of relational dynamics that are unique to each marriage. And there may be relational dynamics from family history that are not of Christ, and do not belong in the household of faith. When a couple marries, they enter a new order of authority and grace as established by the Lord. The man is the head of the woman. She is his helper comparable to him. As such, she submits herself to her husband and respects his God-given mandate towards her.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'The woman ought to have a *symbol of authority* on her head, because of the angels'. The words '*symbol of*' have been added and do not appear in the original text. The verse literally reads, 'The woman ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels'. This authority is her husband, and as she respects, honours and obeys him, she remains joined to him in a relationship that has been raised far above all principalities and powers.

If she were to go outside of this covering authority towards her, her own head would be uncovered, and unprotected from the activities of the angelic or demonic realm. She would be subject to influences of good ideas that lead to dead works, anxieties, fear and terror. She could easily become more and more empowered to attain a good outcome, even to the point of offering the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to her husband and to the church. However, there is a place of protection and covering for a woman who respects the authority of her husband towards her. Even a woman who does not have a believing husband, still has a place of protection and safety when she lives as a daughter of Sarah in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

References:

1Co 11:10
Eph 5:33
1Co 14:35

1Pe 3:1-6
Act 21:8-9

Further Study

Gen 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 12

The Father gave Christ to be the Head

The apostle Paul declared that the Father 'gave Christ' to be the Head of the church. The principle we observe is that headship is 'formed' and then it is 'given'. Christ did not presume to take up authority towards the church. In the same way, every man must be 'given' as head to his wife by Christ. When a man is given in headship to his wife, he possesses both an authority and a capacity for headship. He has the capacity to join his household to the fellowship of the New Covenant. He does not presume that this authority originates within himself. He has received it as a gift. It belongs to Christ and he exercises it on behalf of Christ. And he only exercises it on behalf of Christ by offering and laying down his life for his wife.

In all these matters, we observe the principles of offering and the interplay of giving. When the Father gave up His Son in offering, it was not a dominating or controlling initiative of the Father. Christ also gave Himself up because of His love for the Father and for the church. Paul instructed all husbands to 'love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her'. We conclude that for a man to find headship towards his wife, it will be necessary for him to be given up in offering for her sake. Jesus Christ gives a man to be the head of his wife, but a man must also give himself in headship. In this way, there is an interaction of giving. Just as Christ gives a man as head to his wife, that man gives himself to the accountability of headship. His headship is a gift to his wife. There may be times when he asserts his authority, but even when this is the case, he is giving himself by offering.

References:

Eph 1:22 Eph 5:25
Luk 22:42 Rom 8:32
Joh 15:13 1Jn 3:16

Further Study

Num 30

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 13

A man alone

In this present season, we have been considering that the new heart is not received until we join Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. Likewise, a man does not have the capacity to love his wife as Christ loved the church until he personally meets Christ in the garden. It is only as he meets Christ in this way that the surpassing greatness of the power of God, which is the power of love, is operative toward him.

As a man approaches marriage, he may be involved in many discussions about the meaning of headship. Likewise, a married man will enjoy fellowship with his brethren on these matters. However, the motivation and capacity for headship is not found until the Holy Spirit leads every man to the garden of Gethsemane to meet Jesus Christ alone. Practically, this will involve a man submitting himself in prayer to the lordship of Jesus Christ and the will of the Father. A man must pray, 'Not my will, but Yours be done', in relation to his marriage. Christ submitted Himself to the Father and found the capacity for obedience. In this way, every man must submit himself to Christ and join His obedience by the power of God. This is a profoundly personal experience.

We are reminded that Jesus separated Himself from His disciples as He sanctified Himself to the will of God. He testified, 'For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth'. When Christ was separated to the work the Father gave Him to do in the garden of Gethsemane, He was not with His disciples. He alone faced the process of overcoming and being raised in headship as an obedient Son. This is also the case for a man regarding his wife.

References:

Joh 17:19 Col 3:19
Luk 22:42 2Co 3:5-6
2Co 4:7, 11-12

Further Study

Eph 5

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 14

Separated for the sake of his wife

A man is called to meet Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane alone. This means that he will separate himself from all his wife's agendas and give himself to the Lord. It is at this point that he will either turn his heart towards his wife, or separate himself to the Lord. If he does turn his heart towards his wife, all hope of sanctification will be lost. Her desire will be that he provides for her a self-defined lifestyle. She may use 'beauty and charm' and 'snares and nets' to show how 'good' her desired lifestyle will be for them both.

It is important to recognise that a woman with spiritual insight will be compelling her husband to separate himself and meet the Lord alone. She will be like the woman who says to her betrothed, 'Turn, my beloved, and be like the gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of Bether'. The mountains of Bether are the mountains of 'separation' or 'sanctification'. When a man sanctifies himself to the Lord, his head is uncovered, and he can see clearly the things that are from Christ. From this place of sanctification, he can provide a way for her to also be sanctified to the Lord. This opens the way for the life and grace of God to come into their household.

Jesus said to His disciples, 'Where I go, you cannot follow Me now, but you will follow later'. The disciples could not sanctify themselves to find the grace of life. Likewise, a wife cannot negotiate with her husband how he can be separated to the Lord and establish a way of life for her. When a man gives himself to this way of sanctification to the Lord, she cannot go with him. However, she can and must go with him later, once he has established this way for her.

References:

Son 2:17 Gen 3:16
Ecc 7:26 Joh 13:36
Pro 31:30 2Co 6:17

Further Study

Num 6

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 15

So that He might sanctify her

Paul proclaimed that Jesus ‘gave Himself up’ for the church ‘so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word’. The symbolism of ‘washing with water’ immediately draws our attention to the way that Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. We read in the Gospel of John that Jesus ‘poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded’.

In a marriage, a man must take on this same role towards his wife. He is not the saviour of his wife, but he finds capacity to join Christ in sanctifying his wife with the ‘washing of water by the word’. The husband’s manner will be as one who humbles himself to this necessary task. He will take the current word, and in fellowship with her apply this word to their lives together and to her life. As she allows him to do this, she also is sanctified. The effective application of the water of the word within a marriage will often be normal, relaxed and humble conversation. The word is applied to the family’s lifestyle, relationships at home and in each one’s activities in the world.

All of this is accomplished in the context of love and the demonstration of the man’s own submission to Christ. Of course, a man who is not submitted to his own sanctification will have no capacity to sanctify his wife. We recall Jesus’ words, ‘How can you say to your brother, “Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye” when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.’

References:

Eph 5:26 Joh 13:5
Luk 6:42 Heb 10:22
Tit 3:5-7 1Co 6:11

Further Study

2Ti 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 16

That they may be one

It is amazing to consider that Jesus' purpose in sanctifying Himself was so He and the church could be made one, just as He and the Father are One. In the same way, a man must seek headship and sanctify himself to the Lord, so that he and his wife can be made one. There is nothing more remarkable than a marriage where two have become one and yet, at the same time, each is preserved in their own identity. Indeed, this is the working of the fellowship and offering of the Godhead. The Godhead is One, but the unique identity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is always maintained. In our considerations here, we are touching the heights of the mystery of God and the true meaning of love and fellowship.

Jesus continued, 'The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one'. As a man takes up this work of sanctifying his wife by humbly applying the word that is coming to them in the church, he finds that he and his wife are becoming one. The fellowship of husband and wife that is established in this way is one of offering. A man's love, care and affection for his wife and his provision of headship are all by gift and are his offering for her. Likewise, it's his wife's initiative in giving herself to be a helper comparable to him. Her willingness to hear, honour and know him as her lord is her gift of submission. Here we have a fellowship of offering that is enabled by the Spirit of God. It is constantly being built up, purified, enabled and made alive. As a married couple, or a couple who are approaching marriage, give attention to these matters, they will find that they are genuinely being made 'one spirit' together.

References:

Joh 10:16 Act 2:46
Php 1:27 Col 3:12-14
1Pe 3:6, 15

Further Study

Joh 17

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 19

Fleeing to the mountains of sanctification

The process of a husband sanctifying himself for the sake of his wife is poetically portrayed in the book of 'Song of Solomon'. The context of this book is the impending marriage of Solomon and his betrothed Shulamite. She says, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies. Until the cool of the day when the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like the gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of Bether.' At first glance, we can lose the very practical instruction these verses give because of their rich poetic language. The word 'Bether' means 'cutting' or 'separation'. It is the place where a man finds definition concerning his sanctification. For their impending marriage to be godly, Solomon must 'turn' away from his betrothed and go alone to seek the Lord in the place of sanctification.

Interestingly, we note that the woman has *asked* Solomon to go. This is a wise and courageous woman. She has put godly sanctification ahead of any romantic ideals she may have. She is insisting that her betrothed learn what he must, to be an effective head. She even instructs him to 'be like a gazelle on the mountains' which is symbolic of a man comfortable and competent, navigating the process of sanctification. Her desire is for a husband and a true head who has learnt how to find help in time of need. He can find the capacity needed to conquer any difficulties their marriage may encounter. The fruit of establishing and then maintaining a marriage with this culture, is that the 'shadows flee away'. These shadows refer to secret sin, misguided desires and aspirations, carnal agendas, ungodly cultures, household idols and religious self-righteousness. She believes that proper headship in her marriage will overcome these fallen and vain pursuits and cultivate a dynamic fellowship in the word of life.

References:

Son 2:16-17 Php 2:15-16
Son 8:14 2Pe 1:19
Eph 5:28, 33 1Jn 4:7

Further Study

1Ti 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 20

Returning from the mountains of sanctification

We read in the third chapter of the Song of Solomon, 'What is this coming up from the wilderness like columns of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all scented powders of the merchant? Behold, it is the travelling coach of Solomon; sixty mighty men around it, of the mighty men of Israel. All of them are wielders of the sword, expert in war; each man has his sword at his side, guarding against the terrors of the night.' These verses describe Solomon returning from the mountains of Bether, the mountains of sanctification.

It is clear that he has overcome and brought with him the spoils and spices of victory. He possesses authority and capacity from God to be head to his betrothed. He is known among the mighty men who wield the sword of the word. They are experts in war because they discern the word of Christ. The symbolism of their swords girded at their sides shows that they are able to accurately handle the word of truth in and out of season. The word of present truth is indeed in their mouths and in their hearts. They are ready to wage war with any ungodliness that would attack and corrupt the sanctification of their houses.

As a further example of this, we are reminded of the way Ruth asked Boaz to cover her when she humbled herself to be at his feet. For Boaz, this meant he took the initiative to go to the mountains of Bether for her sake. This place was among the elders. Boaz offered himself to do this for her sake, not knowing how it would work out. We know the difficult matters of the near kinsman were resolved and he came back with the blessing of the Lord and the elders for their marriage.

References:

Son 2:16-17
Son 8:14
Eph 5:28, 33

Php 2:15-16
2Pe 1:19

1Jn 4:7

Further Study

1Ti 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 21

A remnant of the Spirit

A man must give himself in offering to the Lord for the sake of his wife. When he does this, the Lord gives him a portion of His Spirit. This enables that particular man and woman to be one spirit together. A couple will never discover or touch this dimension of godly marriage by the initiatives of the flesh. King Solomon wrote, ‘Two are better than one ... *a cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart*’. He was describing the imperative that the Spirit of God joins and sanctifies each married couple. The Lord is the third element in the relationship. Hence, the apostle Paul wrote, ‘The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him’. A husband and wife must firstly join themselves to the Lord in sanctification. In doing so, they can find oneness of spirit in their marriage. As a husband and wife continue in this faith commitment, their marriage possesses a unity of heart and a unity of fellowship. Their marriage will continue to be blessed by the Spirit, who also works to sanctify the *dynamics of offering* in their marriage.

God gives a remnant of His Spirit to a man so that he and his wife can be ‘one spirit’, able to bring forth and raise godly children. We have spoken from time to time about children falling through ‘the gap’ between husband and wife. However, where there is a remnant of the Spirit making a husband and wife one, there is a unity of fellowship and purpose that is able to nurture and protect their children. This is a cause for great rejoicing! It is, likewise, an important reason for a husband and wife to guard and maintain their marriage in the fellowship of ‘one spirit’.

References:

Ecc 4:9, 12 1Co 6:16-17
 Mal 2:15 Mat 19:4-6
 Eph 5:28-31 1Ti 4:16
 Eph 4:29

Further Study

1Th 5

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 22

Application to sanctification

Many couples are committed to the fundamental proposition of offering. Their individual lives are wholly given to the Lord. But what if they are not finding blessing with their spouse? What if the grace and provision of God is not abounding in their house? The prophet Malachi declared, 'This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favour from your hand. Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But *not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit.*'

It is clear that a breach in the covenant of marriage renders a couple's offerings unacceptable to God. As Malachi said, the Lord 'no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favour from your hand'. A husband and wife 'deal treacherously' with each other if they are no longer 'one spirit' together. If a couple does not continue to receive the word of present truth and apply themselves to the process of cleansing, then they will not maintain their relationship in one spirit. They will end up living parallel lives. They may look happy together, be comfortable in wider fellowship settings, and appear to have a workable routine in their life together. But underneath these characteristics, they do not see 'eye to eye'. And the gap in their marriage covenant will allow uncleanness into the culture of their home. There is no escaping the fact that a godly marriage requires a continual application to sanctification.

References:

Rom 12:1
Isa 52:8
2Co 7:1

Mal 2:13-15
Heb 12:14
1Th 4:7

Further Study

1Ti 6

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 23

The grace of life

In Peter's first epistle, he described the remnant of the Spirit as the 'grace of life'. He wrote, 'You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker; and show her honour as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered'. In the same way, a couple's offerings can cease to find favour with God. Their prayers will be hindered if they neglect the ongoing work of the Spirit to join them as one. A woman is not 'weaker' before the Lord according to name, identity, works, or her grace expression. A wife is weaker because she has undergone a process of reorientation through the cross to become a comparable helper to her husband.

A man must show his wife honour as 'a fellow heir of the grace of life'. Practically, this will mean that he will continue to submit himself to the headship of Christ and maintain his own sanctification for her sake. As he continues to submit himself to Christ, the Lord will continue giving him the grace and capacity to be the head of his wife. He will be able to live with her in 'an understanding way'; meaning, that he will have genuine spiritual insight to help her stand fully in her unique sanctification. When a husband and wife are fellow heirs of the grace of life, they will foster a free and open culture for the word of God in their home. They can confidently bring their offerings, believing God will meet them and abundantly supply grace to their home. They will be able to confidently approach the throne of grace to pray, knowing that their prayers are heard. And their children can be raised securely as sons and daughters of God.

References:

1Pe 3:7
Rom 5:17
Php 3:8-9

Tit 3:7
1Ti 1:14

Further Study

Act 5

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 26

The crisis for Zipporah

In the book of Genesis, there is a short discourse which identifies a major realignment in the marriage of Moses and Zipporah. It is apparent that there was a breach in the covenant of their marriage so that one of their sons was not circumcised. The Lord had called Moses to deliver the nation of Israel from the land of Egypt so that they would become a kingdom of priests who were fully sanctified to the Lord. However, if Moses would not sanctify his own son, how could he be involved in sanctifying God's firstborn, the nation of Israel? We are reminded of the words of Paul. 'If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?'

The Lord brought Moses and Zipporah to a crisis. Why didn't God take this up with Zipporah? Moses was the head of the house, and it was his place to make sure the son was circumcised. He had not done it, and we can only presume that it was because Zipporah had resisted it. In the crisis, Zipporah realised their marriage covenant had to be secondary to the Everlasting Covenant. So she circumcised her son and declared to Moses, 'You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me'.

In doing this, she acknowledged that the blood of the Everlasting Covenant had to take priority in their marriage and had to include all of their children. She would no longer resist her husband in the matter and seek a pain-free future for her son. She resolved to stand with Moses and release her son to the discipline of the Lord which would train him in the way he should go. In so doing, he would find everlasting life.

References:

Exo 4:24-26
1Ti 3:5
Gen 17:10, 13
Exo 3:10

Further Study

Heb 12

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 27

Bringing forth godly seed

The Lord makes a man and a woman one spirit in the covenant of their marriage because He seeks godly seed. The responsibility of bringing forth 'godly seed' is more than raising children who believe in God and attend church. Godly seed refers to the seed of the divine nature. When a child is conceived, they receive eternal identity. The psalmist wrote, 'For You formed my inward parts [soul and spirit]; You wove me in my mother's womb [biological substance] ... Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.' As parents, we are given the privilege of co-creating through procreation, ones who are known and loved by God long before they were conceived. Parents are charged with nurturing both the physical and spiritual substance of their children. Our children belong firstly to God.

Although children may not have grown to an age of discipleship, they can participate as members of the body of Christ in remarkable ways. They can be led by the Spirit and function in the Spirit when we meet together for communion. They can obtain testimony concerning their own sonship. This reality can be both exciting and daunting for parents. It is imperative that a mother and father be properly connected to the headship order of Christ. It is only here that they will receive wisdom and grace to nurture the godly seed that has been given to them. To be of 'one spirit' as husband and wife is paramount, because this enables a father and mother to be of 'one mind' towards the training and admonition of their children. The covenant of marriage is the foundation of the covenant of the house.

References:

Psa 139:13, 16 Mal 2:15
2Co 6:16-18 Psa 128:3-4
Isa 11:6

Further Study

Psa 127

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 28

The marriage covenant is secret

The Scriptures emphasise that we meet together ‘house to house’. We do not meet *marriage to marriage!* We are reminded of the words of the wise man, ‘There are three things which *are too wonderful for me*, four which I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock; the way of a ship in the middle of the sea, and *the way of a man with a maid*’. Husbands and wives must be circumspect in the way they discuss the secret intimacies of their relationship. They show respect and honour for one another when they do not ‘uncover’ the other. Equally, it is not given for us to understand the privacy and uniqueness of another’s marriage covenant. We must take heed to the manner of our conversations and dignify every covenant of marriage.

Sarah exemplified a peculiar type of discretion for her marriage with Abraham. The book of Genesis accounts that Abraham said to her as they approached Egypt, ‘I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, “This is his wife”; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that *I may live on account of you*.’ Later in Genesis, we read of a similar situation involving Isaac and his wife Rebekah. These interesting accounts highlight the importance God places on the covenant of marriage. By guarding their marriage covenants, these women did not expose their husbands. On account of their discretion, their husbands lived, and their marriage covenants remained sanctified. The words of King Solomon are true, ‘Discretion will *guard* you, understanding will watch over you’.

References:

Act 2:46 Act 5:42
 Act 20:20 Pro 30:18-19
 Gen 12:11-12 Gen 26:7
 Pro 2:11 Pro 25:9

Further Study

Pro 6

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 29

Not dealing treacherously

When we meet house to house, it will be necessary for the dynamics of the covenant of our house to be expressed. For example, we may need to discipline our children while we are visiting another's home. This will provide a 'window' into the culture and covenant of our house. However, there is no need for this to cross a line and begin exposing the intricacies of our marriage. Perhaps you have had the uncomfortable experience of welcoming guests into your home, or alternatively being guests in another's home, only to have them use that opportunity to air their marital issues. Whether passive or overt, this is not dignified. This is a treachery against the covenant of marriage.

A marriage covenant should never become public property or an 'open forum'. Wives and husbands deal treacherously with one another if they uncover one another in social interactions. They deny the covenant of marriage. For example, this occurs if a husband or wife openly complains about their spouse for not fulfilling their expectations or servicing their agenda. A lack of peace in the marriage and household is evident if there is cause to complain about one's spouse. If a spouse uncovers their partner this way, they sever their connection to God's order of headship. This renders their relationship devoid of the very grace required to change the issues causing upset.

There is a right and proper context for a couple to seek pastoral care and input into their marriage. And there is a proper pathway to find resolution and receive grace for change in all areas. This will involve prayer for clarity concerning the gaps causing dysfunction in the marriage, the sincere belief that repentance is needed, the willingness to hear and obey the word, the faith to join Christ in His sufferings, and the humility to participate in Christ's offering.

References:

Mal 2:14 Ecc 9:9
1Pe 3:7 Rom 2:4
Rom 6:17 1Pe 4:19

Further Study

2Ti 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 30