

Repentance Leads To Christ-like Character

The Sin of Irresponsibility with God's Law

(part 2)

Evading Family Responsibilities

“Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God”

(1Corinthians 11:3).

In these verses we see a sequence of authority and responsibility that flows from God through our Lord Jesus to men and their wives. From our heavenly Father's perspective the *family*, supported by extended family, is the basic building block for spiritual development. It's the avenue by which biblical responsibilities are learned and where God's laws, as appropriate for each family member, are instilled and applied.

As the family unit has disintegrated in past decades, so has the sense of individual biblical responsibilities within the family. The ultimate fruit of this collapse is a lawless society.

Many Christian teachings concerning the role of a husband often focus on his authority. But what is frequently overlooked are the variety of *responsibilities* our Lord has given a husband and father as the head of his home and as one who must render account to our Lord Jesus. Beginning with the man, down through everyone in his household, two questions need to be asked and clearly answered by each person:

- **To Whom Am I Responsible?**
- **For Whom Or What Am I Responsible?**

Biblical responsibility ultimately leads

to rendering account to someone for your actions. Responsibility requires you to know *to* whom you're responsible, and *for* whom or what you're responsible. You're evaluated not by just carrying out your responsibilities, but also that you fulfilled them to the best of your ability.

- Our Lord Jesus was responsible to His Father as He fulfilled all that was required of Him (John 15:10).
- A husband/father is responsible to the Lord for all that is required of him in his family (Ephesians 5:23).
- A wife is responsible to her husband for all that is required of her as his suitable helper (Colossians 3:18).
- Children are responsible to their parents to honor them through their obedience (Colossians 3:20).

Within the family someone has to be ultimately responsible, that is, to have the authority to ensure that our Father's laws are learned and applied. God has entrusted this responsibility to a husband, supported by his wife and family. Authority is the responsibility to:

- ***include*** those people or things that contribute to peace and harmony in your home;
- ***exclude*** those people or things that rob your home of peace and harmony;
- ***commend*** those actions and attitudes that contribute to the peace and harmony of your home;
- ***correct*** those actions and attitudes that rob the peace and harmony of your home.

Are You Fulfilling the Responsibilities God Has Given You?

Husbands

Love is the foundational motive of a husband's responsibility to his wife. Two key passages describe how this love is carried out:

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the collective called-out-ones and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word” (Ephesians 5:25,26).

The Greek term for “word” here is *rhema*. Husbands are enjoined by our Lord to purify their wives by teaching them to *live out together* as life partners the revealed will of God for their marriage and family. A man is called to express his love by leading his wife in *applying God’s specific guidance* to their marriage and family. And, a husband and a wife create a natural twosome for confirming the truth of God’s Word for specific life situations (2Corinthians 13:1).

“Husbands, in the same way be considerate [experientially know her] as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1Peter 3:7).

God created man and woman in His image, yet formed each uniquely with different responsibilities toward one another in their marriage relationship. As a husband, have you ever really considered to its fullest extent what it means for you to *understand* and *honor* your wife as a weaker vessel? That’s *knowing* her.

A husband is called to protect his wife; she’s physically weaker than he is. He’s also to refrain from any actions or attitudes that would produce unnecessary apprehension or emotional discomfort in her. For instance, women in general entertain more negative thoughts about themselves than men do. Knowing this tendency, a loving husband helps his wife overcome these nagging cares and worries. And, his encouraging intervention benefits their covenant marital relationship.

“[Adam] said, ‘The woman You put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it’” (Genesis 3:12).

Although a husband is directly accountable to the Lord for fulfilling his responsibilities, our Father knows that men, starting with Adam, are prone to *give excuses* and *blame other people*. King Ahab was a prime example of a husband who failed in his responsibilities and let his wife, Jezebel, take control. (You can read this sorry account in 1Kings 21.)

To help a husband avoid giving way to this inclination and stressing his wife, our Father calls a man to *relational responsibility* so he may render account to those who are spiritually leading him:

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who are working hard among you, those who are guiding you in the Lord and confronting you in order to help you change” (1Thessalonians 5:12 CJB).

“Be persuaded by those leading you and submit to them, for they watch on behalf of your souls as ones who will render account, in order that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this would be profitless to you” (Hebrews 13:17, literal translation).

If you’re a husband who *isn’t* rendering account to other men of wisdom who are leading you spiritually, you’re not only hurting yourself but your wife and family as well. These men of wisdom have the responsibility to *confront you so that you can change*. And you’re responsible to make it a joy for them as they render account for you. If you have no man to whom you can be accountable, you’re creating huge apprehension in your wife to have to confront you when necessary.

When a wife lives in prolonged apprehension about her husband’s behavior or

has to confront him too often, she will inevitably take control.

- The Bible warns, “A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1). Do those who know you well feel that you’re easy to correct? Or, does your stubbornness often lead to tension and arguments?

[For further insight, see Teaching E-mail 64: *Are You A Fully Responsible Man?*]

Wives

A godly wife has a quiet dignity about her as she helps her husband become more like Jesus in character and fulfill God’s purposes for their marriage. Peter captures the character of this woman:

*“Wives, in the same way **submit yourselves** to your own husbands so that, if any of them disobey the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the **purity and reverence of your lives**.*

*Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your **inner self**, the unfading beauty of a **gentle and quiet spirit**, which is of **great worth in God’s sight**.*

*For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They **submitted themselves** to their own husbands, like Sarah, who **obeyed** Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you **do what is right and do not give way to fear**” (1Peter 3:1-6; see also Ephesians 5:33).*

A wife who sees herself as her husband’s God-given life partner has the responsibility to give wise counsel to him (with a loving attitude!) and confirm with him God’s will for their lives and decisions. God has not called her to be a

silent doormat with her husband lording his role over her! Rather, in our Father’s sight she is his *suitable helper* to help him fill in areas in which he’s falling short in Christ’s likeness.

“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”
(Genesis 3:16).

As a consequence of Eve’s sinful independence and desire to be like God in knowledge, He cursed her and all women after her with the desire to usurp their husband’s authority. For a wife, marriage would be an ongoing battle for control, manipulating where necessary to achieve her desired outcome. And when a husband yields to his wife’s control, it only makes matters worse for their family.

*“A **quarrelsome wife** is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; **restraining her is like restraining the wind** or grasping oil with the hand” (Proverbs 27:15,16; also 21:9,19; 25:24).*

- Do you maneuver or manipulate to get your way in your marriage and family? Do you cause unnecessary tension and arguments? Ask your husband and family.

[For further insight, see Teaching E-mail 10. *Apprehension: The Silent Destroyer*, or our July 2000 Newsletter: *Lashon hara—Bad Mouthing*.]

“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God” (Titus 2:3-5).

If you're a wife who doesn't have an older woman of wisdom helping you put God's Word into practice, you're not only hurting yourself but your husband and family too. A wise older woman is God's source for you to learn how to love. Start praying for one to come alongside you!

Children

God views people *generationally*. He knows each one by their ancestry and interconnectedness. All throughout the Bible our Father makes a big issue about raising children His way, and the responsibility of offspring to “*honor your father and mother*”—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2,3; also Exodus 20:12). That's why it's essential for parents to train their children to understand what *honor* is—so the young may experience the blessings of their obedience.

Each child is born with a sin nature that comes from our first parents. *Authentic parental love* for their children must be the primary corrective motivator to help them not give in to their sin nature.

If your children are frustrating you, maybe you're frustrating them! If you're being driven to exasperation and anger, there's a good chance you've caused this: “*Fathers, don't irritate your children and make them resentful; instead, raise them with the Lord's kind of discipline and guidance*” (Ephesians 6:4 CJB).

As strange as it seems, the more parents lovingly instill the discipline and guidance of God's Word in their children, the more the children trust their parents. A child's trust in his parents produces peace in the home and a submissive spirit.

Beginning in the late 1950s non-Christian “experts” on raising children

claimed that children are born good. *Society* causes them to do evil. And, all forms of discipline *rob a child of self-esteem*.

As a result, many Christian parents stopped correcting their children according to scriptural mandates. Parents began to negotiate with young children, often bribing them to obey or cajoling them over and over. Some also started to offer their children far more choices than the youngster's mind could handle, removing the very necessary concept of boundaries. The fruit of parental adoption of the world's ways is that children began to distrust their parents and see themselves in control. This has produced what sociologists call a “child-dominated society.”

Are you familiar with *anthropomorphism*? It means attributing human characteristics to an animal, especially to a pet. For example, many treat their dogs like people. Instead of using a sharp command to stop bad behavior, they try to persuade the dog to be good. But the dog doesn't understand reasoning; it continues to repeat the same bad behavior.

In a similar fashion, many parents treat their young children like they're adults. Instead of swiftly stopping bad attitudes or behaviors, they negotiate and try to cajole their child to obey. It doesn't work, and the parents get frustrated. Adding to this ineffectual correction is the practice of many parents to bribe their children with computer games. Studies have shown that these games close a child off to readily interacting with real people—they tune their parents out. And the intense focus required in these games also hinders the child's facial muscles from developing expression. That is, the undeveloped muscles portray a “blank face” in situations which warrant expression. The

children also become addicted to the serotonin that's released in their brain as they score or win. Conversations and activities with others become less pleasurable than the "high" their techno gadgets produce.

Study the Book of Proverbs and you'll discover God's ways to train children to resist their sin nature. For example:

"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15).

"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die" (Proverbs 23:13).

"The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother" (Proverbs 29:15).

Whatever means of correction you use, it must be *sufficient enough* to stop the bad behavior and be a *strong enough deterrent* for the child to resist doing it again. As you correct your child, be sure you don't let frustration or anger agitate you. You're God's instrument to lovingly help your child resist his or her sin nature through instilling God's guidance and reflecting the character of Jesus. Remember, you sin against God *and* your children when you fail your responsibilities.

[For further study see our video series, *Jesus in Your Home*, The Home section; or *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church*, Lessons 30 thru 44.]