

LEADERSHIP IN THE HOME

DISCUSSION

When I tell you that our discussion today is going to begin with “authority in the home” and “leadership in the home,” what thoughts come to your mind and what emotions do you experience?

A BIBLICAL PARADIGM

From the very first day we sat together to delve into understanding discipleship and Biblical counseling, we have been steadily turning to the Scriptures for guidance and direction. We have agreed time and time again that we must begin and end with the Word of God because only the Word of God is fully authoritative and sufficient in all matters of faith and life.

In the matter of authority and leadership, there is no surer resource for us to turn to than God’s Word, especially in light of the discussion we opened with today.

We know that there is nothing in the human experience that God does not have an opinion on and a prescription for how to handle. Hopefully, you have been finding that to be more and more sure and reassuring as the weeks have progressed.

In the matters of authority and leadership—especially in the home—we will find that God has said a great deal about them and we can clearly know what His design and will are in that regard.

Let’s start with authority, and then move into leadership—which can be simply understood as authority applied.

Authority, Biblically

We’ve talked a lot about how “Words matter...and it is usually the small words that matter most.”

There is a small word we use often yet give little thought to its meaning. For our discussion today, this particular small word carries a great deal of significance.

If I ask you, "What does the word 'all' mean?" what definitions come to mind?

In our every-day American English, these are the definitions we find in most dictionaries:

- Being or representing the entire or total number, amount, or quantity;
- Every;
- Any whatsoever;
- The total extent of the whole

So, if I ask you, "When you hear the word 'all,' what does that leave out?" If you say "**NOTHING!**" you're absolutely right!

The Greek word for "all" in the New Testament is *pas*, and it means exactly the same thing.

Now, the reason this matters so much in our discussion about authority is that it shows us that God's Word is crystal clear about it when we pay attention to God's use of it.

Do an internet search of "leadership in the home" and you will find there are 30.2 million internet links you can click on and follow. Narrow the search to "Biblical leadership in the home" and you can choose from among 1.25 million links.

With all of those opinions and points-of-view out there, we find that turning to the Word of God, the one source that we know has been steady and constant from the beginning, makes short work of the plethora of information and opinion available.

Key Passages

Matthew 28:18

Then Jesus came up and said to them, "**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

John 3:35

The Father loves the Son and has placed **all things** under **His authority**.

Ephesians 1:20-21

This power He exercised in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms **far above every rule and authority and power and dominion and every name** that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And God put **all things under Christ's feet**, and He gave Him to the church as head over all things.

Let's look at one more passage to help round out our paradigm for authority and give us a clear picture to keep in our minds. It is one we're all familiar with yet often don't take to heart:

Romans 13:1-4

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For **there is no authority except by God's appointment**, and the authorities that exist have been **instituted by God**. So the person who resists such authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will incur judgment (for rulers cause no fear for good conduct but for bad). Do you desire not to fear authority? Do good and you will receive its commendation, **4 for it is God's servant for your good**. But if you do wrong, be in fear, for it does not bear the sword in vain. **It is God's servant to administer retribution on the wrongdoer**.

It is important to note that, while Paul is specifically addressing civil government in this passage, the same message and mandate is articulated within every context we find ourselves living: government, work, family, and church.

DISCUSSION

What can we conclude from these passages about God's view of authority?

Leadership, Biblically

John 13:3-5; 12-17

Mark 10:42-45

Galatians 3:27-29

Romans 8:14-17

1 Peter 3:7

When we take these passages together with what we learned last time about how spiritual siblings are to regard and treat one another (see **John 13:34-35** and **Philippians 2:3-8**), sow that together with **1 Corinthians 11:3** and **Ephesians 5:23...**

1 Corinthians 11:3

But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

Ephesians 5:23

because the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church—He Himself being the Savior of the body.

...then the section of **Ephesians 5:21-33** that addresses the relationship between husband and wife and how authority and leadership are to function in a Christian marriage makes even clearer what we have been discussing all along:

Christian marriage is designed and intended by God to be a picture to the world of God's relationship with His people and, more specifically, Christ's relationship with the Church.

Key Principle: Biblical authority and leadership is “**Servant Leadership.**” Biblical authority and leadership is *ALWAYS* for the good of those being led, *NOT* for the good of the one in leadership.

When Children Join the Picture

Parents, do not provoke your children to anger, but nourish them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. *Ephesians 6:4* (my translation)

From this verse we can presume:

- That there is a form of nurture that derives its excellence and power from the Lord;
- That, this being so, the method and means of this nurture would also derive from Him;
- The purpose, intent, and aim of this nurture would also derive from and also be focused on Him (“the discipline and instruction of the Lord”).
- It falls to the parents to provide this nurture within the precincts of the family (First word – πατήρ *patēr*).

Once again we see that discipleship toward transformation and not behavioral modification are to be the goal of our relationship as Christians with the children God temporarily entrusts to us to steward and shepherd.

GOD’S ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN FOR THE HOME

In light of our discussions last week and this one, it seems clear that God's Word provide us foundational concepts and principles that, if understood and believed, will make a significant difference in our own homes as well as of those we disciple.

Wonder what our nation would be like if adhering to God's design for marriage and the home were the most common practice?

ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

Throughout the Scriptures we see example after example of what authentic, godly love and care look like. We have discovered God's and discussed God's design for Christian marriage. It is important for us to understand that, while the roles and functions of husband and wife differ, there is a balanced sense of equality and mutual surrender to one another's strengths as spiritual siblings,

always bearing in mind that the marriage they are in is a shared stewardship **for a season.**

Key Passage: Colossians 3:18-21

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing in the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they will not become disheartened.

Men:

The man of the household is created and assigned by God as the servant-leader (Ephesians 5:25-31). To him falls the charge of leading, providing for, protecting, and guarding his family. His job is to provide for the family by working diligently and honestly and doing what is necessary to protect them. (1 Timothy 5:8; Colossians 3:8; 1 Peter 3:7)

The man, with the help of his wife, has a responsibility to the children to teach them to know the nature and character of God, to worship Him, and to lovingly serve Him, and to train them in the ways of righteousness. (Ephesians 6:4)

Fathers ought not discourage, exasperate with unreasonable demands or ever-changing rules, or belittle their children. (Colossians 3:21) Also, Colossians 3:19 says, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against [harsh toward] them."

Husbands are also admonished to live with their wives in a manner that shows a true knowledge of their wives; otherwise, their prayers may very well be bogged down, even thwarted (1 Peter 3:7).

Women:

The woman of the household is created and given by God to be the nurturer and main caregiver of the family.

In today's Western society, it is not at all uncommon for the woman to take over the household and be in charge. More and more often, we find that women successfully become leaders in the corporate world and more and more frequently have a larger salary than their husbands.

Ephesians 5:22-24 says, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church – He himself being the savior of the body. But as the church submits to Christ, so also wives ought to submit to their husbands in everything." And, in 1 Peter 3:1-2, Peter encourages wives who find themselves married to an unbelieving husband **may be** the catalyst God uses to effect change in their belief by what they observe in their wife's Christ-like attitude or behavior.

Both:

Husbands and wives are also to remain together for a lifetime, because God has called marriage a "covenant of companionship" (Malachi 2:14), and explicitly states that He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

Husbands are to love their wives and wives are to respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:33).

Parents –fathers as well as mothers – are to nurture their children in the discipline [heart-knowledge] and instruction [intellectual knowledge] of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), discipling them just as they would someone outside the family (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Counseling Malfunctioning Marriages

When we are called to speak into a married couple's malfunctioning, deteriorating relationship, three things are important for us to steadily address:

- They are accountable to God for what He has addressed to them in His Word, not what He has addressed to their spouse;
- Love equals give without expectation of return. Holding fast to expectations of another puts you in the place of judge over the other person. God alone is qualified to judge.
- Marriage is a covenant relationship in which each person has vowed on their life to love, honor, and cherish the other, no matter how hard it gets. Each of them is to focus on cooperating with God in helping them fulfill their own vows, not how well or how poorly their spouse is fulfilling theirs.

ISSUES WITH IN-LAWS

The old saying, “When you marry someone, you also marry the rest of their family,” is certainly true, don’t you think?

The problems married couples face when it comes to in-laws are often so significant that they become a never-ending source of strife and conflict in the marriage.

As we saw last time, when the children are grown, they are to leave their parents and their parents’ homes, form a new family, and begin working together in becoming “one flesh.”

In Review

1. God’s design for marriage directs husbands and wives to leave their fathers and mothers.
 - What this *does not mean* is to abandon or to completely forsake (Exodus 20:12; Mark 7:8-13; I Timothy 5:8).
 - To leave one’s parents means that one’s relationship to one’s parents must radically change.
 - Each spouse is to be more concerned about the other spouse’s ideas, opinions, and practices than either’s parents’.
 - Each spouse is to not be slavishly dependent on their parents for affection, approval, assistance, and counsel.
 - It means that each spouse must internally forgive their parents and eliminate any bad attitudes towards their parents, or they will be emotionally tied to them regardless of how far away they might move.
 - It means that they must stop trying to change their spouse simply because the parents don’t like him/her the way he/she is.
 - It means that the husband and wife relationship is the priority human relationship.

The newly married couple need time and distance from their parents to experience the realities of marriage and to develop their own “family culture” before they are solid enough in their union for outside influences to not be the main drive behind how this new family develops, adapts, and “cleaves.”

For the most part, parents of grown children do a fair job of allowing their newly married children to “struggle through” just as they themselves did. Yet, we have to be honest and admit that this is too often *not* the case.

Too late, many people discover that they have married into families that are toxic, narcissistic, or abusive.

The greatest in-law problems grow out of how the parents see their children and how controlling they believe they have a right to be. They can be suffocating and possessive, equating to the new spouse not possibly being good enough for their child.

Some of the most common in-law problems people seek counseling for are:

- receiving unsolicited advice, especially about child-rearing
- being criticized about everything from housekeeping to how family finances are handled
- hearing complaints about not spending enough time with them, especially holidays
- the in-law making clear that the new son/daughter-in-law is not being good enough or even good to “their child”.

Counseling couples with in-law troubles needs to be approached with prayerful wisdom and grace, along with some clear guidelines for the couple to follow when faced with difficult, demanding (or worse) families:

1. Keep in mind that your vows are to one another, and that they exclude anyone else—including parents and siblings—from “having a say” in the marriage;

2. Spouses are to be supportive of one another and to be each other's number-one ally, standing together against anyone whose actions create division between them;
3. Be in agreement that you will work together to protect the marriage from the destructive influences of problem family members;
4. Agree to not criticize your spouse's family or to attack their worth, but to instead identify and tackle the problems they bring against the marriage, even if it is against only one of you. The idea of "one flesh" is an important one here;
5. Be kind yet firm about what you will permit and what you will not—always seasoned with grace, yet not wavering. Our debt is to speak the truth in love and to surrender the outcomes (Ephesians 4:15, 25);
6. Keep your contact with the troublesome family to a minimum. Do not allow yourself or your spouse to be made a target of their manipulation, guilt-tripping, coercion, and the like.
7. NEVER sit still for them insulting, demeaning, or in other ways denegrating your spouse. Let them know that there will be no contact between you and them if it continues.
8. Pray together often for unity and strength, and that God would bring the troublesome family members to the place of conviction and repentance.

PRACTICAL DECISION MAKING

Once we spend a little time with folks, they often reveal of that the most nagging problem they have is know for sure what God's will is in certain situations. They look at life and the poor decisions they've made and would love to know how to change their trajectory.

Real victory for successful living is rooted in our ability to make wise choices and follow through with them. There is little hope or help for someone who persists in making bad choices or in making wise choices but not carrying them out.

The reason we bring this up here is that, as witty and as humorous as this little ditty is, it is grossly inaccurate.¹ In fact, that definition is a well-suited one for “stupid.” Let’s tone that down a little and talk about “foolishness.”

Fools lack wisdom and discernment. Fools lack good sense and good judgment. Someone who is foolish is someone who is not paying attention to the details and realities of what is happening but is, instead, focused entirely on the desired outcomes *without regard* for the path taken.

They lack focus. In order to make wise decisions, knowledge, understanding, insight, and logical thought are required. For this lesson, our working definition of wisdom is, “the ability to discover the best course of action and to take it.”

Knowing what is best to do is of little good if we fail to act on that knowledge. So, if we plan on learning to live wisely, we need a great desire to *know* best and then to *do* best.

God’s “math” for wise living is simple:

Knowing Best + Doing Best = WISDOM

Knowing: Jesus says, “*If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:31-32, NET).

1. Set a foundation for making wise choices by studying the wisdom in the Bible. Reading a Proverb a day is a great discipline to engraft into your life. Each day, read the chapter that corresponds to that day of the month (There are 31 chapters in Proverbs). Or read a Psalm (or part of a Psalm for the longer ones). There is virtually nothing in the human experience *not* covered by Psalms and Proverbs (let alone the rest of the Bible).
2. Seek out and listen to mature Christian counsel. People who have been down the road we’re on and have experienced victory in their own lives can be invaluable when we need honest and sound advice (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). The Bible tells us that God has given us mature believers, pastors, and teachers to help us discover and follow God’s plan for our life.

¹ The real definition of Insanity is a legal term and it is, “mental illness of such a severe nature that a person cannot distinguish fantasy from reality, cannot conduct her/his affairs due to psychosis, or is subject to uncontrollable impulsive behavior.”

3. Always ask the question, “Lord, what is Your best right now?” We need to ask that question in the light of what God's Word teaches us and what His purpose for our lives is (as best we can understand it). **Anchor Point:** The #1 enemy of “best” is “good.” If we are willing to settle for good, we've robbed ourselves of God's best.

Doing: Knowing is the easy part; **doing** is often the hard part. Most of us are driven by our emotions, which often has disastrous results. Here are some suggestions:

1. Stay away from places and people who increase temptation or have an unhealthy influence on us. In Psalm 1:1, God makes clear what His “best” formula is in order for us to experience His blessings in our life. The rest of the Psalm shows us what that is, and what the outcomes are for those who do not follow His best plan.
2. Learn to lean into and cling to God in trying times. Trials and temptations pass. We need to reach out and cling to God during those times, knowing that He will not allow anything to overtake us that He has not also provided a way of escape from (1 Corinthians 10:13). Look to Christ and focus on Him (Matthew 14:22-33). He has already been through it Himself and will walk through it with you (Hebrews 4:15).
3. Make no provision for pursuing anything that is not God's best (Romans 13:14). We need to use the tools we have to do our best to push out of our mind any thinking that is not in keeping with God's best. If we allow our minds to ponder it for very long—even though we may decide in the end not to do it—then we have passed through our safety margin and are running up against the final boundary separating us from destruction. James tells us that sinful choices begin with our thinking (James 1:13-15). If we settle too long on those thoughts, we will often crash through the guardrail. Don't be seduced to give consideration to those things which are not best.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

A Biblical Construction

It is often said that you can tell what people value most and where their hearts are devoted by looking at their checkbooks. It is God who gives the ideas,

ability, talent, and blessing to work and produce any fruit of labor. As we use these gifts, we exchange them for capital and the tangible goods we need in order to survive. We are blessed with the ability to develop wealth that we are to share with others who are in need and with which to obey the “one another’s” in the Word.

“David praised the Lord before the entire assembly: ‘O Lord God of our father Israel, you deserve praise forevermore! O Lord, you are great, mighty, majestic, magnificent, glorious, and sovereign over all the sky and earth! You have dominion and exalt yourself as the ruler of all. You are the source of wealth and honor; you rule over all. You possess strength and might to magnify and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your majestic name!’” *1 Chronicles 29:10-13*

Key Points:

1. As believers, when we think about finances, the first thing we need to get from our head to our heart is the principle of **stewardship**. There is nothing we are or have that does not belong to God. Since this is so, if we want to live faithful to His name and His calling, we must start by asking Him how He wants us to manage these things.
2. As Biblical counselors, we need to be aware that there are two things that easily become the most corrosive to marital unity: lack of praying together and an unbiblical approach to finances.
3. As Biblical counselors, if our own finances are not in order, we need to start there. It is counterintuitive to believe that we can counsel others well when the area we are addressing is an area we have not addressed in our own lives.

Basic Financial Principles

1. God owns it all and we each serve as God's “asset managers.”
2. We possess, we do not own.
3. Be content and trust that God knows and will supply our every need.

4. One day we will give an account of our stewardship.

Here is a simple 5-Step Plan for getting finances under control that you can pass on to anyone (this is the same plan we use with everyone who comes to us with financial struggles):

1. If you are not working, start (2 Thessalonians 3:10; 4:11); if you are legitimately unable to work, devote your energies to finding and using the other resources that God has provided (family, then the church, then –as a last resort – the state. See 1 Timothy 5:3-5, 8, 16)
2. If not already doing so, start giving and supporting your local fellowship. Tithing is an excellent discipline to begin with (Malachi 3:10; Luke 11:42).
3. Set-up a monthly budget;
 - a. Add all monthly expenses and divide by number of paydays;
 - b. Cut out all silly and foolish spending;
 - c. Keep in mind that the money that comes in belongs to God FIRST;
4. Start paying down debt right away (Romans 13:8):
 - a. Calculate outstanding debt (credit cards, car, student loans, payday loans, etc.);
 - b. Pay the minimum amount on all except the lowest balance;
 - c. Pay as much as you can over the minimum amount on the debt with the lowest balance;
 - d. Once that is paid off, repeat this process with the next lowest balance debt.
5. When possible, transfer balances to 0% credit cards and pay those off within the 0% timeframe.

Note: The counselor needs to begin this process by doing an initial assessment of the crisis level the counselee is in:

- a. What are their short-term financial needs?
 - i. Do they need cash; do they need food; do they need shelter; do they need to open or close a bank account; do they need to contact creditors; do they need help with paying bills?
- b. What are their long-term financial needs?
 - i. Child care expenses; legal fees; medical/dental care; transportation; job training/certification; physical therapy; counseling.
- c. Whom have they contacted already and whom should they contact going forward for the help they need?
 - i. Family; close friends; church; private agencies; government agencies.

Next Step: Once this campaign is well underway, it is time to start asking God for opportunities to give to others **out of our need**. (Acts 20:35)

PRIORITIES: WORK, MINISTRY, HOBBIES, SPORTS, FRIENDS

The simplest way to address these matters is to come back to the question:

“To whom did you pledge first choice of your love, your devotion, and your loyalties when you got married?”

Their answer will likely be, “My wife (husband).”

Our first response then needs to be, “Then that is what God is expecting you to do—joyfully and without argument, without complaint, and without grasping for excuses not to.”

The most often heard reply goes something like this: “But I have other commitments that demand my time and attention away from home. I can’t give her/him as much time and attention as she/he keeps insisting she/he needs.”

“When you've prayed about this, what has God made clear to you?”

If they have been praying and seeking the Lord, we probably won't be having this conversation—unless they're looking for a loophole or for someone to cosign their disobedience.

This is when we direct them back to their need to be humble before the Lord, seek His will, and then ask Him for the strength and the courage to live that out.

Remind them of their covenant vow to love the other person self-sacrificially. Remind them that God is in their corner and is a willing partner in their stewardship of a God-honoring, Biblically consistent and Christ-centered marriage.