

Instructions to
Husbands & Fathers
(And Their Wives)

Gil Rugh

Instructions to Husbands, Fathers & Their Wives
A Study of Men's Roles

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1000 South 84th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68510-4499

Phone (402) 483-4541

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Instructions to Husbands, Fathers & Their Wives

These are trying days for men and women alike. Often our attention is focused on women with the feminist movement and the confusion surrounding the woman's role being such a popular media topic. However, if you stop and think for a bit, you will realize that just as much confusion encompasses the role of men.

We would expect the world to be confused. Without authoritative revelation from God, they have no unchanging standard to appeal to. The roles of men and women become a matter of opinion polls—52% think men ought to do *this*, 40% think they ought to do *that* and 8% are undecided.

God's Word, on the other hand, is unchanging. He created man and woman. In His Word He tells us *why* He created them, *what* He created them for, *how* they were created and *what* responsibilities He has given to them.

It is important for us as believers to arrange our lives according to the Word of God. Consider a few passages of Scripture which remind us what God says a man is to be—particularly in the role of husband and father.

Is Man an Animal?

Genesis 1:26, 27 summarizes mankind's creation:

Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' And

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Here at the very beginning we find a major point of disagreement between believers and those who do not accept the Bible as the Word of God. Unbelievers assume that man is part of the animal world—at best a higher form, though today there are people who would debate even that idea.

Scripture tells us that there is a major distinction between mankind and the rest of creation. *Only men and women have been created in the image of Almighty God.* Only human beings are able to function in a personal relationship with their Creator.

Help Wanted

Genesis 2 expands this creation summary and explains the details surrounding the origin of man. “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

Man—speaking of man as *male* here—was created directly by God out of the dust of the ground. He was then given work to do, cultivating the Garden of Eden and naming the animals—work which could have kept the man perfectly busy and active. But God soon determined that “it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18).

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. (Genesis 2:21,22)

Note here that the male was created first. He was formed from dust, while the female was created from a side-part of the male. The female was created as a companion for the male, and the male gave the female her name:

And the man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:23,24)

From the beginning it was God's intention that the man function as a husband—as the leader of the family. He created the woman for the man. A man is to leave his father and mother and join with his wife. The role of child to parent is supplanted by the role of husband to wife.

It is important that the relationship between a husband and wife supersedes all other relationships. This relationship becomes a man's primary responsibility. When he takes a wife, he leaves his parents, cleaves to his wife and from then on that relationship takes precedence.

The Spirit of Marriage

One of my favorite verses in all of Scripture is Ephesians 5:22: "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord." My second favorite verse is also found in this context—"But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:24). I dare say nearly every man reading this is very, very familiar with these verses and has probably quoted them to his wife—for her *edification*, of course!

Seriously, however, the focal point of this passage lies in the verses which follow. As a reminder, this section of Ephesians is built upon the instruction of Ephesians 5:18, "Be filled with the Spirit." The power to live in a marriage relationship according to God's plan comes from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit of God. Living under His authority and control enables a man and woman to function as God created them to function.

Love as Sacrifice

In light of that, we read in Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." The love mentioned here is not an emotional love—though obviously there is a place for that in marriage. This love refers to a self-sacrificing kind of love. The Greek word is *agapao*, agape love. The key element in agape love is personal sacrifice for the benefit of someone else. The primary example of agape love is Jesus Christ. He loved the Church—so what did He do? *He gave Himself up for her.*

Jesus Christ went to the cross to die for the Church. That is the supreme demonstration of love. And that is the kind of love Paul is saying men should have for their wives.

“First You Gotta Love Yourself”

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 5:28, 29)

It has become generally accepted that some people just do not love themselves as they should. Because of this, they cannot love others. God says that no one ever *hated* himself. It is a fantasy — a deception of sin—to think we do not love ourselves enough. In fact, all of the attention we shower upon ourselves in telling people how much we *hate* ourselves is just an indication of how much we *love* ourselves!

No, the struggle is not in learning to love *yourself*. The struggle is in loving your wife as you *already* love yourself. Note that Ephesians 5:28 uses the word *ought*. This word means “to be obligated” or “to be in debt.” Men are indebted to the act of loving their wives. As a Christian man, I cannot love God if I am not loving my wife as I should. I am to watch out for her, take care of her and love her. That is my responsibility as a husband.

Paul says in Ephesians 5:29 that a man is to nourish and cherish his wife as he does his own body. The literal translation means “to keep warm.” It is a picture of nourishing and nurturing. The same phrase is used in 1 Thessalonians 2:7: “As a nursing mother *tenderly cares* for her own children” (emphasis added). This is the kind of care and love we are to be demonstrating toward our wives.

A Word of Warning

“Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them” (Colossians 3:19).

Here you have the negative side. Ephesians encourages nourishing and cherishing your wife while Colossians warns against becoming embittered against your wife. Ephesians 4:31, 32 also brings out this contrast between bitterness and kindness. They are oppo-

sites. To be bitter means to be harsh, as opposed to being kind and tender. One Greek commentator writes: "The apostle forbids that sour and surly objurgation." Sour — surly . . . that doesn't describe any of *us*, but I am sure we have all known men like that!

Isn't it easy to slide into a surly attitude toward your wife? Why do we have such a hard time treating her kindly? Think of the last time you went to church. You may have thoughtfully opened the car door for your wife, then on the way home you may have said things to her that you would not have dreamed of saying to anyone else.

The problem is sin. God says men are to be kind to their wives, and our fleshly natures rebel against that. A harshness comes out that should not be there. God makes it clear that there is no room for this bitterness. There is to be warmth, nurturing and cherishing in the relationship of husband and wife.

The Man as Father

Obviously, if I am going to be a husband, I will most likely be a father. This comes up early in Genesis (see Genesis 1:28).

Colossians 3:21 says, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart." As a father I am responsible for my children. My wife is the despot of the home, but as a father I am responsible to develop a right and biblical relationship with my children. I am not to provoke them lest they become discouraged.

The Man's Role in Discipline

Discipline is a touchy subject these days. The world looks at men who mistreat their children, who deal with them harshly and unkindly in the way they carry out their discipline and concludes that there should not be any discipline in the home or at least certainly none of the physical variety. Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." God says that there *should* be discipline in the home, but it must be the *right kind of discipline*.

It is the father's responsibility to mete out discipline. We have a tremendous problem in our homes today because *fathers have not taken the responsibility of discipline in their home*. They do not want to

be bothered with it. Why? Because they do not love their wives and children as God says they should. They are self-centered. Disciplining children is unpleasant, and when men come home from a busy day they don't want to be bothered with it. It is simply another way of saying, "I don't love my wife and children." It is just that blatant.

Because of this attitude on the part of men, what is discipline like in the home today? Our children are out of control, which is an indication of the breakdown of the father's role at home. That is where the blame is laid in the Word of God.

In the face of this, what is the first thing men do? If we have trouble with our children, we find someone else to take the blame: the pastor, the teacher, friends. But there are certain things that cannot be shifted to anyone else. They are at the heart of what I am as a husband and a father. And one of these things is the discipline of my children—their rearing and training in the instruction of the Lord.

"But I Don't Know What to Do"

If you don't know how to go about disciplining your children, you had better find out what God's standard is! Get into the Bible. Saturate yourself with God's Word until you *know* what to do.

A man has no excuse. He cannot delegate his responsibility as a husband and father—not that his wife can never discipline the children. But the father is ultimately responsible for the implementation of discipline in the home.

In light of the Word of God, this is as it should be. In my home, if my wife had a problem with the kids, they were sent to their room until I came home to deliver the necessary discipline. This served two purposes. First, it kept me in the discipline process. Second, it gave my children time to fear what was coming—which is good. Besides, mothers can be softer than fathers, and discipline is never quite the same from Mom as it is from Dad, unless Dad is not doing his job!

It is the father's responsibility to see that his children are raised in the instruction of the Lord. The breakdown of the father's responsibility has resulted in a generation that has wandered from the Lord. We say, "Oh my! What has happened?" when the simple truth is that we have not followed God's instructions.

Man as Provider

The basic role of men and women was not changed because of the Fall. The Fall of man simply introduced difficulty and pain and hardship to the roles that had already been established.

In Genesis 2:15, after God created the man, He put him in the Garden of Eden. There he was told to cultivate the garden and to keep it. That was his responsibility. As a result of the Fall, man's responsibility remained the same, but it was made much more difficult to fulfill.

In Genesis 3, God addresses those who were involved in the rebellion against Him.

Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it.' Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:17-19)

From the beginning, man's job was to cultivate the Garden. His role was to be the provider. As a result of the Fall, he would have to toil and sweat and labor to get enough to eat and provide for his home. The role was the same, but it became more difficult.

“Work Ought to Be Fun”

We tend to think that working hard for a living is something new. You hear statements such as, “It's so difficult to provide for a family these days.” We can go all the way back to Genesis and find God Himself saying that it is going to be difficult—*You'll have to sweat it out, Adam. In fact, you're hardly going to have time to enjoy it.* “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). In other words, not only will it be hard work to acquire your food, but there will not be much time to enjoy it. You eat it on the run, with the sweat still running down your face. You don't have time to stop!

What was Solomon's assessment of the toil of man? “As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in

his hand. And this also is a grievous evil—exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. What is the advantage to him who toils for the wind? Throughout his life he also eats in darkness with great vexation, sickness and anger” (Ecclesiastes 5:15-17).

You get the idea here that work was a grind a thousand years *before* Christ as well as two thousand years after. *When all is said and done, I'll just be ready for the grave. I won't even be able to take anything with me!* And that is exactly the way it is. That is why you need a proper relationship with the Lord to put life in the perspective of eternity.

Christian men, too, need God's viewpoint on this issue. Society, which has rejected the Bible and what it has to say about men's and women's roles, has developed some kind of perverted, unbiblical idea that work ought to be *fun*—that it is just not right to go and grind it out. You ought to have a job that you enjoy, that allows you free time, and on and on.

Eventually, even believing men begin to accept the world's standard. They begin to think *Hey, maybe I should get a different job—why should I be working twelve hours a day? Perhaps my wife could do some of the providing. Maybe then we could even have a little extra.* There are all sorts of excuses: “We need to be planning for our retirement,” or “We're trying to save for a down payment on a house.” We even have women out working so their kids can go to Christian schools! Good grief! Where is the Word of God in all this?

When I come back to the Scriptures, things are clarified for me. My responsibility as a husband and a father is to grind it out. So that is what I do.

Modeling Outside the Home

But it will take two jobs for me to provide for my family, and that is just providing, not trying to become wealthy! In light of the Word of God, it is far better that a man be working 80 hours a week and his wife be at home than it would be for each of them to be working half of that.

But don't you think a man should be home? I think a man should be doing what a man ought to do. He should be modeling what a man ought to be.

I remember what my mother told me when my dad couldn't

be home in the evenings. “Why does he have to work?” I asked.

“It is his responsibility to be providing for us, and his job necessitates that he work tonight,” was her response. It was good for me to learn that. It provided a good model for me.

Now, I realize that if the man is complaining about his job or if his wife is groaning about his being gone all the time, then naturally, the children will consider it a bad thing. However, if we realize it is modeling the role of man as provider, it can be a very good example for our children.

My responsibility before God is clear. I am the provider for my home. I may not be able to provide the way someone else does or as much as someone else does. I may live in a rented house, far below what other people live in. But so what? We are only strangers and pilgrims here anyway. I will not be taking anything with me when I go.

Man as Leader

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression. (1 Tim. 2:12-14)

This passage in 1 Timothy compares the responsibility of the man and the woman, particularly in the functioning of the Church. The woman is not to teach or wield authority. The man has the responsibility of teaching and leading—and there are two reasons given.

First, Paul points out in 1 Timothy 2:13 that it was Adam who was created first, then Eve. The order of creation that we saw in Genesis 2 establishes the man’s leadership role. It has nothing to do with the Fall. If there had never been a Fall, man would still have been the leader, because God created him first.

The order of creation is also developed in 1 Corinthians 11:8, 9: For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.

The second reason men have responsibility for leadership is the fact that it was Eve and not Adam who was deceived.

That Was Then

I read much material written by supposed Bible students who say that these passages are cultural—that they relate to a special problem at Ephesus which Paul was addressing specifically.

But when you examine the passage, you find that it is anchored by God to an event that goes all the way back to the opening chapters of Genesis! It is transcultural in the most basic sense. And yet, you continue to see material written, even from within the Evangelical camp, saying *Well, Jesus had it right, but the Apostles missed it on the roles of men and women.*

The Scripture is clear. The man was created first. He has the responsibility of leadership in the Church and protectorate of the home.

Marks of a Mature Man

Godliness and maturity in a man can be measured by examining the qualifications of an elder found in 1 Timothy 3. It is interesting that one word comes up several times in these lists of qualifications—the word *manage*.

Paul says, “He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity. . . . Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households” (1 Timothy 3:4, 12).

The word translated *manage* in these verses means “to be at the head” of something, to “rule” or “direct.” It doesn’t mean “to boss,” with all its negative connotations—abuse of authority, etc. It clearly means that a man is to be at the head of his home. He is to lead and rule that home, but he is to do it in godliness. As Jesus spoke in the Gospels, the man is to rule in love, as a servant of those whom he rules.

Pointing a Finger

Titus 1:6 tells us that a man is qualified to be an elder if he is,

among other things, “above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.” You see who is responsible for children who are out of control? The father! We men say, “Hey, it’s not my fault! My wife is home with them more than I am!” Do you think you are going to tell that to God?

My father could control our home long-distance. He was on shift work, so he would be gone from 4 p.m. to midnight five days out of every month. We didn’t see him all week. But the discipline he used put the fear of God in us for that entire week. Discipline in love, I might add. He didn’t have to be there every day. He didn’t have to come home every night and roll around on the carpet with me so that he could be a good, nurturing father to me, the way the world describes it. That is really just another way of saying he ought to be another *mother*—so that the mother can be the *father*! Where does it say that in the Word of God?

We Christians eagerly lap up the world’s philosophy just because someone claiming to be an authority writes a book saying what a father ought to be! When my kids were little, I asked my wife to get rid of all those books. “Why?” she asked. “Because you didn’t marry this author,” I said. “You married me!”

The world is continually trying to blend the roles of men and women, and Christians are buying into it wholesale. The world tries to delegate responsibility for parenthood with better child-care facilities and more businesses that provide day care. And all the while our homes are in shambles because there is no one left to take on that responsibility!

But She Wants Out of the House!

Now who is responsible to implement all of this? I had a husband say to me, “Well, my wife wants to work outside of the home, so what do I do? Should I go home, slam both feet down and say, ‘I’m the boss in this home and you quit! That’s it! And don’t talk to me about it again!’?”

Well, that is not necessarily the biblical way to handle it! But neither is it biblical to say, “Well, gee, that is what she wanted to do.”

This lack of male leadership impacts everything—our homes,

our churches and our society. We have to come back to the Word of God and say, *God has appointed man to be the leader. That is his responsibility. That is what He created man to be.*

You may be thinking, “But I know this really good teacher, and she’s a woman. So what God has to say about women preachers — well, that doesn’t apply.” So what if she is a good teacher? What does that have to do with anything? Remember, our theology is not built upon what works. It is built on what God says. God’s order is established in His Word.

With Leadership Comes Responsibility

We talk about having a problem with feminists, about having a problem with the women in their roles and so on. What we really have a problem with is *men*. Because it all comes down to a matter of leadership.

When I worked back East, I was responsible for conducting business in the evening. The next morning the manager would come in and ask questions and I’d say, “Well, so-and-so didn’t get that done.”

He’d say, “I don’t particularly care to hear that. *You* were responsible to get it done.”

“Yeah, I know, but he was goofing off in the back.”

“I don’t care about him. *You* were responsible to get it done.”

You ought to remind yourself of that. Someday we will all give an account before God—and we will all have great excuses. And you know what He will say? “*You* were responsible!”

In Genesis 18:19, God says of Abraham, “For I have chosen him, in order that *he may command his children and his household after him* to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about Him” (emphasis added).

Abraham was responsible for his home and his children. Does that mean his wife Sarah wasn’t important? No, she was crucial. But she was *different*. God delegated to her different responsibilities.

First Corinthians 11 says that God is the head of Christ and Jesus is subject to the Father. Does that mean He is inferior? No. But

there is an order established.

As men we must come to the Word and realize what our role and responsibility is, and to take on that responsibility in love.

Doing What Is Right

You may be a man who doesn't know Jesus Christ as your Savior. If so, you do not have the Spirit of God indwelling and empowering you. The first thing you need to do is take the lead in your family. You need forgiveness of sins. You need to provide the leadership in that area by coming face-to-face with your *own* sinfulness. Recognize before God that the Son of God died on a cross and paid for your sin. Place your faith in Him. It's humbling. But some men need to exercise leadership by humbly bowing themselves before God and acknowledging they are sinners in need of His gracious salvation.

Then we as men need to assert our leadership in our homes—in love, doing what is right and best for our wives and children so that they are raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

If you are a man walking under the control of the Spirit—filled with the Spirit—then, by His grace and in His power, you will carry out the responsibilities God has given you.

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