

Patriarchal Joy
Family Series 2026 #3
Ephesians 5:25, Matthew 3:16-17

Introduction

We live in a time where father-hunger is rampant. In God's grace, we are also seeing a recovery of a right view of husbands and fathers as the head of their homes. As we continue to embrace this according to Scripture, however, we must remember where fathers and husbands get their marching orders. In Scripture, the archetype for fathers is God the Father, and the archetype for husbands is our Lord Jesus. As we seek to straddle the ditches of abdicating patriarchy on the one hand and tyrannical patriarchy on the other, our Father and our Lord must be the stars we sail by. One of the most important features of faithful patriarchy that we see in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus is a deep patriarchal joy. This joy is foundational to the work of husbands and fathers in ruling their homes well.

Husbands, Love Your Wives

What does it mean that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (Eph. 5:25)? He took on flesh and the form of a bondservant (Phil. 2:7). He took on Himself the guilt and shame of all our sins and offered up His life on our behalf. He endured the death of the cross and the wrath of the Father. Through all of this He reconciled the Church to God, sanctified and cleansed her, making her holy and blameless according to God's purpose (Eph. 1:4). And He did all of this "for the joy set before Him" (Heb. 12:2). In other words, even in the midst of the labor and sacrifice, Christ rejoiced greatly over the Bride He would take ("His inheritance in the saints", Eph. 1:18) and for whom He laid down His life. This is, Lord willing, familiar territory for us. But husbands need to realize that they have the astounding opportunity to declare this gospel to the world, even when simply walking in the door at home after a long day of work.

What does it mean to love your wife like this? (1) It is a sacrificial love that gladly assumes responsibility for everything in your home. (2) Your authority in the home is potent, but again it takes the form of a bondservant. Your authority should liberate your wife in your home, just as Christ's authority gives freedom to His Church. (3) You do not love your wife *because* she is lovely. You love her in obedience and imitation of Christ such that she is made more lovely, for "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Her unloveliness is never an excuse for your lack of love, and your love for her is effectual (v. 26-27). (4) You do not lay down your life so that your wife can have her way. That is what Adam did, and it ruined everything. You lay down your life *before* God and *for* her. Having done so, then take up the mantle of ruling over the little universe God has given to you. Taking all of this together, loving your wife begins with humbling yourself, setting aside your own desires, and then exercising authority in such a way that the world looks at you and sees a picture of the gospel. Husband-love is the combination of husband-blood and husband-rule. This is a potent existential gospel witness to the world, beginning with those in your home.

A Well-Pleased Father

There are few things that give confidence to a child better than hearing his or her dad say some version of, "I am pleased with you." The Father proclaims this over Jesus, identifying Him particularly as His Son and then officially sending Him to do the work He came to accomplish (Matt. 3:16-17). In our flesh, though, we might be tempted to respond that this was easy for God the Father to say since He had Jesus for a son. Your children are not as perfect. But the fruit does not fall far from the tree. Your children are not perfect because they come from a line of sinners. This should encourage us to imitate the Father in this regard, then, without such an objection. One thing to note is that the Father declares this over Jesus *before* He had accomplished His earthly work. The Father delights in the Son simply because He is His Son. And, since Christians are in Christ, He rejoices over each of you as well (cf. Eph. 1:5-6, Zeph. 3:17).

This father-joy is the foundation for much of what goes on in the home. (1) In the normal course of things, a wife and children will follow Christ, worship the Lord, and submit to Him in the way they see the father doing. And so, like the Father sending the Son into His work, a father's pleasure and joy sets his family on the path of pursuing Christ well instead of begrudgingly. (2) A patriarchal joy means that discipline is painful, but not punitive (Heb. 12:5-11). The goal is fellowship and restoration ("partakers in...holiness", "yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness"). (3) Along with this, fathers should rejoice in repentance and be delighted to forgive (Ps. 86:5, Luke 15:20-24). (4) Patriarchal joy sets a tone of comfort and protection characterized by celebration and feasting, even in the darkest times (Ps. 23). Remember that God created His first human children and put them in a lush Garden with many "yesses" and a single "no."

Conclusion

Who is sufficient for these things? The standard set for husbands is the Lord Jesus Christ, and for fathers is God the Father. How can you possibly meet that? Do not forget that as you imitate God in these things, He *is* also these things to you. He is your Father that delights to forgive, delights to raise the fallen, delights to supply all your needs. Jesus is your Lord who laid His life down for you so that you might be free. And your Father and Lord does all of this for you with great joy. Your joy in your home will fuel your wife and children, but this is true first because of your Father's and Lord's joy over you. And so, as you repent and stumble your way in imitation of these perfect standards, wait on the Lord (Is. 40:28-31), for the joy of the Lord is your strength (Neh. 8:9).