

## Reforming the Mess of Modern Marriage #2

### Husbands, Fathers, Patriarchy, Masculinity, and All That is Good – Eph 5:21-6:4

**Introduction** – Previously we saw from this passage and others that marriage is God’s idea and defined by Him. Through marriage, the gospel is preached, and through families, societies are built. In this work, husbands particularly take on the role of patriarch, the head of the family. Their leadership, under submission to Christ, provides masculine, protective, and representative rule. And *masculinity is the glad assumption of sacrificial responsibility* (Wilson). When men obey God in these roles, there is nothing toxic at all for women and society. There is great blessing.

**First Things First: “As Christ Loved the Church”** – The only way a man can obey Eph 5:25 is if he knows how Christ loved the church. This means that he must know, personally and deeply, the love of Jesus Christ. These are not abstract principles that anyone can apply to better their marriage. This is fruit that comes from a tree of its own nature. Fundamentally, a husband is faithful to his duties only if he has faith in the Son of God. Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross to draw all men to Himself, not simply to be a good example, but to bring life from the dead (John 3:14-17, 12:23-36). Do you see Jesus Christ lifted up for you? Have you called upon His name, and have you believed that He was raised from the dead (Rom 10:9-10)?

**A Discipleship Call** – For a man to truly love his wife, he must love someone else even more (Luke 14:26). His life must now be a life crucified in Christ and lived by faith in the grace of God (Gal 2:20-21). To almost every marriage problem that exists, the husband should always concern himself with this – do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Has His grace had its way with you? This is where it must begin. Ephesians 4-6 cannot be obeyed unless Ephesians 1-3 has had its way with you (Eph 3:14ff).

**Headship and Inescapable Patriarchy** (Eph 5:23, cf. Eph 3:14) – We pray to God our Father (*pater*) from whom the whole family (*patria* – *defn: a lineage running back to some progenitor*) in heaven and earth is named. A patriarch is one who rules (*arche*) as a father (*pater*). *Rule* implies authority and *father* implies a covenantal structure with masculine leadership. God the Father has built patriarchy into the fabric of the cosmos. It is not a question of whether men will be ruling, but which ones and how. The exception (women temporarily ruling due to absent or abdicating fathers) proves the rule.

**Father Rule** – Adam is established as the first human patriarch, and he blew it. Patriarchy, “father-rule” describes the practice of men providing for and protecting women and children. Adam was to rule his family and he ruled poorly. He was to be a masculine leader, for he was the covenant head. And *masculinity is the glad assumption of sacrificial responsibility*. Instead, when something went wrong in his family, Adam said, “but God, she gave me the fruit and you gave me the woman!” This had dire consequences for all those under his patriarchy – “*The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression*” (WSC Question 16, Rom 5:12, 17). But God, who is rich in mercy, as a ruling Father, sent His Son to be a New Adam. That Man gave His life for the sins of His bride. The first Adam disobeyed at a tree. The second Adam obeyed on a tree. That is true patriarchy. And so patriarchy is built into redemptive history.

**Two Bad Ditches** – They are: Wooden Patriarchy (who bellows and laments, “why won’t they follow me?”) and Spineless Patriarchy (who always asks, “what would you like to do?”). These are husbands and fathers who will not take responsibility - and *authority only flows to those who take responsibility*. Each man has his sinful tendencies, and we all tend to careen from one ditch to the other. In any event, repent of both, take responsibility for everything, stop making excuses, be a man, and take everybody with you to Christ.

**Evil Patriarchy** – Patriarchy is the natural and inevitable state of the world. But just because something is natural does not mean that it cannot be twisted. Our culture has been wooed to a Marxist-Darwinist-socialist view of the state and family (and this is a religious view, not simply a political view) that is destroying the rule of the father in his home, tearing apart the rights of families (and the need for families), crushing masculine leadership, enslaving us to the State as our patriarchy (*HT Michael Foster*).

**Made for Dominion** - Men are to take dominion, but not *over* their wives. They are to take dominion with *their* wives. In Christ, Head and body disciple the nations. In Christ, there is a King and queen. In Christ, High Priest and Church approach God. But we must not think as egalitarians in this. Men and women are equal in value and worth, but the scriptures reject a functional equality. God designed men and women to take dominion together, but to do so with different relations and roles in human relationships (marriage, church, and society). For instance, men make money (dominion) and women make people (dominion). Our culture has so devalued people (i.e. abortion) and overvalued “career” and “personal fulfillment” (i.e. daycare centers, state-run education) that we miss the point – and the blessing.

In addition, fathers are to take dominion, but not *over* their children. They are to take dominion *with* their children. They are not your slaves; they are arrows to be fashioned and they are to stand with you against the enemies at the gate (Psalm 127).

**Made to Lead** - Absolutely. But lead where? Since the chief end of marriage (and man) is to glorify God, then the chief role of husbands and fathers is to lead those under their care to Christ. Lead your people to Christ. Lead by example. Lead by imitating Christ Himself who brings us to the Father. Are you the first to be in the Word, to be singing the Psalms and worshipping, to be in prayer, to be instructing from the Word like the father in Proverbs? Fathers, you are the responsible head of your children’s upbringing (6:4). This is not simply about choosing a curriculum or methodology for school. This is about the entire culturalization of the next generation into the family of God, His worldview, His culture, His ways, His loves – are to be theirs. And husbands are to imitate Christ who sanctifies His bride with the washing of water by the word (5:26).

**Husbands, Love Your Wives** – In the same way that Christ loved the church, so husbands are to imitate that masculine love of their wives. This kind of love calls him to be personally responsible for her before God.

**Efficacious Love** (5:27) – Consider this “optimistic love” which sees past all imperfections and creates a more lovely wife because of this love. Christ has this attitude and effect upon His bride.

**Selfish Love** (5:28-29) – Paul says you cannot love your wife like this without it returning in blessing on you. If you have your head on straight, you will only try to love her (remember, a masculine love) more. But you will also learn that you can never out-love your wife which will protect the marriage from score-keeping on who has sacrificed more.

**Prayerful Love** – If you imitate Christ, then your love will be bathed in prayer for her (John 17:9) and constant intercession for her (Heb 7:25). And because you want those prayers heard, you will treat her in a particular way (1 Pet 3:7) – *even and especially if* she is the kind of wife that needs a husband to pray for her.

**Constant Love** (v30) – Just as his head is always listening to and responding to the needs of his body, so he as head is always listening to and responding to the needs of his wife. This is constant, organic, ongoing, love – like the love of Christ for His body.

**In Sum** – God is our Father. Christ is our Husband. The cosmos is patriarchal and not egalitarian. And men who act like men, like the second Adam, are essential in the building, protecting, and providing for the world God has given to us.

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