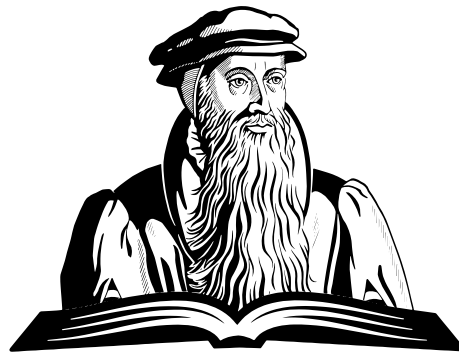

VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

LECTURE 3: HEADSHIP

Lecture Presenter: Robert D. McCurley M.Div.



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Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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Module

BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

8 LECTURES

ROBERT D. MCCURLEY M.DIV.

1. Priorities in a Christian Marriage
2. The Unity in Marriage
- 3. Headship**
4. Servant and Shepherd
5. Godly Wives 1
6. Godly Wives 2
7. Communication
8. Finances and Physical Relationship

Lecture 3

HEADSHIP

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 3

When you travel in a bus or a car, the person in the driver's seat controls the steering wheel, the gas pedal, the brake pedal, and so forth. While the driver cannot control what those inside the vehicle are thinking or saying, he does determine the direction, route, and speed at which everyone in the vehicle is traveling. This illustrates the role of the husband within a biblical marriage and family. The husband sets the spiritual direction of his family. The Lord, of course, provides the map in the Scriptures, but the husband follows these clear instructions in steering his family in the ways of the Lord. In other words, as the husband goes, so the family goes. The exercise of godly leadership shapes the spiritual direction of the home. And just as the husband spiritually guides his home, the wife often contributes to the atmosphere inside the home, but we will consider her role and responsibility in future lectures.

What does it mean for a husband to be the head of his wife? How does this relate to the relationship between Christ and the Church? Why does God tell husbands to love their wives, and what does this look like in practice? In this lecture, we will study what the Bible teaches us about the place that God has assigned to husbands in a biblical marriage. We will consider the husband's position and his chief pursuits. In the next lecture, we will explore his exercise of godly leadership. But, let me also say a word to wives at the beginning of this lecture. In case you are tempted to use this material for berating your husband, please remember the words of 1 Peter 3:1 and following, and also remember that in a future lecture, the tables will be turned in addressing wives.

And so first of all, we need to consider the husband's position; and, in a word, that position is one of headship. The Bible says that the husband is head of his wife. This headship is another reflection of Christ's relationship to His bride, the Church. Ephesians 5:23 says, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." The Church is presented as the bride of Christ in both the New Testament and throughout the Old Testament. Think, for example, of the prophet Isaiah or Ezekiel or Hosea, or think of the book of the Song of Solomon, and so many different passages throughout the Psalms. The idea of headship fits within the gospel as a marriage covenant.

Furthermore, this headship is inescapable. Well, what do we mean by that? We mean that the husband's headship is a matter of fact. It is not a command. So you think of the words, again, in Ephesians 5:23. Paul does not say, "Husbands, go be head of your wife," or, "You should be head of your wife." Rather, he says, 'Husbands, you are head of your wife.' The husband cannot cease being head, though in his sin he can at times serve as a dysfunctional head. But regardless, you are always saying something through your life and through your relationship as a husband. You're either saying something truthful or something erroneous about the gospel and the relationship of Christ and the Church.

As head, the husband is a representative of God in the home. Thus, he should accurately model the character of God to his wife and his family. They should be able to see in their husbands something about the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They should be able to trace, as it were, the outline of who Christ is. A husband's first relationship is to his own head, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's right; the husband also has a head. In 1 Corinthians 11:3 we read, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man." So if

the husband's relationship with Christ is not flourishing, then the husband's relationship with his wife will suffer. His relationship to his head, Christ, directly influences his relationship to his wife.

The husband is also the overseer, or the governor, the ruler of his home. Now, some today insist that male headship was a result of the fall in Genesis 3; that prior to the fall, headship, male headship, did not exist, but that it came as a consequence of it. Well, this contradicts the Bible. This position of headship was actually given to the husband prior to the fall, not as a result of the fall. And you see this when you open your Bibles and look at Genesis 2; note verse 18 and verse 22 and verse 23. And, notice that when you turn to the New Testament that Paul appeals to that creation account in Genesis 2 when he is speaking about the role of women, for example, in 1 Timothy 2:11 and following, and again in 1 Corinthians 11.

This headship is a divine calling. This is a calling and a responsibility of a husband, but he is not more inherently deserving of this position than the wife. Only God has ultimate authority, so all human authority in this world is derived from Him, and He establishes the pattern and He establishes the parameters for the exercise of that authority. But it is a position assigned by God, and therefore it must be upheld. So, headship is not a right. It's not a right, for example, to abusive control or, on the other hand, to gross neglect. In fact, it's not a right at all but rather a responsibility. It is the responsibility to love, lead, protect, and serve one's wife like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of a parallel example. A pastor or an elder within the church is likewise given a calling and a role to fulfill before God, and that role includes authority and responsibility. But, he is not inherently more deserving, for example, of the respect or of the obedience that the people in the congregation must give. He's not more inherently deserving of that than those he serves. Yes, it's true that in Hebrews 13:17, the Lord's people are told to obey and to submit to those who have rule over them, to the elders. But it is only God's calling and the position He assigns that determines such a response by the people of respect and obedience. This has practical implications.

Think of the difference in our perspective when a wife fails to respect the husband's authority. So if you're a husband, think about that. Do you take legitimate offense for Christ and the shame that has brought to Him? Or, do you take offense, whether in part or in whole, for yourselves? The objection, "How dare you," can be motivated by self-centeredness or by having our pride wounded. Is venting our anger an expression of insecurity or an insistence that we deserve better treatment? Or is the disturbance in our spirit driven by zeal for the glory of Christ, which in this case is being undermined by the wife? You see, God assigns different roles to different people, and we all must learn to abide in the calling that God has given to us. Paul was addressing marriage and singleness when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:20, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."

That brings us secondly to the husband's pursuit; and here, the whole framework for his pursuit is defined in terms of love. God's main exhortation to the husband is to love his wife. So, go back to that passage in Ephesians 5. Notice how it's repeated three times. In verse 25 and verse 28 and verse 33, husbands are told to love their wives, and the same can be found in the parallel passage in Colossians 3:19. Men can sometimes be motivated by a challenge. It can be tempting to pour everything into successfully securing a wife before you're married, then after marriage to redirect your interests and energies into the next challenge. But, God calls husbands to pursue their wives all their days. We are to have an abiding love. It can be tempting to be sinfully independent to the neglect of the marriage relationship.

Husbands can easily busy themselves with other goals and not feel the need to cultivate a close relationship with their wife. But if they're to reflect Christ and His relationship to the church, then they must pursue constant union and communion with their wife. Think of how this is brought out in John 15:1 and following and consider the description of the husband's love in Ephesians 5. We're told that love is giving: "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." We're told that that love entails sacrificing one's own body, in verse 28, and caring for another as for oneself, in verse 33. This is a call to perpetual pursuit. The husband should no sooner neglect his wife than his own body. He does not give to his body sporadically or hate his own flesh; and so with his wife, this is a call to daily self-denial. Again, you can look at this definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

If you turn your attention to Colossians 3:19, Paul warns husbands not to be bitter toward their wives. This is a pointed temptation aimed at undermining love. Think again of Christ and compare, for example, His response to Adam and Adam's response in the garden of Eden. Christ never complains to the Father using language like, "This woman that thou gavest me." That was the response of Adam. Nor does the Lord Jesus Christ wish that He

were with someone else. Bitterness is, among other things, a refusal to forgive, and forgiveness is part of love. Indeed, when you again think of the gospel, the great work of grace that God brings in the life of a sinner, one of the wonderful manifestations of His saving love is in the forgiveness of sins, in the pardon that He provides for His people. Christ's love is manifest in repeatedly forgiving and in bearing with His people in patience and in longsuffering. As the husband reflects affectionately upon all that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for poor and needy but redeemed sinners, he is given tremendous [contentment] and help in knowing how to tangibly love his wife by being quick to forgive and by being patient and longsuffering.

The husband is to love his wife even as Christ loves the Church; that's the language of Ephesians 5:25. So the question comes, how exactly does this look? Well, that requires us to first understand what Scripture teaches about Christ's love. If the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, how did Christ love the Church? Well, we're told that He set His love on His people. Think, for example, of Deuteronomy 7:7, when the Lord Jehovah is saying, "I chose to love you out of my own good pleasure." This is a commitment to choose to love, not just an emotion or the idea of falling in love. Christ is the supreme model of loving even the unlovable. In Romans 5:8 we read, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In that same context, He describes His people and His love for His people in verse 6 as those who are "ungodly," and in verse 10 as those who were "enemies." Jesus wasn't loving someone that was lovable, but rather His love is magnified in His willingness to show love even amidst all of the failings of His people.

As Christ cherishes His bride, so the husband [is called to cherish] his wife. Look at that passage in the prophet Zephaniah 3:17 where the Lord is described as rejoicing over His people with joy, rejoicing over them with singing, and so on. Well, this entails devoting time and our full attention to our wives. The language within the psalms is full of this, of the attentiveness that the Lord has toward His people in times of woe and difficulty and trial and sorrow as well as in times of triumph. His eye is constantly upon His people; indeed, His people are called "the apple of His eye."

Christ's love even makes His bride beautiful. Go back once again to Ephesians 5. Speaking of Christ, it says, "That he might present it," that is, the Church, "to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." That's the language of Scripture. The husband's love produces loveliness in their wives. We are to draw out loveliness and to cultivate greater spiritual beauty in her.

Furthermore, the husband is to praise his wife. This, of course, is a means of encouraging her and of building her up and of strengthening her, but it's also a means of giving glory to God. So in Proverbs 31:28, we're told that the husband will praise her, rise up and call her blessed. And, you think of all of the ways in which the Lord praises His bride. We sing about it in Psalm 45, in the latter part of that psalm where you have this beautiful description of how the Lord thinks of and speaks of His bride, the Church.

A husband is also to support his wife. This is another way of tangibly loving her. He, as the stronger vessel, should not burden her with things as the weaker vessel. It is sometimes, perhaps, tempting for husbands not to be tender and compassionate, and yet Christ is our ultimate example. He looked upon the multitudes with compassion, not with irritation, and not with condescension, but nine times in the gospels we're told that the Lord looked upon the multitudes with compassion. You think of how this works its way out in other aspects of the family. Notice that Paul says to fathers - different relationship but a similar principle - Paul says to the fathers, "Provoke not your children, but bring them up in the nurture of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Well, there's a similar picture here of husbands nurturing their wives in the things of the Lord. Christ, of course, is perfect. Unlike every human husband, He is perfect and He is never at blame for anything. And so, the fault in that heavenly marriage relationship has to always be on the side of the Church. Yet, unlike Adam, Christ does not take up an accusatory posture toward His bride.

Loving your wife also involves being a lifetime student of her. In 1 Peter 3:7, it says that the husband is to "dwell with them," the wives, "according to knowledge." Husbands need to grow in understanding of both their wives' verbal and nonverbal communication. Husbands, that means you need to watch and listen closely, but not to assume that you understand or know everything that is going on in her heart or mind. If in doubt, you are to ask. It takes skill to draw out of our wives the things that perhaps they don't even see themselves in an effort to serve and encourage and help them.

Let me provide a handful of examples of areas that you can explore and discuss with your wife in order to better understand her. You can talk to her about biblical doctrine. What does she know, what is she clear on, with regards to the doctrine of Scripture? Where is she perhaps weak and lacking and needing further instruction? You can of course talk to her about the home, all of the goals and responsibilities and various challenges that are being faced in the home. If you have children, it is important to talk to her about the children, how they're doing, how they're relating to her, how they relate to one another, you know, their areas of strength and weakness, what their needs are. You can talk to your wife about her responsibilities, the responsibilities that God has given to her. Or, talk to her about her own family, her extended family, or her friends. Talk to her about her areas of Christian service within the church, or her goals, her hopes, her dreams. You can talk to her about the way that you could be a better father and a husband, or what you could do that would be even more edifying. You certainly need to talk to her about her struggles and her feelings with regards to many matters. Well, even if you limit yourself to this brief list, it could provide hours of edifying discussion. But, the point is clear: husbands love their wives by pursuing a greater and deeper understanding and knowledge of who they are, both spiritually and physically, with regards to relationships and everything else. A husband's pursuit is to love, and that is a perpetual call. He is to pursue, pursue, pursue, pursue his wife in love all his days.

Well, in this lecture, we have considered the husband's role as head of his wife and his primary call to pursue his wife in love. In the next lecture, we will turn our attention to the husband's practice of godly leadership within a biblical marriage.