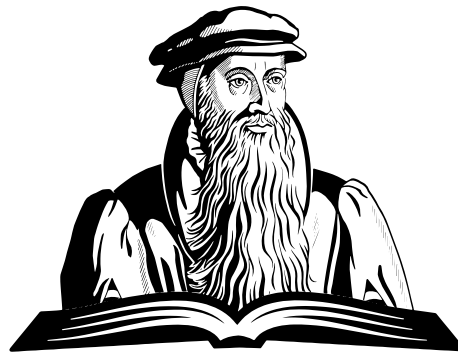

VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

LECTURE 4: SERVANT AND SHEPHERD

Lecture Presenter: Robert D. McCurley M.Div.



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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 4

SERVANT AND SHEPHERD

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 4

Think of the important relationship between a faithful shepherd and his flock of sheep. He is responsible for leading them to lush pastures for feeding and to water sources to satisfy their thirst. He guides them to shelter when a big storm comes. He protects and defends them against predators that would harm or kill them. His leading, protection, and provision are indispensable to the sheep. What would happen to a flock of sheep without a faithful shepherd? They would be scattered and left vulnerable to many dangers. Well, husbands also serve as spiritual shepherds to their wives, and for the same purpose, the purpose of leading, guiding, protecting, and providing for them. And in doing so, husbands model the Lord Jesus Christ, who serves as the Good Shepherd of His people, as we sing in Psalm 23. As we noted in the previous lecture, the exercise of godly leadership shapes the spiritual direction of the home. In other words, his role is indispensable to the well-being of his wife and family.

So what does biblical leadership include? How does being a servant relate to being a leader? More specifically, how does a godly husband spiritually shepherd his wife and family? And what does this look like in practice? In this lecture, we will study what the Bible teaches us about the exercise of the godly husband's leadership in the home. We will consider the husband's role as servant and shepherd, and his responsibility to conduct family worship.

So the husband's role is one of leadership. We must, first of all, consider the potential obstacles that men face which sometimes prevent their exercise of leadership in the home. For example, one obstacle would be fear and insecurity. After all, leadership is vulnerable, and it can also foster a fear of failure at times. But as you probably know, courage is not the absence of fear; courage is doing our duty despite our fears, even when we are fearful. And the remedy for fear is love. 1 John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." You'll find a similar idea in 2 Timothy 1:7. So love is an important part of dealing with and addressing fear. Love for Christ and the desire to please Him will fuel, of course, love for your wife, and that growing love for your wife will help in overcoming fear. Wives can assist here, of course, by enabling the heart of their husbands to safely trust in them, as Proverbs 31:11-12 teach us.

Well, another obstacle to the exercise of godly leadership is laziness. Now, the book of Proverbs has a great deal to say about the [slothful] and about slothfulness, and it's important for us to make some distinctions here because we can often think of laziness as doing nothing. But, laziness can actually masquerade in busyness, and busyness is not the same as diligence. The question is, in all that you're doing, are you motivated by what is right or by what is fun? In other words, are you being driven by what is principled or being led away by what is pleasurable? Laziness does not follow through on the principled responsibilities that have been assigned to us. So, there may be a flurry of activity, but it's not the activity that God has actually called us to give our attention to. And, in addition to not following through on these responsibilities, laziness will also be full of excuses; notice Proverbs 22:13. Being a leader, of course, is hard work, it doesn't matter what the capacity is, and so any temptation toward slothfulness will end up producing a significant hurdle that has to be addressed.

A third area or obstacle would be selfishness and pride. Christ's leadership is seen in His initiative to save His bride. In other words, His focus and His pursuit were on bringing blessing to His bride. So the husband is to

use his strength and his resources to provide physically and spiritually for those entrusted to his care. And this is not self-centered; this is other-centered. Our leadership position is, after all, not for ourselves, but rather for the benefit of those who are being led by us.

Fourthly and lastly in terms of obstacles or hurdles that men will sometimes face, the last one would be discouragement. What happens when a person becomes discouraged? Well, they lose motivation and they lose energy and they're tempted to neglect the things that are in front of them. Well, Galatians 6:9 says, "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." You understand the picture there taken from farmers; if they do not sow in the spring, then when fall comes they will not have anything to reap, and so they have to carry on in the work of sowing. So it is for the husbands. There needs to be an ability to step back and to have the big picture, to realize, though there may be struggles and difficulties at various points that could lead to discouragement, that nevertheless, we're to continue in that well-doing; we're to continue sowing in love and in service, knowing that the Lord will bring a harvest out of it for His glory.

Another aspect of this leadership is the husband's call to be the chief servant of his home. Now these two things are often set as opposites to one another. Leadership is one thing; [servanthood] is another thing, and many people think that they are incompatible, but we know that they're not incompatible because we can look at the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And what do we find? We find that Christ, who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the great and most glorious leader, we find Him serving His bride, serving His church. And, a beautiful example of this is in the Gospel of John chapter 13, if you'll look at verse 4 and following. Here is the Lord of the disciples, and He takes up the basin and the towel, He sits His disciples down, and He goes down the line, one after another, washing their feet. And as you probably know, if you know your Bible and the history that is related to it, washing a person's feet in ancient times was one of the most demeaning things a person could be called to do. In fact, they didn't even make their slaves wash the feet of another person. And yet, here is the Lord Jesus Christ taking up the basin and the towel. The Lord is serving His people or His bride. And at the end of that, Jesus tells them, 'I'm your Lord, and yet I've done these things so you should go and do likewise.' As we bring all of that to the home, we discover that the role of the husband as a leader is actually a call to servanthood.

Authority is given by God as a position of protection and servanthood. You can think of parallel examples regarding other authority structures in Scripture. The first would be the civil magistrate. The civil magistrate is to be the servant of the people, not the savior of the citizenship. The language of Romans 13 is that he is a servant, a "minister" or a servant. He's not called to be the one who uses his authority in order to gather power to himself, or prestige to himself, or to position himself in order to gain something. He's not given his position in order to fleece the people and to take what is theirs for his own benefit. But rather, his position is one of serving for the benefit of those he is called to care for.

Another example would be the elders of the church. They're called to serve the members of the congregation, not to lord over the people. That's the language the Bible uses in 1 Peter 5:3 when Peter is speaking to the elders. He says, "neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." And if you turn to that passage in Hebrews 13:17, it is discussing the responsibility of the members of the Church to obey and submit to their elders. But it tells us the whole purpose of this. We're told in that same verse that the elders' responsibility is to watch out for the souls of the people, as those who must give an account to God for them. In other words, the whole purpose of the eldership is for the benefit of the people. And so, the author to the Hebrews makes the point, it is to your detriment if you're not bringing joy to those who are called to serve to your benefit. Well, those are parallel examples, but coming back to the family, the husband is to serve his wife and family. He's also given a position of leadership for the benefit of those that he's called to care for. Go back to Ephesians 5 and note the language of verse 25 and verse 28.

So the difference between biblical authority and what we might call authoritarianism is [contained in] several things. So, biblical authority on one hand and then an unbiblical use of authority or authoritarianism. These two things can be distinguished. Authoritarianism is first of all self-serving rather than focused on those who are under them. And, this can be seen in various places; you think of Matthew 20:25 and following. Another characteristic of an unbiblical use of authority or authoritarianism is that it reaches beyond the parameters prescribed for it in the Scriptures. So a person in authority begins taking responsibilities that God never gave to them. Well, that's an abuse of authority. So there are distinctions that have to be made. The husband, after all, is himself a

man under authority. He is under God's authority, so he is not free to do what he wants or to think how he would like or to pursue the things that are in his best interests. He is a servant under the Lord. And he is therefore to carry out his Master's will and wishes in caring for his wife.

As servant, the husband is the manager of his home or a steward of his home. Leadership means that he bears the ultimate responsibility for everything in his home. Notice God's words when He first comes to Adam and Eve in the garden. What does He do? He immediately goes to Adam, and He says in Genesis 3:9, "Where art thou?", and addresses him. Why? Because Adam was the head, and Adam was responsible, ultimately, for what had taken place. So, with rule comes responsibility. Any activity that takes place in a man's home is ultimately his responsibility. Many people will take that passage from Joshua 24:14-15 and write it out and perhaps hang it up on a wall or something, but you think back to those words, 'As for me and my house, we shall serve the LORD.' How could Joshua say that? Joshua is not just speaking for himself as an individual, but he is saying, as one who is responsible, he's saying, "Both [I] and my whole house [are] going to serve the Lord. I'm going to ensure that that's the case." Well, that means all final decisions in the home are ultimately the husband's responsibility. And whereas he may gain counsel and input from other parties, he ultimately has to take the responsibility for those decisions. And, those decisions are to be made in light of God's own will, as it is found in His Word, striving for the household to serve the Lord.

Thirdly, this leadership also works its way out in terms of spiritual shepherding. Husbands are not only servants; they're also spiritual shepherds. A husband is to shepherd his wife. This brings us back to where we started at the beginning of this lecture. But what does this entail? What does it look like for a husband to be the spiritual shepherd of his wife? Well, he is to be a teacher and a spiritual mentor of his wife. Remember the words in 1 Corinthians 14 where wives are to ask their husbands at home about things that they don't understand? Well, what does that mean? It means the husband himself must be a diligent student of God's Word in order to instruct his wife. It doesn't mean that the husband knows everything, but rather that he too has to be learning; and that may take place through his study of the Bible, through reading good literature, through talking to his pastor and asking him questions, but all of that furnishes him with material with which he can instruct his wife. Think of 2 Timothy 2:15. Well, this only comes with time and effort. It's not something that will just happen automatically, and if it requires time and effort for you as a husband to be a student, where is that time going to come from? It means that you have to devote less time to other things, perhaps your hobbies, and more time to things like study, reading theology, and studying the Scriptures, and listening to sermons, and so on.

The husband is obligated to know his wife intimately. Well, that includes knowing his wife's spiritual struggles. It means knowing her besetting sins, or the sins that give her the most trouble, or the ones that she struggles with and is most vulnerable to. It means that he has to know how she's developing in terms of her understanding of the gospel or her growth in Christian maturity. It means that he needs to know the other weaknesses that she's facing as well. How can he shepherd his wife unless he first knows her? Think back to that image of the shepherd and the sheep. The shepherd has to know what the sheep needs. Is it needing water? Is it needing more grass to eat? He needs to know, perhaps, its weaknesses; it tends to be skittish and run off in certain circumstances. He'll study and know each of the sheep and what their strengths and weaknesses are.

This is reflected in the ministry that a husband has to his wife. It means being proactive and taking the initiative to discover these things. What are her strongest graces? What sins plague her most? What areas of spiritual growth is she addressing at present? Are you ensuring that she has adequate time for communion with the Lord Jesus Christ? Maybe she has many responsibilities and she's pulled in many different directions. Think of the account given to us in Luke 10:38-42. You'll remember, Jesus comes to the home of Mary and Martha, and Martha is busy with many things. And that wasn't entirely wrong. She had many responsibilities. Mary is found at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, and when there is a little bit of an objection that comes from Martha, the Lord tells her that Mary is remembering the one thing needful. Husbands need to care for and shepherd their wives by ensuring that, though they have other responsibilities that are appropriate, that they're getting adequate time and attention to spending time with the Lord, the one thing that is indeed most needful.

The husband is to wash his wife with the water of the Word; that's the language of Ephesians 5:26. And that can include reading together and studying the Bible together, memorizing Scripture together, helping in terms

of applying the scripture to her own life and circumstances. But he's responsible for washing his wife with the water of the Word.

The husband is to cherish his wife by protecting her, protecting her not just physically, but protecting her from a multitude of dangers. For example, protecting her from erroneous theology; that's far more dangerous than physical harm. Perhaps a husband needs to protect her from the influence of bad friends who aren't spiritually-minded. Sometimes he needs to protect her from assuming the wrong responsibilities, not the ones that she should be focused on, or perhaps too many responsibilities. He can protect her from unedifying habits or, of course, from dangerous places. It can even be, at times, protecting her from pressures that are brought from other people, like extended family. This is the work of a husband in shepherding his wife. He is ultimately responsible, of course, for her obedient living as a wife: "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Shepherding your wife and your family at home is a prerequisite for shepherding the Lord's people at church. So when the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3 is addressing the qualifications for men holding office as elders in the church, he actually makes this point. He says in 1 Timothy 3:5, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" And so, exercising leadership in the home is a prerequisite for exercising leadership in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another very, very important aspect of shepherding one's wife and family relates to family worship. Family worship is non-optional for a Christian home. The father is responsible to diligently instruct his family in the ways of the Lord. That's the language of Deuteronomy 6:6 and following, "And thou shalt teach them diligently" (verse 7). Since priorities are what you actually do and not what you say, that means that anchoring family worship to something in your schedule that is unchangeable becomes very important. So, it's important to anchor family worship to something unchangeable in your schedule. You want to ensure that it is a priority, that it will actually get done. Now that could be attaching family worship to family meals. That's a helpful thing. It could be that everyone is in the same place at the same time early morning, and then they scatter in different directions. Or perhaps everyone is together in the house before bed, before they all go to rest. It could be breakfast or dinner or something else as well, but you need to make sure that family worship is taking place. This is a stated time to ensure that you as a husband are shepherding your family. I would recommend setting a designated time for family worship, perhaps in the morning and in the evening, which would be similar to the morning and evening sacrifice in the Old Testament. This should begin on the wedding night, not just when children come along. A Christian home is established when a man and a woman become husband and wife, and it is a Christian family at that moment, and family worship should begin at that moment as well.

Well, for some of you, you're wondering about how exactly this is to be applied. So let me give you some practical suggestions for leading family worship. At the very center of it, of course, is the Bible, and so you should always read a passage of Scripture, and it would be very good to have a system, perhaps, for reading through the Bible. Reading the Bible together every day with your wife and, if you have children, with your family is where they will learn to master the content of the Scriptures. And so we need to be in the Word. That reading can be followed by making brief comments on the passage, in other words, explaining what it means. Now, there may be questions that you don't know the answers to, and it may not be very deep or complicated explanations, but you can point out things in the passage that are pertinent to your family and help them to understand what it means, but also, to be looking for applications of the passage to yourself, as well as to your wife and perhaps geared to your children as well, helping them understand how not just to be a hearer of the Word but a doer also, how it can be practically applied to their life.

Prayer should also be included. For example, praying at the beginning of family worship and then again at the conclusion of family worship would be appropriate. During one of the prayers it would be good to list specific needs of the family or of your congregation or those you know. This will strengthen your family's faith in seeing God answering the prayers that you have as a family lifted up before Him. You should also sing the psalms in family worship, thereby causing the Word of Christ to "dwell in you richly," as you see in Colossians 3. The singing of God's Word puts it in our hearts and not just in our heads, and it exerts a powerful sanctifying influence upon us. And this will also help you and your wife and children to become more familiar with the psalms that they will sing in church. You can learn new ones. You can even make a point to try to memorize portions of the

metrical Psalter together, singing the Psalms together. These can then be sung from memory in the car on the way to church or on trips and other occasions.

Another thing that might be helpful would be to discuss the sermons you hear at church. This review of the sermons will actually increase the benefits that your wife and family receive under the preaching of the Word. The minister goes and sows the good seed of the Word into your hearts and minds, and you're coming along behind as the shepherd of your home, trying to cultivate and nurture that seed in your own heart and in the hearts of your family. You can especially discuss the application of the preaching to your individual lives.

Another element that can be very helpful would be to catechize your wife and children, and I would recommend using the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which is especially useful for these particular purposes. Catechizing is a time-tested means of helping you and your wife and your children to learn spiritual discernment by mastering biblical doctrine. It enables you to define the truth clearly and to distinguish it from falsehood. It will protect your family from being fooled by bad doctrine. Think of the end of Hebrews 5, where he distinguishes between those who are only taking milk and those who are able to eat strong meat because they've had their senses exercised to discern or distinguish between good and evil.

Now, as a wise shepherd, you will need to adapt the way that you conduct family worship to the needs of your own family and even to the various stages of your family's development. With little children, it may be different than when the children are older and wisdom will be needed. I'm giving you suggestions that may serve as some help, but you'll have to adapt these things to your own circumstances.

The husband's constant example and his speech are also training. They're training his wife, either positively or negatively, either by things that you leave undone that should be done, or things that you do that shouldn't be done. The classroom is actually all day long, not just at family worship. If you go back to that passage in Deuteronomy 6:7, he not only says "diligently teach," but he says, "Talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." And so it is a whole life shepherding and discipleship. Your actions will often speak louder than your words.

Also, Christian education is non-optional for a Christian home. Paul warns us in Colossians 2:8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." You compare that to the language of 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. This takes us beyond what we can cover here, but Christian education is indispensable to biblical leadership and shepherding in the home.

Well, by way of conclusion, some of you may be tempted to be thinking to yourself, "You don't know my wife, Pastor. All of the things that you're saying are fine, but you don't know my wife." And that is of course, true. I don't know your wife. But I do know another wife. And here, I'm thinking of Christ's wife, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, you look in the Old Testament at all of the weaknesses, all of the waywardness, all of the failures, all of the fragility of the Old Testament Church. You look in the New Testament, and you find the same thing. It is an example of the most imperfect, at times hard-headed, stubborn, and sinful, of wives. And yet, the Church is married to the most perfect of all husbands, a Husband who is lovingly pursuing and leading His wife. And so I may not know your wife, but the Lord Jesus Christ does, and He knows His wife, the Church. And therefore, you have a great example that is set before you.

I don't know your own struggles, but when we're brought to see afresh our own bankruptcy, and when we're brought under the light of God's Word to see our own sin, it should humble us in repentance and it should send us running again to the Lord Jesus Christ. And in going to Christ, we are quieted by His love for us, His bride. This in itself further strengthens us in grace and enables us to love our own wives in mercy. All of this pertains to the glory of Christ and the gospel in our homes. In the next two lectures, we will explore what the Bible teaches about the role and responsibilities of a godly wife.