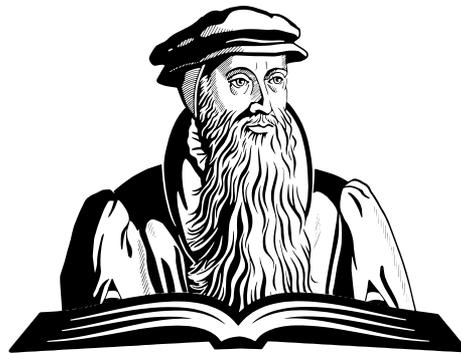

VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

LECTURE 6: GODLY WIVES 2

Lecture Presenter: Robert D. McCurley M.Div.



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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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
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7. Communication
8. Finances and Physical Relationship

Lecture 6

GODLY WIVES 2

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 6

Even children know the difference between common stones that you find in the street and precious stones that you might see in a ring. Precious stones like diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and emeralds are rare, and they are truly beautiful to behold. People devote massive effort to digging and mining for these stones, and others are prepared to pay large sums of money to purchase them for jewelry and similar uses. When God describes a godly wife in the Bible, He compares her to a rare, beautiful stone. Proverbs 31:10 says, “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.” The unbelieving world overlooks and even despises the kind of woman that God considers to be a true gem, but Christians believe that “a prudent wife is from the LORD,” as we are told in Proverbs 19:14. How does the knowledge of Christ motivate a godly wife? What are a wife’s top priorities and goals in a biblical marriage? How does her inward character shape and influence everything else that God calls her to do? And in light of a wife’s many responsibilities, how does communion with Christ fit into her thinking and living? In this lecture, we will continue to explore what the Bible teaches about the place of wives within a biblical marriage, and we’ll begin by considering a wife’s motivations.

What is it that motivates her, that drives her, that fuels all that she does? And there are a couple of things here that are important to highlight. First of all, she is to maintain a Christ-centered perspective. In other words, wives, you are to look past your husband to Christ, Who stands behind him. That’s why Ephesians 5:22 says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” Your gaze is to go beyond your husband to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Now, when your husband loves you, what should the impact be? It should tangibly warm your heart to Christ’s greater love. You should see in your husband’s love a little picture, a little glimmer, of the love that Christ bears towards you. Your personal submission to Christ has a practical impact on your marriage because you submit to Christ how? By tangibly submitting to your husband who Christ has put over you. You can’t say, “I’m submissive to Christ” and not be submissive to your husband. And, it is far easier to be submissive to Christ. Christ is worthy of such devotion, even when your husband is not.

Conversely, rebelling against your husband is actually rebelling against Christ, which is a heinous sin. Think of how 1 Samuel 15:23 describes rebellion. It says that it is “as the sin of witchcraft.” This Christ-centered approach explains why the consequences of a wife’s disobedience are so significant. It does not just affect the good name of the woman or even of the family, but rather the good name of our Savior. It is His name that is impugned. In Titus 2:4-5, when it’s addressing the young women, it says that they are to be obedient to their own husbands “that the word of God be not blasphemed.” It is God’s Word that ends up being dishonored. You also know that the gospel is distorted. If the relationship of the wife to her husband is a reflection of the relationship of the church to Christ, then her unwillingness to submit, of course, skews or distorts a true understanding of the gospel. Your submission to your husband illustrates even for him, as well as for the world, the church’s submission to Christ.

This Christ-centered perspective, also addresses one of the wives’ primary temptations, and that pertains to fear. That fear, of course, can be prompted by an obvious sense of vulnerability. I mean, you are being called upon to follow a man, a husband, who is not perfect, who makes mistakes, who is not as fully godly as he could

or should be. That can engender a measure of fear and vulnerability. But following your husband is really about trusting the Lord and trusting His Word and His ways. So faith, and the increase of faith, is actually the remedy for fear. And this all comes together in the context of wives.

Notice the connection between faith and fear in that section of 1 Peter 3:5-6. We read, "For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." Do you see the connection between trusting the Lord and not being afraid? In the first section, it says these women of old were trusting the Lord like Sarah was, and those who follow that same godly example are those who are "not afraid with any amazement." And so the remedy for fear is an increase of faith, of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. So there's this Christ-oriented perspective.

But then, secondly, there's also a husband-oriented perspective. You know from what we covered in previous lectures that your husband cannot replace Jesus in your life. Christ is given the preeminent place. The relationship with your husband is temporary and secondary, whereas your relationship to Christ is permanent and primary, but your earthly responsibility is to care for your husband and to please him. When Paul is writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 7, he's talking about singleness and marriage, and in addressing those that are married, he says, in verse 34, "She that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." And so a godly woman's focus, and her goal, is to please her husband, not herself. Now this is not the same as being a people-pleaser, because ultimately, the motivation is Christ-centered. Ultimately, the motivation is to please the Lord Jesus Christ in seeking to please a husband's godly desires, as Colossians 3:23 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

But, this means that a wife must learn how to please her husband. This isn't something that is automatic or something that comes naturally. It is something that is to be studied. She needs to learn what his desires are, his goals are, his priorities are for their marriage, and for the family, as he's seeking to follow the Lord and to lead his wife and family in a way that will glorify the Lord. That has to be learned. What exactly are his goals and priorities?

She is to do her utmost to create a happy haven of rest, to do him good and not evil, which includes cultivating a peaceful and a loyal relationship where the husband's heart can safely trust in his wife. Proverbs 31 makes reference to this in verses 11 and 12. The motivation for serving one's husband must not be self-serving. So, you'll remember that love is giving and not getting. And yet, it can be tempting at times to give in order to get something in return, but the motivation to serve one's husband can't be a secret way of seeking to serve one's self.

That brings us, secondly, to considering a wife's goals. What are a wife's chief priorities? Well, a wife's number one priority is cultivating her fellowship and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The more you as a wife are growing in intimacy with and obedience to Jesus, the more you will be growing in the depths of intimacy and obedience with your husband. First and foremost, a godly wife must fear the Lord. Without this priority, everything else will fail. Everything else will be in vain. But her first priority after the Lord is to be serving as a helpmeet to her husband. We saw that at the very beginning, in the last lecture in Genesis 2:20 and following, that was the design that God had created for marriage. This means organizing your decisions as a wife throughout the day in terms of meeting your husband's goals and his desires for the family. That means asking yourself questions and determining how you're going to allot your time and what you are going to put first on a list of things to do in contrast to something that might be on the bottom of that list. Are the things at the top of the list in keeping with the goals that the husband has set for the family?

This priority also entails a wife loving her husband first, and then her children second, before the rest of the world. So sometimes those who have children, mothers, can sometimes push their children to the fore as the number one priority, and the husband is relegated to something else. But biblically speaking, loving your husband is first, and your children are actually second, and then after your children come other responsibilities that God calls you to. You see this in Titus 2:4. This is why the Bible says that a godly wife is to be a "keeper at home," or, it could be translated a "worker" at home in Titus 2:5. Now this text applies to all wives, both those with children and those without children; they're all to be keepers at home. This passage is not talking about the impermissibility of women working or making money, that's clear from Proverbs 31. Rather, it is saying that a wife's world, if you will, and priorities are to be centered on diligently fulfilling her responsibilities at home. So

the focus of her world is on the home, and everything else is to work around that. It means, as we saw in a previous lecture, that she's also to be her husband's chief disciple; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 tell us this.

And after a woman's priorities at home, her husband and then her children, her next priority is ministering to other women in the church. So again, Titus 2 helps us here in verses 3 and 4. The women who have gained maturity and godliness and experience are to take all of that - from their study of the Scriptures and from working all of that out in an application into their lives - they're to take all of that wisdom and they're to impart it to other women, less mature or younger women in the church, so that even those who have reached older years are to use their time and energy in caring for other women in the church. When the home becomes empty of children, it is to be replaced with discipling and serving younger women. This involves, as I noted, taking lessons that you have learned in applying the Scripture and communicating that to other ladies.

Thirdly, we need to consider a wife's godly character and demeanor, and it would be helpful for you to consider the description provided in Proverbs 31. In fact, if you have your Bible, you might wish to open to that. Let me direct your attention to highlighting just a handful of the things that are given to us there. We're told that a virtuous woman is industrious, and this is clear in verses 10 and following. It includes caring for her family's clothing; look at verse 13, as well as verses 21-22 and verse 24. It includes caring for her family's food; you see that in verses 14-15. But beyond that, we're told that she is generous to those outside the home, generous to those who are in need. She's identifying needs and looking for ways to provide for them. You see that in verse 20. We're told that she supports and furthers her husband's success in verse 23. We're told that she is careful and financially prudent in verse 16. And, we're told that she uses her tongue for wisdom and kindness in verse 26. Lastly, we're told that in all of these things, she is diligent (Proverbs 31:27 and 31).

Turning our attention to other places in Scripture, we discover many other aspects of a godly wife's character. She is to be respectful to her husband. We've seen that in Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3. But, this is especially manifest in the way that she speaks both to him and how she speaks of him to other people. Notice the language of 1 Peter 3:6. When Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:13, he says that the godly woman is not an idle busybody. She is not an idle busybody. Her hands are full of good labor, of godly labor, and she's not lazily interfering, as it were, in other people's business. Now that takes place in a lot of ways, and in our modern context, it perhaps expresses itself most of all through the computer online. Things like texting and social media and things like that have become very popular, and they can easily become a trap in which you become an idle busybody busying yourself in other people's business and their private matters, rather than focusing your attention on what God has called you to.

Another description that the Lord gives is that a godly woman is to exemplify chaste and reverent behavior (1 Peter 3:2). That includes practical things. Her godliness is expressed, for example, in modesty, in modest dress or apparel; 1 Timothy 2:9 teaches this, as well as 1 Peter 3:3. She's also to be sensible, pure, and kind (Titus 2:5). And that well-known text in 1 Peter 3:4 [says that] a godly wife is to adorn herself with a "meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." Now the world, of course, will not put much value on this at all, and there may even be times when those within the church don't value it as they ought. But, the godly wife will find her heart aroused by the thought that God Himself considers the meekness and quietness of spirit that she is exhibiting to be of great price, of great value. We're also told that a godly wife is to be prudent (Proverbs 19:14). And, if she has children, then she is to raise those children in the fear of God; one example of that would be Proverbs 6:20-21. And, as we noted earlier, she's to live in a way, in a manner, that the heart of her husband will safely trust in her (Proverbs 31:11).

And above all, the capstone, if you will, or we could say the foundation of everything else, in a godly wife's character and demeanor is that she fears God (Proverbs 31:30). The fear of the Lord is the soul of godliness. It is the primary description that we have both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament of the people of God; they are those who fear the Lord. They're conscious of God's glory and exaltation; they're conscious of God's presence; and they're conscious of all that God calls them to be and do in His Word.

As we noted in the last lecture, relating to your earthly husband is just one more way of walking with your heavenly Husband. And in all of the many distractions life entails, a godly wife must remember the "one thing needful." That language is taken from the account given to us of Jesus in Bethany at the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. And you'll remember the scenario there, how Martha was cumbered, she was busy with

many things, she was busy serving and caring for the needs, and there was Mary sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Martha, of course, complained about Mary not helping her. And Jesus tells her, “No, Mary has actually chosen the better part. She’s remembering the one thing needful.” What Martha was doing is commendable; it has its place. But what Mary was doing in sitting at the feet of the Savior is the one thing needful, the first priority that a woman is to pursue. Wives have many responsibilities.

So, let me conclude with an illustration which may serve as a stimulus to wives who seek to walk in fellowship with Christ amid very busy schedules. A number of ministers were assembled in the home of one of them for the discussion of difficult questions. And it was asked how the command to “pray without ceasing” could be complied with, so you had various ministers putting forward various ideas. And at length, one of the number was appointed to write an essay upon this theme to be read at the next meeting.

Well, there was a plain, sensible servant girl who was in the house, and she overheard this. And she exclaimed, “What! A whole month waiting to tell the meaning of that text? It is one of the easiest and best texts in the Bible!”

“Well, well,” said one of the old ministers, “Mary, what can you say about it? Let us know how you understand it. Can you pray all the time?”

“Oh, yes, sir,” she said.

“What? When you have so many things to do?”

“Why, sir, the more I have to do, the more I can pray.”

“Indeed,” said the minister, “Well, Mary, do let us know how it is, for most people think otherwise.”

And here’s the answer that she gave. “Why, sir,” said the girl, “when I first open my eyes in the morning, I pray that the Lord would open the eyes of my understanding; and while I am dressing, I pray that I may be clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. And when I have washed me, I pray for the washing of regeneration; and as I begin to work, I pray that I may have strength equal to my day. And when I began to kindle the fire, I pray that God’s work may revive in my soul. And as I sweep out the house, I pray that my heart may be cleansed from all its impurities. And while preparing and partaking of my breakfast, I desire and pray to be fed with the hidden manna and the sincere milk of the Word. And as I am busy with the little children, I look up to God as my reconciled Father in Christ and pray for the Spirit of adoption, that I may know myself more assuredly as His child. And so on all the day long, everything I do furnishes me with a thought for prayer.”

“Enough, enough!” exclaimed the old minister. “These things are revealed to babes and often hid from the wise and prudent.” He said, “Go on, Mary, pray without ceasing; and, as for us, my brethren,” speaking to the other ministers, “let us bless the Lord for this wonderful practical exposition, and remember that He has said the meek will He guide in judgment.”

And of course, after this, the essay was considered no longer necessary.

So, in conclusion, in the last four lectures, we have considered what the Bible teaches about the distinct roles and responsibilities of a godly husband and a godly wife. In the next two lectures, we will return to the theme discussed in the opening lectures about the priority of unity in a godly marriage. In doing so, we will explore some of the practical areas where this unity should be pursued.