

Last month I took the opportunity to address God's Will for Mothers .

This morning, being Father's Day, I want to again take up a similar challenge.

It's not an understatement to say it's hard work being a father or even a mother.

Both have their roles, responsibilities and challenges.

But we could equally say it's hard work being a husband or a wife.

If you want a great marriage and to be a great parent then you have to roll up your sleeves and get busy with the responsibilities God has given you.

If you're like me, you're probably asking, "What are they?"

I have grouped a few of them into 2 areas that I would like for us to consider this morning.

But before we talk about the relationship every father has with his wife and children, I want to address the first responsibility...

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Do you love Him with all your heart?

Before you answer that question, consider these:

Are you saved?

1 John 5:1 says, “Whoever *believes* that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever *loves* the Father loves the child born of Him.”

There are two key words in this verse:
"believes" and "loves"

John uses the word "believes" in 5:1; 5:5; 5:10.

When John uses this word, he always has in mind a belief that is more than intellectual knowledge.

It's a belief that manifests itself in practical righteousness.

If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, then it will affect how you live as well as what you believe.

You cannot say you believe Jesus is the Christ or the Messiah and then say you believe He did not come "from God" (4:3).

Nor can you say you "have fellowship with [God] and yet walk in the darkness" (1:6). John says if this is the case, you "lie and do not practice the truth" (1:6).

The same is true when John uses the word "love."

If you truly love "the Father" you also love "the child born of Him" (5:1).

In other words, you love other believers.

John says in 2:9-11, "The one who says he is in the Light and yet *hates* his brother is in the darkness until now. 10 The one who *loves* his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who *hates* his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

In 3:14 he says, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we *love* the brethren. He who does not *love* abides in death."

Jesus defined believing as continuing in His Word in John 8:31.

In John 2:23-24, John says that when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many *believed* in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not *entrusting* Himself to them, for He knew all men."

The word "entrusting" is translated "commit" in the NKJV and "trust" in the NLT.

This is the same Greek word used in verse 23 translated "believed."

To "believe" is to "commit" or "trust."

Paul uses the words "believe", "believes" and "believed" in Romans 10:4, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16.

He also uses the word "faith" in verses 6, 8, 17.

It's clear from verse 1 that the subject is "salvation" as he expresses his "heart's desire and...prayer to God for [Israel] is for their salvation."

But the reason why many were not saved is because they sought to "establish their own" righteousness and "did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (v.3).

They had "a zeal for God, but it was "not conditioned nor characterized by a complete but a partial, insufficient knowledge, which because insufficient, led them astray as to the method whereby they could appropriate salvation" (Kenneth Wuest, Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek NT: Romans 10:2).

The apostle knew from his own experience as a radically zealous Pharisee that most Jews of that day were very religious but yet far from God.

He testified to the Galatians: “For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions” (Gal. 1:13–14).

You can have a zeal for God but it must be according to knowledge that is subjected to the righteousness of God.

Therefore, it must be according to faith and belief in Jesus.

Specifically verses 9-10 says, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and *believe* in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person *believes*, resulting in righteousness, and

with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

So Paul says to believe or have faith in God is to confess Jesus as Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

1 Corinthians 12:3 says "no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

So the act of believing and confession is a supernatural act from God.

You say, I am saved but...

Do you enjoy fellowship with Christ and His Redeemed People?

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but

encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Some have no problem staying away from the fellowship of God's people.

Others can't stay away.

Which are you?

But it's not just fellowship with God's people.

It's also fellowship with Christ Himself.

Do you enjoy that kind of fellowship?

We have time together on Sunday fellowshiping with Christ but we also enjoy that sweet fellowship with Him throughout the week as we spend personal time with Him in prayer and His Word.

Let's take our initial question further...

Do you tend to hate the world and its evil?

1 John 2:15-17 gives us this test:

He says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."

Are you drawn to the things of the world?

Does the world occupy your affections?

That's why Paul says in Romans 12:1-2 to "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual

service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world (i.e., do not let this world mold you in its image), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Another question we should ask is...

Are you obedient to God's Word?

Looking again at 1 John 2, John says in verses 3-5 says, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we *keep* His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not *keep* His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever *keeps* His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him."

Three times he talks about *keeping* God's commandments.

Is His commandments limited to the 10 listed in Exodus 20?

No. It applies it to all of God's Word.

Obedying God's Word is synonymous with keeping of obeying His commandments.

Let's ask another question...

Do you see a decreasing of sin in your life?

John said in 1 John 3:5-6, "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him."

Throughout chapter 3, John uses the word "practice."

If you "practice" sin, he says, you "practice" lawlessness (v.4) or you're "of the devil" (v.8).

But John also says, "the one who *practices* righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous" (v.7).

Therefore, "no one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him" (v. 6).

One of the clear signs of the transformation of the Thessalonians was their eagerness to "wait for His Son [Jesus] from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:10).

Not only did they manifest a "work of faith and labor of love" (1:3) but also a "steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:3).

Do you await the coming of the Jesus Christ?

1 John 3:2-3 says, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

Now there are many more questions we can ask related to salvation but I think you get the point.

The first priority of a father or anyone for that matter is to evaluate in their life whether they have been born from above or not.

In order to be a good husband and father, I must truly know Jesus Christ and live in obedience to His Word.

That doesn't mean I am perfect.

I will make mistakes.

I will sin but I don't have to make those choices.

As a believer I now have the ability to do what is right.

That's because God has given me His Holy Spirit.

And anytime I refuse to walk by the Spirit, I'm going to manifest the works of the flesh and therefore demonstrate the behavior similar to my old life.

So fathers, putting it as simply as I can, "Do you love Jesus?"

Do you love Him, as Matthew 22:37 says, "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."?

If you have answered yes, let me ask, "do you still love Him?"

If there is a hesitation in your answer, it must indicate something further to consider like having lost your first love.

The church at Ephesus was guilty of that and many people in here are guilty as well.

The remedy is to "remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first" (Rev.2:5).

Once you evaluate your spiritual life, then you can adequately evaluate your responsibilities as a husband and father.

Let's consider now your...

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR WIFE

Ephesians 5:25 says you are to love her as Christ loves the church.

Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."

You say, "What does it mean to love your wife like Christ loved the church?"

It's a reference to death.

Jesus loved the church by dying for the church or as Ephesians 5:25 states by "[giving] Himself up for her."

That's not hard to understand but I immediately see a danger in our response to this verse.

It's easy for us husbands to say, "Yes I am willing to give up my life for my wife."

"I am willing to die for her."

I believe Paul has in mind something more than our *future* death.

He is talking about our *present* death.

Are you dying for her right now?

Are you giving yourself up for her?

Colossians 3:19 gives the parallel, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them."

John MacArthur says, "If a loving husband is willing to sacrifice his life for his wife, he is certainly willing to make lesser sacrifices for her. He puts his own likes, desires, opinions,

preferences, and welfare aside if that is required to please her and meet her needs. He dies to self in order to live for his wife, because that is what Christ's kind of love demands. That is his submission.”

It's the little sacrifices I'm referring to.

Any manifestation of love toward your wife calls for a death of self because that's what true love is.

It loves sacrificially and without conditions.

Do you see why I began with your relationship to God?

Without it you are hopeless as well as clueless of what God requires of you.

Ephesians 5:26-29 reveals how you are to love your wife...by meeting her spiritual needs. Verse 28-29 her physical needs.

You meet her spiritual needs by leading her in the Word and her physical needs by loving her as you love yourself.

Listen to what he says...

Jesus gave Himself for the church that "He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church." (Eph.5:26-29).

When you "sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (v.26), you are setting her apart to holiness.

The word "sanctify" (hagiazō) means "to separate from profane things and dedicate to God, to purify, set apart" (Strong) (see 1 Thess. 4:4)

You cannot cleanse her without first setting her apart "with the word."

This means you do not expose or incite her to sin.

Notice I said "expose" and "excite" her to sin.

John MacArthur again says, "Love wants only the best for the one it loves, and it cannot bear for a loved one to be corrupted or misled by anything evil or harmful."

This means that you promote holiness in her life by first exhibiting a godly lifestyle in front of her and second by not violating the Word.

So, don't pull her into your sin.

If you're reading porn, or watching filthy movies or tv shows, don't pull her into your sin.

Of course, if this is a part of your life you need to back up and evaluate yourself to see if your saved or being disobedient to God's Word and repent!

Because "the love husbands are commanded to have for their wives is also a love that seeks and protects the purity of its object.

When a man truly loves his wife, her purity should be his supreme concern.

No one would want to defile a person whom he really loves.

Husbands, if you really love your wife, you'll hate anything that defiles her.

Whatever threatens to steal her purity will become to you a mortal enemy" (John MacArthur, *Successful Christian Parenting*, p. 172).

Paul says in verse 27 that your desire should be to present your wife to Christ as having no "spot or wrinkle or any such thing" to which they are made unholy.

"Spot" refers to a "speck or stain" (Rienecker).

"Wrinkle" (putis) literally means "a fold and originally referred to a wrinkle or fold on the face" (Rienecker).

Right now we are imperfect but one day Christ will present us without imperfection.

Lenski says the church in her present state "passes through this sinful world and still battles with the flesh, the church has many "a stain" of sin splashed upon her from without, many "a wrinkle" due to faults in her own body, also other things of this kind...The world about the church causes the stains, the flesh still in her causes the wrinkles."

As such, all husbands are to love their wives in such a way not to ignore the imperfections but "sanctify" her with the Word so that she may be "holy and blameless" (v.27).

Lastly let's consider...

YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO YOUR CHILDREN

Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

There are two main points made here:

First, don't provoke your children to anger and second bring them up in the "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

You do both by fearing the Lord and by teaching them to do the same.

Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted mouth, I hate."

Teach your kids what the Bible says about sin.

Teach them what God thinks about it.

Proverbs 6:16-19 says he hates it.

You as a father must hate sin and demonstrate that to your children.

Remember, they will always imitate you, especially your sin.

You must teach them to imitate the Lord.

To do that you must live it in front of them.

As Proverbs 23:17 says, you must "live in the fear of the Lord always."

Because a father was by far the dominant figure in the households of that day, he was the parent who would most often provoke his children to anger.

But a mother is obviously capable of doing the same thing, and she is no more justified in doing it than is a father.

Harvard University sociologists Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck developed a test (that proved to be 90 percent accurate) to determine whether or not five- and six-year-olds would become delinquent.

They discovered that the four primary factors necessary to prevent delinquency are: the father's firm, fair, and consistent discipline; the mother's supervision and companionship during the day; the parent's demonstrated affection for each other and for the children; and the family's spending time together in activities where all participated (*Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1950], pp. 257–71).

The Christian psychiatrist Dr. Paul Meier gives a similar list of factors that produce right parent-child relations: genuine love of the parents for each other and for the children; firm, consistent discipline; consistency of standards

for parents and children; the right example by parents; and the father as true head of the home. He also comments that the vast majority of neurotics have grown up in homes where there was no father or where he was dominated by the mother (Christian Child–Rearing and Personality Development [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980], pp. 81–82).

To provoke ... to anger suggests a repeated, ongoing pattern of treatment that gradually builds up a deep–seated anger and resentment that boils over in outward hostility.

Such treatment is usually not intended to provoke ... anger. Often it is thought to be for the child's good.

If it's not overprotection or favoritism, it's pushing achievement beyond reasonable bounds or even discouragement.

Fathers, we must make sure we do not do this but bring them up to fear God.

CONCLUSION

Are you saved?

Are you loving your wife as Christ loved the church?

Are you bringing your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

I trust this day will include such an evaluation.

Let's pray.

LIFE APPLICATION

Define love.

What does it mean to love as Christ loved the church?

In what ways do we provoke our children to anger?