

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 23 February 2020. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

God's Handbook for Husbands

Several years ago, I saw the title of an article in *U.K. Mail Online* entitled, "Surprise! There Really Are Differences between Men and Women." Yes, the author actually went out on a limb and declared that there may be some differences in the way men and women think! Now, a title like this *should* seem like a joke to any rational person; but to the so-called "experts" who gathered this "information," this is profound stuff. They came to this conclusion after blowing lots of money, and probing the lives of tens of thousands of people. (Even then, they were very cautious and inconclusive about it!)

Why is a revelation like this so "shocking" to our modern world? Because the God-hating, evolutionary humanists who control our society are doing their best to confuse and blur (if not completely reverse) the God-given roles of husbands and wives, parents and children. The very idea that the man should be the head of his home is treated with utmost scorn in the schools and universities, in the business world, and in society at large. Christians who believe what the Bible says about these matters are treated as relics of a dark, ignorant age—as intellectual "misfits."

However, this reversal of the roles of man and wife is not new. It has been one of Satan's best strategies against mankind since the Garden of Eden. By inspiration of God, the prophet Isaiah preached to the nation of Israel about this very thing, seven hundred years before Christ was born. He cried, "***As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths***" (Isaiah 3:12). This is exactly where we are in our society today! Most men are not the leaders of their homes.

However, I am not here to talk about the dysfunction of fathers in the world out there. I'm here to address us husbands (and *future* husbands) who know Christ as Saviour. Men, we have a tremendous responsibility before God regarding our wives. If you have been saved, Satan can't take your soul; but he can influence your thinking, so that you will be spiritually ineffective. Among the many plans Satan has for you, he desires to have you neglect your responsibility of being the spiritual leader and protector of your wife. He wants to convince you that being the provider of *material* means for your wife and children is enough. He wants you to seek after the self-satisfaction of personal achievement, rather than the duty of leading your wife in the ways of the Lord. He knows that if he can get you to shun these duties, there will be spiritual discord in your home.

It is imperative that we Christian husbands know what God expects of us. There are many passages in the New Testament that address husbands; however, in the *one verse* that we'll be studying this morning, there is more than enough for us to digest. So, let us get into the Scripture. This message is entitled ***God's Handbook for Husbands***.

Read 1 Peter 3:7.

Peter gives four distinct commands in this verse; but the first of these commands is to " ***dwell***" with your wife " ***according to knowledge.***" This command is foundational to the other three. Let's examine it.

I. What is means to "dwell with your wife according to knowledge"

What, exactly, does Peter mean when he commands husbands to “*dwell with them according to knowledge*”? Of what “*knowledge*” is Peter speaking? He’s speaking of *every* area of knowledge! Christian husband, you need to be working toward a “Ph.D.” on your wife! You need to know all about your wife’s person—both **physically, emotionally, and spiritually**. Many men jokingly say, “Women! You can’t understand them: so why bother?” A *Christian* husband, however, should have a completely different attitude. We’d *better* be seeking to understand our wives, because God has *commanded* us to do so!

So, what *does* it mean to dwell with your wife according to knowledge? Well, for one thing, it means that if your wife have a spiritual weakness, you need to be prepared to instruct her gently in that area—and, more importantly, to lead her by example. This requires that you diligently study God’s Word. The Bible is the only place where you will find the answers to your wife’s spiritual needs. The command to “*study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” isn’t just for pastors; it is for *you*, husband (2 Timothy 2:15)! When your wife has *emotional* needs, or *physical* needs, you need to be prepared to help her in those ways, as well. Again, this requires knowledge of, and adherence to, God’s Word. In 2 Peter 1:3, Peter says that God has given us “*all* (not “some,” but “all”) *things that pertain unto life and godliness*” (2 Peter 1:3). Dwelling with your wife according to knowledge requires that you study God’s Word. However, it also requires that you study *your wife*! It requires that you seek to know and understand everything about her, and then evaluate her needs in light of Scripture.

Accomplishing the commands in this verse requires spiritual maturity, men. It requires a daily putting on of *the “mind of Christ.”* Why? Because this wisdom does not come naturally. It can come only through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in your mind and heart.

Read Ephesians 4:17-24.

An unsaved man would take offense at the idea that he needs special enlightenment from God’s Word in order to be the right kind of husband. He thinks, “I know how to be a good husband. I work hard. I take care of my wife and family. I win the bread. If there be a God, what more can He expect of me?” A lost man does not understand that without God in his life, all his toil under the sun is ultimately “*vanity* (emptiness), *and vexation of spirit*.” He doesn’t understand that without God, there is “*no profit*” in his labour (Ecclesiastes 2:11). However, a saved man *can* have the assurance that his “*labour is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Now, please don’t misunderstand: unsaved men do have a measure of understanding concerning their duties as men. God wired men to be the natural achievers and protectors of their families. This is why Paul wrote, “*But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*” (1 Timothy 5:8). In other words, even an unbeliever can understand his need to achieve and provide for his family! By the way, God ordained that the man is to be the *primary* provider for his family. This doesn’t mean that women can’t work outside the home to provide *supplementary* income, if needed. However, the idea that a man is to be the main “bread winner” for his family is a biblical concept, which cannot be improved upon. When a wife (even a Christian wife) seeks a career outside the home in order to fulfil some kind of need to be a “success,”

she is not thinking with the mind of Christ. Being a “*help meet*” to your husband, and being a “*keeper at home*,” and bringing up children to love and serve God, is the “career” that *God* has given to ladies; and it is the most important and honourable career in the world! Let’s go back to the beginning, and see what God said about husbands’ and wives’ roles.

Read Genesis 3:16-19.

Read Titus 2:1-5.

God has ordained for wives to bear children and to be keepers at home; and He has ordained for men to be providers and protectors. However, here is the problem: *sin* has warped and destroyed the God-given “achievement” instinct in men. Because sin has shattered man’s *spiritual* understanding, the “*natural man*” (the unsaved man) cannot understand the real reason *why* he should strive to strive, protect, and achieve on behalf of his wife. This leads me to the second point regarding this subject:

II. Things that *prevent* husbands from “dwelling with their wives according to knowledge”

As I just mentioned, *sin* has warped and destroyed the God-given instinct of achievement in men. What are some of these faulty, sin-warped notions about “achievement” that keep men from “knowing” their wives to the extent that they should? What can keep us husbands from fulfilling this command to dwell with our wives according to knowledge?

Well, one way that sin destroys the “achievement” instinct is by causing a husband to be **lazy**—or, by causing him to *misuse* the resources that he has worked to achieve. Let’s see what Paul said about it.

Read Ephesians 4:28.

In one short verse, Paul addresses two wrong attitudes concerning work. (This principle applies both to men and women; but since men are to be the main providers for their families, the greatest weight of this command falls on the man.) First of all, men are **not to steal**, but to **labour**. No Christian man should be guilty of stealing, in any form. (By the way, “stealing” includes failing to give an employer your best day’s work.) **Laziness** should not be part of any Christian man’s life. However, this is not the only thing that Paul commands. Not only *should* a man labour, but he should labour for the right *reason*. The *reason* a man should labour is that he might be able to “**give to him that needeth.**” *Giving* out of a heart of love should be a foundational character trait of every Christian man; and it all begins with our giving to *God*.

One of the main causes of problems in marriage is, and always has been, tension over *money*. However, for a Christian family, this should not be! When a husband and wife view money in the right way (that is, that their money is not their own, but *God’s*), they will be wise stewards of their money. To begin with, they will **set aside ten percent** of their income for the Lord, no matter what financial pressures they may be facing at the moment; and they will trust the Lord to enable them to give even *beyond* their tithe. They will give to **missions**. They will dig even a little deeper, and **help those around them** who are in need. Also, they will be *content* with such things as they have. (Hence, they won’t blame *each other* for what they

“don’t have.”) They won’t horde their money, or blow it on luxuries of this life which they don’t really need: instead, they will see themselves as stewards of God’s resources. And what is the result? The result is that as they live by faith, and give freely, God will provide their needs. **Philippians 4:19** says, **“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** Will there be struggles, and lean times? Of course there will be! Nevertheless, the husband and wife who have their eyes on the Lord will make it through those storms unscathed in their love for each other. And guess what, husband? *You* have the primary responsibility to lead your wife in this matter. *You* have the responsibility not only to work to provide for your family, but to set the right spiritual *attitude* in your home toward the value of work, and toward the *purpose* of work (which is to give).

You see, if Satan can’t succeed in getting husbands to be lazy, his next favourite tactic is **to twist and pervert the reason for being an achiever**. If Satan can get us men to desire to achieve in order to feed our *ego* and our sense of self-importance, or to heap up nice “stuff” that we think will make our families happy, then he has us right where he wants us to be!

For the Christian husband, the *reason* for achieving and striving on behalf of your wife is that you might *please God*, and *lead your wife closer to God*. Yes, your wife’s physical and material needs must be met; but it should always be done with the thought, “I am doing this for *God*. I’m doing this because *God* has given me the responsibility to take care of my wife.” **God should be the true Head and Leader in your marriage**. Your marriage should be all about glorifying God. Men, you should “know” your wife inside and outside, in order that *God* may be exalted, and kept at the centre of your relationship. Everything you set your hand to do should be for *Him*. In **Colossians 3:19** the Apostle Paul wrote, **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”** Then, six verses later, Paul wrapped up his section on relationships by saying, **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”** Whatever you do in your relationship with your wife should be for the ultimate purpose of bringing glory to God!

Read Romans 14:7-9.

As you know, back in early January, Seán and I were making daily trips to Maynooth to attend the Bible Baptist Theological Seminary classes. As I made those trips, I was reminded of the January of 2013, shortly before Sarah was born, when I was attending seminary classes. I was exhausted after ten hours of classes every day; but I loved it! However, back home, Katie was having a very hard time. She was in a lot of pain from the pregnancy; and emotions were running high. The fact that I was away all day long was not helping her, either. Katie never said it out loud; but I could tell that she was wondering whether she might be about to have another miscarriage. (She had had a miscarriage in the previous year; so this was a natural worry.) I tried to give myself reasons for not going back home for a night; and I came up with some good ones. However, the real reason was that I simply didn’t want to miss any classes! I tried to justify myself with “spiritual” reasons such as, “I can’t miss any classes. I need these classes in order to prepare me more for my ministry as a pastor.” However, deep down inside, I could sense that the Lord was saying, “Why study my Word if you don’t put it to practice? You’re not loving your wife in the way that I loved the church. She has physical and emotional needs; and you’re more concerned about your studies than you are about her.”

Well, I listened to the Lord. I went home that night; took her to the doctor and got confirmation that all was well; spent time with her; and read the Bible to her. And guess what? Amazingly, the terrible pain she'd had all week went away. I had reasoned to myself that Katie was going to have the pain anyway, and that my coming home wouldn't make any difference. Yet, it ended up making *all* the difference. She just needed *me*. She needed my time and attention. She also needed strengthening and reassurance from God's Word, on account of other anxieties that were going through her mind that week. Administering the Word that she needed at that time wasn't merely *her* responsibility; it was *my* responsibility. I had a duty toward her physically, emotionally, *and* spiritually. This is called "***submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.***"

Read Ephesians 5:21-24.

A husband's "submitting" to his wife does *not* mean that he isn't the head of the home. (Paul makes it clear that the husband *is* the head, under Christ.) It simply means that the husband has the attitude of being willing to put aside important needs of his own in order to attend to *his wife's* needs. He doesn't demand that his wife "serve *me*, because I'm the boss": instead, he willingly serves his *wife*. He follows the example of Christ, who girt Himself and washed His disciples' feet (even though they should have been washing *His* feet). Instead of *demanding* that his wife iron his shirts, or have his meal on the table the instant he walks in the door from work, or bring his coffee to him while he reclines in his chair, he instead makes *her* coffee, or picks up the broom and sweeps the kitchen, or buys her flowers, or simply listens to her while she has a "good cry" (even though there might be other things *he* wants to do).

We Christian husbands can flatter ourselves that we have done our duty toward our wives, when, in fact, we *haven't* done all our duty. Many Christian men believe that their desire to work hard and achieve is virtuous—when, in fact, the real reason that they work hard is to have a sense of *personal pride* in their work. The bread may be on the table, and the family may have nice things; but they are not really "dwelling with their wives according to knowledge." They are not taking the time to understand their wives' deepest emotional and spiritual needs, and to study how they can lead their wives to love God more passionately.

To be sure, many Christian men have a love for their wives; but their love is often not of the highest quality. Even an unsaved man is capable of a "nobler" kind of human love. Even an unsaved man can recognise that spending too much time at the office in order to pursue a sense of personal achievement is not good for his relationship with his wife. Even an unsaved person can understand that if he value his relationship with his wife, he needs to spend time with her. However, because of the effect of sin, a lost man's love for his wife is *not* of the highest quality. Why? Because *God* is not in his thoughts. *God* is not in that relationship with his wife. He wants his wife all to *himself*. The unsaved man does not wish for *God* to have his wife's first and ultimate love. Thus, he cannot meet the most important need that his wife has—the need to help her to know and love Christ and His Word supremely! Jesus said, "***Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God***" (Matthew 4:4).

Read John 6:35, 51-63.

Think of this! Jesus said, ***“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”*** What does He mean by that? Well, He explained it clearly enough in **verse 63**. He said, ***“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*** Husband, your wife needs to “eat” God’s words every day. (And so do you!) Your wife’s relationship with Christ should be the most important, vital relationship that she has; and her relationship with *you* should be second. Are you helping your wife to *have* that kind of relationship with Christ? Should your wife not be saved, are you striving to *bring* her to the “Bread of Life”?

We Christian husbands can easily fall back into the thinking of the “old man.” We may be meeting our wives’ material needs; and we may be spending time with them, and getting to know those “little things” about our wives that no one else knows. However, are we really meeting our wives’ *spiritual* needs? *That* requires the thinking of the “new man.” Are you spending time in *prayer* with your wife? Are you reading God’s Word together with her? Are you spending time simply talking with her about the things of God?

Men, God has given our wives to us for a short time. Jesus said that in heaven, there will be no marriage, or giving in marriage. However, until that day, what does God expect of us in regard to our marriages? Well, God *does* want us to enjoy our wives while here on earth. The physical pleasures of marriage have His full blessing! In fact, they are vital to the well-being of your marriage. Solomon wrote, ***“Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all time; and be thou ravished always with her love”*** (Proverbs 5:18-19).

However, you must always remember the *ultimate purpose* of your relationship with your wife (even in its physical aspect). The purpose of your relationship is not that you may *get* something from your wife—nor that she may get something from you. Rather, it is that both of you, together, may *give* to the Lord. Husband, your role is to meet your wife’s physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, so that she may be fit to serve and love God. You cannot say, “Well, my wife’s walk with God is *her* responsibility.” Yes, her relationship with God *is* her responsibility; but it is also *your* responsibility. You are her head. The Apostle Paul reminded the church of Corinth, ***“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.”*** Just as Christ cleanses His church with the washing of water by the Word, *you* should be helping your wife to stay spiritually clean, by reading God’s Word with her.

A person’s head (or “mind”) detects when there are issues throughout the body; and it sets remedies in motion. Likewise, we husbands need to know our wives’ physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, so that we can help them to be in submission to Jesus Christ. The ***“mind of Christ”*** does not look only on its ***“own things,”*** but also ***“on the things of others.”*** The more you put on Christ’s mind, the less you will think of yourself, and the more you will be sensitive to your wife’s needs. By the way, recognising your wife as the ***“weaker vessel”*** does not mean that you look down on your wife with smug pity, because she is somehow “inferior” to you. She is *not* inferior! Paul says that in Christ there is neither male nor female. Recognising your wife as the ***“weaker vessel”*** means that you realise that your wife is more connected to her emotions; and she needs your help to remove the grief, the fears, and the anxieties that have been poured into her “vessel” by the enemy. It means that you need to treat your wife with understanding, and be in tune to her heart’s deepest needs.

Husband, so you know your wife? Do you *really* know her deepest needs? Of course, you are not God, and you cannot see all that He sees. However, if you be saved, God *has* given you the “mind of Christ,” by which you can discern needs in her life. Is your wife strong in the Lord? She *can* be strong in the Lord without your leading; but most likely, she won’t be as strong as she could be if *you* are not being the spiritual leader that *you* should be.

There are a thousand threats and pressures assailing marriages today—and especially in our Western world, where evolutionary humanism and gross materialism reign. However, the pressures that we face in our world are nothing like the pressures that our spiritual forebears faced. Imagine with me, for a moment, that you were in the shoes of a man named Michael Sattler, and his wife, Margaretha. Who were they, you say? Well, Michael Sattler was an old Anabaptist preacher, who was executed by the Catholic Church back in 1572, in Rottenburg, Germany. Sattler had known Christ for only two years; but within that short time, he became a fearless preacher of the Gospel; and he was responsible for the salvation of hundreds of people. On his execution day, his tongue was cut out; his flesh was torn from his body with red-hot tongs; and he was tied to a ladder and pushed into the fire, where he burned to death. With his dying breath, he witnessed for Christ; and his testimony and influence are still being felt to this day. Yet, the unsung hero of this story was his wife, Margaretha. Margaretha *watched* her husband die; yet, she did not complain. After her husband’s murder, she herself went through seven days of excruciating torture; but she refused to recant and return to the Catholic Church. On May 27, 1527, she was put in a net, and was drowned in the River Neckar. Not only did she go to this awful death without flinching, but in the weeks when her husband was being grilled, tortured, and threatened to recant, she supported him, and encouraged him to stand for Christ. How could she do something that is so unnatural? Obviously, she was strong in the Lord. However, I guarantee you that in those two years when she and her husband were running from the authorities, her husband was helping her to keep her eyes on Christ, and to deal with the anxieties that she was facing at the thought of one day being separated from her husband. The tendency to waver in the face of persecution because of the emotional bonds of marriage is very real; and Paul warned about it.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:26-35.

Was Paul against Christians’ getting married? Of course not! This is the same man who wrote the beautiful truths about marriage in **Ephesians 5**. Paul was simply warning the Corinthians that the strong emotional bonds of marriage could cause husbands and wives to waver in times of persecution, *if* they do not keep their eyes on the Lord. To us, real persecution is so far removed from our experience, that we can hardly imagine it. However, persecution is more possible now than it has been in a long time. Separation of husband and wife, and even *death* for the name of Jesus, could be reality within our lifetimes, should the Lord not return before then. Husband, are you helping your wife to love the Lord so much, that she would stand fast for Him even in the face of persecution and death? As we will see next week, if you and your wife are both saved, you will, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, be judged as a “unit” with your wife—because in God’s eyes, you *are* “one flesh.”

We men have a great responsibility. Husband, are you seeing your role of “husband” in its full light? You may be achieving and providing for your wife; but is your “achievement” for the right reason? Are you truly meeting her needs? If you are striving to achieve for the purpose of glorifying God, and equipping *your wife* to glorify Him (whether in life or death)?

Conclusion: The world hasn't a clue what marriage is about. (These days, the world can't even understand the basic differences between men and women!) However, we who know Christ *can* understand these things, because we have been given the mind of Christ. Put on Christ's mind daily, men! Study God's Word! Study your wife! Know her needs. Dwell with her according to knowledge, so that together, you may be equipped to glorify God.

In closing, I would also say this: you may be the "husband of the year," or the "mum of the year"; but being a "family man" or a good wife cannot save you from your sin. Are you trusting in Christ alone to save you? Have you truly been born again? If not, I urge you to stop trusting in your own good works, and trust in Christ today! **Romans 4:4-5** says, "*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*"