

Family Ministry – Preparing Your Children for Marriage

Introduction – We began this series focusing on the ministry of a husband and the ministry of a wife. We will conclude this series, coming full circle, to the biblical principles for establishing new covenants of marriage. The godly family is to reproduce itself.

The Promises, the Covenant, and Marriage – We saw that God desires faithful husbands and wives because He desires godly offspring (Mal 2:15). We know that God made promises to Abraham of innumerable descendants (Gen 15:1-6) and the blessings to families (Gen 12:1-3). We see that this promise is fulfilled ultimately, not in ethnic descendants alone, but in sons and daughters of the faith, that is, Christians (Gal 3:29). We have the hope that this will spread, by the grace of God through the declaration of the gospel and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit over the whole world (Matt 28:18f, Is 11:9). Therefore we must enter into this topic in the context of the covenant as well. And covenant-keeping is promise-believing (John 6:29).

Going and Giving Under Authority (Gen 2:24, Ps 78:63) – In the establishment of new families, God does not instruct us to treat men and women the same. Men marry and women are given in marriage. This requires young men to become responsible covenant heads and young women to be honored through covenant security, protection and love at all times.

Fathers and Daughters – Two things have happened in our society. Fathers have not provided masculine, covenantal headship in their homes. Second, women in general, daughters in particular, are now seen as autonomous individuals, ripe for the picking. But daughters, in a biblical society and in a godly home, remain under the authority of their parents until there is a transfer of that authority to a man approved by the parents.

Authority Seen (Num 30:3-16) – Headship requires responsibility and protection. In this passage we see that men have the authority to overrule vows made by their daughters and by their wives. The biblical context is the father providing loving protection and unselfish care.

Responsibility Until Marriage (Deut 22:13-21) – Regardless of where she was, she played the harlot ‘*in her father’s house*’. While high standards of sexual purity are required of all of God’s people, high standards of responsibility for all his family always fall upon the father.

Vestiges in Our Wedding Ceremony (Matt 24:38) – The normal pattern is for a woman to be under her father’s authority until she is brought under her husband’s authority. Our culture hates this truth, but still loves the sentimentality of a father walking his daughter up the aisle to be given to her new covenant head.

Implications – The whole modern idea of recreational dating is simply a manifestation of several generations of culture-wide abdication by fathers. Some of this was done in ignorance, and some has been outright rebellion to the Lord. In any case, we must begin by repenting of how poorly we have treated our daughters, and how poorly we have prepared our sons, turn back to the practice of covenant headship in the family, and prepare our children with wisdom, according to the Word of God.

Preparing Sons – A son’s preparation begins with his own devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, which must be thorough in doctrine and practice. He is to learn from his father how to speak to his wife, and how to love, care for, honor and live with her in an understanding way.

Thinking Covenantally – He must be prepared to be an initiator and one who takes responsibility. He must be one who has learned to work sacrificially for others and to work hard. He must understand that his duty is to pursue her by pursuing *her father*, and that he should not even begin to think of doing so until he is prepared to take the authority he is seeking to be transferred.

Proverbs 5 Men – He is to know that sexual hunger is a gift from God. He should also learn that he doesn’t get to eat for several years. He is to be a self-disciplined man in all of his passions, this one included. He should shudder at the thought of sexual relations or fathering a child outside of the protection of the covenant of marriage. He should fear God.

Learning to be a Gentleman – Even if a boy is not yet prepared to pursue a young lady, there is no excuse for acting like a jerk to the women around him. He is required to show honor in a general way to all women. They are neighbors to be loved according to the second commandment, and he must learn from his parents how to do that in appropriate ways.

Preparing Daughters – Contrary to popular, even pop-Christian, opinion, God has built her in such a way that she wants to be given by a godly man to a godly man. Her preparation should work out what God is putting in.

A Man to Respect – If she has grown up for years watching her father love her mother and sacrificially serve the family, she will naturally stay under his authority whenever an interested man calls. She will keep the standards her father has lived, not necessarily what he has said.

Godly Rudeness – A girl should never be rude for rudeness’ sake. But she should learn how to give a godly cold shoulder at appropriate times because the glory of God, the reputation of her father, and the honor of a Christian virgin are at stake. Also, she should grow up being a life-giver and nurturer – but she may not marry a ‘project’.

Under Her Father – All of her activities are her father’s responsibility in a way different than that of her brother at the same age. Therefore, the rules will be different. Even the godly, upright, Christian man will be directed to her father and not simply to her. In that

trusting relationship with her father, she will find protection to send away those who are not qualified, a 'cold water' realism when she has been swooned, and careful scrutiny over time of a potential husband who will love her as her father does.

Principles – There are many details to consider in how a man is to court a woman, and how a woman is to respond under her father's authority. Wisdom must be sought while the principles we have learned in this series on Family Ministry are embraced and employed.

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