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EQUIPPING THE MARRIED MEN OF GRACE BAPTIST  
CHURCH, BATAVIA, NEW YORK, TO BE SPIRITUAL  
LEADERS IN THEIR HOMES

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Jeffrey Ryan Bartz  
May 2016

**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING THE MARRIED MEN OF GRACE BAPTIST  
CHURCH, BATAVIA, NEW YORK, TO BE SPIRITUAL  
LEADERS IN THEIR HOMES

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To my dear sweet Jami, my Proverbs 31 wife,  
Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.  
To Samuel, Michael, Joshua, and Timothy, Men of God in-the-making,  
I have no greater joy than to hear that our children walk in truth.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
PREFACE .....	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose .....	1
Goals .....	1
Context of the Ministry Project .....	2
Rationale for the Project .....	5
Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations .....	6
Research Methodology .....	8
2. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP OF THE HOME REQUIRES MEN TO KNOW AND IMPLEMENT THE APPROPRIATE BIBLICAL DIRECTIVES .....	12
God Establishes the Foundation for the Spiritual Leadership of the Home in Genesis .....	12
Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Requires Men to Model and Teach the Bible in Their Homes .....	22
Joshua 24:14-15 Requires Men to Establish the Worship of God Alone in the Home .....	28
Ephesians 5:22-33 Requires Men to Sacrificially Love Their Wives .....	33
Ephesians 6:4 Requires Fathers to Raise Their Children in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord .....	45
Conclusion .....	52

Chapter	Page
3. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP OF THE HOME REQUIRES MEN TO GROW IN GODLINESS .....	53
The Spiritual Leader of a Home Develops a Biblical Vision for the Direction in Which He Will Lead His Family .....	53
The Spiritual Leader of a Home Leads His Heart .....	66
The Spiritual Leader of a Home Practices Spiritual Disciplines for the Purpose of Growing Himself and His Home in Godliness .....	71
4. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION .....	83
Pre-Series Survey Results .....	85
Weekly Sermons .....	86
Post-Series Survey Results .....	102
5. PROJECT EVALUATION .....	105
Introduction .....	105
Evaluation of the Project's Purpose .....	105
Evaluation of the Project's Goals .....	106
Strengths of the Project .....	109
Weaknesses of the Project .....	113
What I Would Do Differently .....	115
Theological Reflections .....	117
Personal Reflections .....	119
Conclusion .....	120
 Appendix	
1. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP INVENTORY .....	122
2. LESSON EVALUATION RUBRIC .....	126
3. LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS .....	127
4. T-TEST RESULTS .....	129
5. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP INVENTORY RESULTS .....	130

Appendix	Page
6. PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIES .....	131
7. TESTIMONIES FROM PARTICIPANTS' WIVES .....	139
8. PROJECT CALENDAR .....	146
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	151

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
A1. <i>T</i> -test: paired two sample for means .....	129
A2. SLI results .....	130

## PREFACE

The world looks much different from the backseat of a police car. All seems lost and hopeless. It is a fearsome place to be. But that is where God had to take me to awaken me to my need for the Savior, Jesus Christ. Right before I turned sixteen, I was caught shoplifting, and my double life came to a screeching to a halt. The Lord set my secret life on a collision course with real life. I was exposed, and as frightening as it was, it was a relief.

Taking decisive action in response to my waywardness, one of the first things my parents did was take me to church. Our family began attending Grace Baptist Church in Batavia, New York, in the summer of 1995. That is where everything changed for our family, and that is where we have stayed and grown and so has the church.

A run-in with the law and my resulting redemption is not what makes my story unique. While I am eternally grateful for my salvation, if there has been any overarching theme to my life it has been the Lord's strategic placement of godly men in my life. My emergence from the police car to the pulpit was stirred by men who could see past rough, raw materials. Every step of the way has been spurred on by men of spiritual moxie and biblical acumen. Were it not for God's gift of bold, godly men shaping my life, my time in the back seat of a police car may have defined me.

I remember often being angry with my dad, Steve Bartz. Most of the time I turned inward with my anger and found release in acts of destructive rebellion. It was easy then to blame my dad—that way I could avoid responsibility. However, that was when I was young and lacked maturity and understanding. Later, I realized he modeled forgiveness and set me up to meet my Savior. Some of my fondest, most meaningful

memories of childhood are of apologies and forgiveness that came with hugs and the tussling of my hair. I love you, Dad.

My grandpa, Henry Bartz, faithfully, relentlessly, gently planted the seeds of the gospel in my heart as I grew up. There will never be anything like working side by side with grandpa. Only because of his influence in partnership with the Holy Spirit could I have known that the answer to my mess of a life as a sixteen-year-old was Jesus Christ. I have given my life to the charge he gave me on a camping trip in the Adirondack Mountains, “Give them hope, Jeffrey!”

Donald Shirk has been the senior pastor of Grace Baptist for a wonderful twenty-eight years. Our church family at Grace, my family and me included, has flourished spiritually under his leadership. From my baptism forward, he has been there not only for every highlight in my life (wedding, college and seminary graduations, installations, ordination, births, etc.), but has been a stable force of godliness whom I continue to look to for leadership. One of the greatest honors and privileges of my ministry is serving with him as a pastor. I am a beneficiary of his passion to develop men.

Entering Grace Baptist Church for the first time came with the expectation that I would be rejected and that people would run from me; however, I found the opposite. In particular, Mark Ferry, the youth pastor, took me under his wing and showed me how to walk with the Lord. I caught my passion for people from him. He is not an ivory tower pastor. He is a down-in-the-trenches pastor who met me where I was and engaged the battle right alongside me. Today, he is not just a mentor, he is a true friend.

Donald Childs is a mentor-turned-friend from Grace for whom I will always be thankful. Our friendship has been marked by laughter and adventure. More than that, I have looked and will always look to Don for wisdom and counsel. Outside of family, no one has invested more in me than him and especially when it comes to education. There

was a time when I did not know how I was going to make it through my first semester at Summit University (formerly Baptist Bible College).

While I was a wild, immature freshman in college, Ted Boykin, my resident director, set me down and set me straight more than a few times. This ex-basketballer from the Bronx is an imposing figure, with an even more imposing heart for people. “B” (as he is affectionately known) fanned my flame for the Lord, His Word, and His people. One of the greatest thrills for me in ministry today is encouraging young men called to ministry to attend Summit University and reside in “Boykin’s Dorm.”

Robb Besosa was a stage in life ahead of me and a few years further down the road when we met in college. Our mutual love for the wilderness sparked a friendship in which I found a kindred spirit. Robb showed me the importance of transparency, integrity, and bringing God’s Word to bear in my life so I can do the same for others. He was instrumental in mentoring me through the dating and engagement phases of my relationship with the stunning woman who is now my wife.

Eric Hempel will always be my “battle-buddy.” We did life together in my first pastorate. The Lord used Eric to mature me in every way, as a man, husband, father, pastor, leader, and friend. I trust both our families are more like Jesus because of our friendship. I have often wondered if I would have made it this far in marriage, parenting, and ministry without his influence.

“I like you better when you have men in your life.” A simple sentence uttered in loving frustration by wife, Jami, prompted a change in the way that I approached relationships and ministry with men at Grace Baptist Church. Early on in my time on staff as a pastor I had grown complacent and was not connected with men in a spiritually significant way. Now, inviting men to join me to grow together as the spiritual leaders of our homes is a way of life. Praise the Lord that the men of Grace Baptist Church who have had a role in shaping this project are too numerous to mention in a preface. Life

with them is truly rewarding, empowering, and better because of their presence. They are iron to me and I am a sharper man because of them.

I can only hope that the Lord will multiply the influence of these men through this project. I am reminded that the completion of this project does not mean I have completed my growth as a man. To that end, I remain inexpressibly, over-joyously thankful and in love with my dear sweet Jami Richelle. She remains my greatest impetus and encourager for not squandering the grace given me but rather taking full ownership of my God-ordained calling as a man. Together we are laboring with all our being to raise four young men for the honor and glory of the Lord. It is our life's greatest work, and I love doing it with her.

Sam, Mike, Joshua, and Timmy, truth be known, I undertook this project to help me be a better dad. If other men benefitted, then that is great, but I wrote every page with my boys in mind. Every page is the product of my wrestling with the Lord to be a better spiritual leader myself so that I can most effectively bring my boys up in the training and admonition of the Lord. It is painfully yet thrillingly obvious that one of their greatest needs is a dad who leads. All I can do is give it everything I have. This project is a part of that effort. I love you boys and pray you will love, fear, and serve the Lord.

Jeff Bartz

Batavia, New York

May 2016

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip the married men of Grace Baptist Church (GBC) in Batavia, New York, to be spiritual leaders in their homes.

#### **Goals**

The first goal of this project was to assess the spiritual leadership practices of the married men who are members of GBC. This goal was measured by administering the Spiritual Leadership Inventory (SLI)<sup>1</sup> to twenty-five member-households that contain men as husbands and fathers.<sup>2</sup> Men were surveyed regarding their spiritual leadership practices in the home. This goal was considered successfully met when at least twenty married men completed the SLI, and the inventory has been analyzed, resulting in clarification of the spiritual leadership practices among GBC married men.

The second goal of this project was to develop a thirteen-session preaching series on male spiritual leadership in the home for the men of GBC. This goal was measured by the pastors of the church, utilizing a rubric to evaluate the lesson material.<sup>3</sup> The evaluation rubric focused on the biblical and theological quality of the lessons, whether the material was relevant and practical, and whether the lessons were clear and

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup>Thirty-three member-households have men as husbands and fathers based on the 2015 Membership Roll of Grace Baptist Church, Batavia, New York.

<sup>3</sup>See appendix 2.

compelling. The goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

The third goal of this project was to equip the men of GBC to be the spiritual leaders of their homes by implementing a small group program for married men with children at home. There were two groups with 12 participants and one leader in each group for a total of 26 men. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post-survey of the men's preparedness for spiritual leadership. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre and post-series scores.

The fourth goal of this project was to equip the men of GBC to be the spiritual leaders of their homes by implementing the twelve-session preaching series. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post-survey of the men's preparedness for spiritual leadership. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre and post-series scores.

### **Context of the Ministry Project**

Five factors of the ministry context at GBC clarify the need for this project. First, GBC is strongly complementarian. Since its inception in 1946, the church has thrived on the expositional preaching of God's Word. The church's doctrine is founded on the authority of the Scriptures and expressed in conservative Baptist theology. One aspect of this theological mooring is the biblical complementarian view of the roles of men and women. Historically, GBC families have been taught this complementarian view with the husband as the head of the home leading the family spiritually. Both husbands and wives respond favorably and seek to pattern their homes after the biblical injunctions for complementarianism.

Complementarianism as a concept is known intellectually, but personal ownership of the doctrine is lacking. There was an awareness of the need to lead, but

knowing how to lead was not understood. Men simply knowing they need to lead did not result in godlier homes. In general, the men of GBC want to grow in their capacity to lead their families. Their collective desire is demonstrated by their faithful church attendance, involving their families in the ministries of the church, and their participation in opportunities for spiritual growth. They knew they needed to be spiritual leaders in their homes, but knowing how to do so was the challenge for many men. The men of Grace wanted and needed a clear vision for biblically leading their family. The men were not alone in their desire. At times, wives also expressed dissatisfaction over their husband's lack of spiritual leadership in their homes.

Second, a strong majority of men at GBC are in phases of life that require them to apply biblical leadership in their homes. Ninety-five percent aged 25 and older are married.<sup>4</sup> Sixty-eight percent of men in the congregation 25 and older have children living at home.<sup>5</sup> Of those men with children still living at home, 80 percent have children high school age and younger.<sup>6</sup> What is more, men 25 and older comprise just 26 percent of the congregation.<sup>7</sup> With 6 percent of the congregation being single, 68 percent of the congregation is dependent on male spiritual leadership in the home.<sup>8</sup> These percentages represent a compelling need for the men of GBC to be biblical leaders in their homes.

Third, GBC has experienced a recent influx of couples and families who have not yet given themselves to God's design for the family. Marriages and parent-child relationships are seriously strained in these contexts. Broken and blended homes are increasingly common in society and certainly within the congregation of GBC. In

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<sup>4</sup>The 2014 Membership Roll of Grace Baptist Church, Batavia, New York.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

pastoral counseling at GBC, issues threatening the break-up of the family are increasingly complex. The need for a robust vision and implementation of masculine spiritual leadership in the home has never been more pronounced.

Fourth, the efficient completion of an expansion project in May 2012, highlighted the extensive skill sets and leadership capacities of the men at GBC. Churches can be numerically built upon the shoulders of gifted men, but raising a future generation of godly leaders takes more than giftedness. It requires godliness. Skill sets and career success cannot be mistaken for spiritual leadership. It is possible that some men in leadership at GBC may confuse having a position with being spiritual. However, giftedness is not godliness. There is no replacement for genuine spiritual vitality, having a real, vibrant walk with God. With vocationally successful men occupying the leadership positions of GBC, it is imperative these men have a regular, daily devotional time with the Lord, pray with their wives, and lead their families in worship.

Perhaps leadership is so emphasized that the foundation of spiritual leadership—one's own personal holiness—is being lost in translation. The true spiritual condition of the church's men and their homes is seldom known by the pastors or even other men in the church. Men may be making outward behavioral changes to fit in with the church crowd or look the part of a church member or leader, but it is not clear how effectively the men are holding one another accountable for their personal time with God and leading their homes in godliness.

In summary, the need for the men of GBC to be equipped for spiritual leadership in the home was compelling. While most come from a complementarian view point, the application of this doctrine was lacking. Many men are in life stages that demand biblical leadership in their homes, yet issues facing the family are increasingly complex. Men's spiritual practices and preparedness to lead their families were deficient. All of these indicators gave reason to believe that an effort to equip the men of GBC would be well received.

## **Rationale for the Project**

The five indicators mentioned reveal clear merit for equipping men at GBC to be the spiritual leaders of their families. First, having regular exposure to complementarian theology, the men of GBC understood the biblical precedent for male leadership in the home. Men desired to fulfill their God-given role in the home, but they were not sure how to go about accomplishing it. Many expressed interest in being equipped. Seeing the need and having the desire to become spiritual leaders in their homes, the men of GBC were ready to embrace a process of equipping that this project offered.

Second, with most of GBC men in a stage of life that necessitates them leading spiritually, this project provided equipping for men to influence their families. Multiplying family influencers was the most effective way to spiritually impact the greatest number of people at GBC. With the vast majority of men being equipped to exercise headship in their homes, most people in the congregation were impacted by this project.

Third, men who are equipped to lead their families spiritually will be more active in family life, the spiritual development of those in their home, and dealing with family problems biblically. This project resulted in stronger families who are much more adept at handling conflict. As men grow in their capacity to handle problems biblically, so will those in their home. When counseling issues are resolved in the home, a burden of counseling is lifted from the church and its pastors. This project challenged and equipped men to be spiritually engaged in their homes, and in particular, to solve family problems biblically.

Fourth, spiritual leadership in the home qualifies a man for leadership in the church. Clarifying the priority of male leadership in the home impacted the church's perspective of leadership. As men learned and grew in their capacity to lead the home spiritually, they adopted biblical expectations of those in positions of church leadership. Men who clearly demonstrate consistent godly leadership at home, will rise to the surface of the leadership pool in the church. They will be sought after to fill key leadership

positions because their lives reflect the distinctive qualities of 1 Timothy 3. Equipping men to be the spiritual leaders of the home has the potential to increase the caliber of church leadership for GBC.

Fifth, equipping men for maximum spiritual influence in the home increases their competence and confidence in ministering to their wives and children. As men engage a closer walk with the Lord and learn how to apply biblical imperatives of spiritual leadership, they bring increasing spiritual initiative and guidance to their homes. God's calling upon men to lead their homes has always been urgent and is no less compelling today among the men of GBC. It is with that sense of urgency and unction that this project was pursued.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

For clarification, the following terms are defined for their use in this ministry project.

*Complementarianism.* Complementarianism is the view that God created both men and women in His image and designed them to fulfill equally valuable but different roles in the home and church.<sup>9</sup> In this view, the man bearing ultimate responsibility for the family, as well as the church, is rooted in the biblical creation order. In the home, God has entrusted the spiritual leadership of the wife and children to the man as he fulfills his function as "head." The woman's role in the home is no less important as she fulfills her God-given role as her husband's "helper."

*Spiritual disciplines.* Spiritual disciplines are "activities undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and His Kingdom."<sup>10</sup> "Exercises unto

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<sup>9</sup>The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, *Biblical Distinctives between Males and Females*, Topic no. 17. "The Danvers Statement" (Wheaton, IL: CBMW, 1988).

<sup>10</sup>Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 156.

godliness” are the responsibilities that each believer must assume for his or her sanctification (growth in godliness).<sup>11</sup> They position the believer before God so that He can transform him or her.<sup>12</sup> More than mere religious duties, spiritual disciplines can also be a means of communion with God.<sup>13</sup> Examples of spiritual disciplines discussed in this project include Bible study, Scripture memorization, prayer, corporate worship, and accountability.

*Spiritual leadership.* This project uses John Piper’s definition of spiritual leadership: “Knowing where God wants people to be and taking the initiative to use God’s methods to get them there in reliance on God’s power.”<sup>14</sup> God wants each of His children to be in a spiritual condition and lifestyle that glorifies Him. “Therefore, the goal of spiritual leadership is that people come to know God and to glorify him in all that they do.”<sup>15</sup>

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre and post-series surveys were subject to the participants’ willingness to be honest about their spiritual leadership practices. To mitigate this limitation, participants were promised that their answers would remain anonymous. Second, the effectiveness of the preaching series was limited by the participants’ attendance. If they did not attend each of the sessions, the effectiveness of the teaching would be difficult to measure. To mitigate this limitation, each session was posted online.

Three delimitations narrow the focus of this project. First, the target audience

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<sup>11</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1994), 63-76.

<sup>12</sup>Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 7.

<sup>13</sup>D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 17.

<sup>14</sup>John Piper, “The Marks of a Spiritual Leader,” *Desiring God*, January 1, 1995, accessed July 17, 2014, <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/articles/the-marks-of-a-spiritual-leader>.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

was married men. Scripture requires these men to be spiritual leaders in their homes. Second, this project concentrated on the spiritual leadership of the home but not of the church. However, spiritual leadership in the home includes leading the family to actively participate and serve in the church. Third, the project was confined to a fifteen-week timeframe. This gave ample time to prepare and preach the thirteen-sermon series, facilitate men's small groups. Fourth, while women do play a significant spiritual leadership role in the lives of their children, this project was limited to equipping men to provide spiritual leadership in the lives of their wives and children.

### **Research Methodology**

The first goal of this project was to assess the current spiritual leadership practices of the married men who are members of GBC.<sup>16</sup> One month prior to the first teaching session, a letter was sent to 25 married men with children at home who were members of GBC inviting them to participate in a men's small group.<sup>17</sup> The letter included the pre-series survey (SLI).<sup>18</sup> Each participant identified himself on the survey using the final four digits of his social security number. The completed surveys were submitted at the first group meeting.

The participant group included a minimum of twenty married men. Twenty-five men were recruited via personal letter and e-mail invitation with the survey attached. An additional follow-up letter and survey were sent to each of these men. Participants were asked to commit to attending at least ten out of the thirteen equipping sessions and listen to any missed sermons online. Participants viewing sermons online were asked to complete and submit a sermon handout prior to the next sermon.

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<sup>16</sup>All of the research instruments used in this project was performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

<sup>17</sup>See appendix 3.

<sup>18</sup>See appendix 1.

The pre-series survey sought to understand what is true of the men's spiritual leadership in their homes. It ascertained each man's understanding of biblical principles related to spiritual leadership in the home, including questions related to key biblical passages, biblical headship, and the father's responsibility for the spiritual development of his children. The pre-survey also assessed the men's spiritual leadership practices in their homes including his personal devotional life, accountability relationships, and family worship. The first goal was successfully met when 23 of the 25 men surveyed completed and returned the SLI survey, and the survey was analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the current understanding and practices.

The second goal was to develop a thirteen-week sermon series on male spiritual leadership in the home. The series consisted of thirteen, forty-five-minute sermons that covered key scriptural passages related to spiritual leadership in the home. Each sermon was submitted to a panel of two pastors for approval the week prior to preaching the sermon. This goal was measured by a rubric used by the panel to evaluate the material.<sup>19</sup> The rubric asked the panel to evaluate the series primarily based upon its scriptural accuracy and clarity, thoroughness, and practicality. If fewer than 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric were scored at "sufficient" or above, the series was modified according to the panel's feedback and resubmitted for approval. This process continued until at least 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric were scored at "sufficient" or above, at which time the second goal was considered successfully met.

The third goal of this project was to equip the men of GBC to be the spiritual leaders of their homes by implementing a small group for married men with children at home. These men were chosen and mutually agreed upon by the senior pastor and me. The men were split into two groups. I led a group of 12 men, and the other group of 12

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<sup>19</sup>See appendix 3.

was led by a man mutually agreed upon and regarded as an effective spiritual leader by the senior pastor and me.<sup>20</sup> The groups met monthly for three hours in men's homes on the first Friday of each month. Four monthly meetings fell within the scope of this project (weeks 3, 7, 11, 15).

The fourth goal was to equip married men to be spiritual leaders via the thirteen-week sermon series. The series took place during Sunday morning and evening services. Upon completion of the series, at the final small group meeting, the men took the post-series survey used to measure the third and fourth goals.<sup>21</sup> The post-series survey was identical to the pre-series survey. Only the men who completed a pre-series survey and attended all thirteen sermons and four small group meetings were invited to take the post-series survey. Each participant was asked to identify himself on the post-series survey using the same four digit code he used on the pre-series survey. Like the initial survey, the post-series surveys assessed each participant's current understanding and practices related to spiritual leadership in the home.

A *t*-test for dependent samples was used to determine if there was a positive significant difference between the pre-series and post-series scores. A *t*-test for dependent samples "involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores."<sup>22</sup> Since this project involved a single group of the same subjects being surveyed under two conditions, a *t*-test of dependent samples was the appropriate test statistic.<sup>23</sup> The third and fourth goals were considered

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<sup>20</sup>The two groups began with 26 men including myself. However, I did not participate in the surveys, leaving 25 men. Two men dropped out shortly after implementation of the project, leaving 23 participants.

<sup>21</sup>See appendices 1 and 2.

<sup>22</sup>Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 189.

successfully met when the  $t$ -test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre-series and post-series scores.

## CHAPTER 2

### SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP OF THE HOME REQUIRES MEN TO KNOW AND IMPLEMENT THE APPROPRIATE BIBLICAL DIRECTIVES

#### **God Establishes the Foundation for the Spiritual Leadership of the Home in Genesis**

What the breath of God brought forth into existence was created perfectly good. There was no flaw or imperfection in any of it, including man (Gen 1:31). Immediately following creation before the fall, everything about man was as God designed; God's plan for man was completely flawless. Understanding that Genesis 2 is a window into untainted man, and God's design for him, gives men a foundation on which to build their understanding of what the Lord expects of them today. God's design for man as it relates to the woman is the particular focus of this project's exegesis of Genesis.

God's directives regarding the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:16-17 were given to Adam alone. Eve was not yet created. Because there is no record of God reaffirming these directives with Eve, it is possible that Adam's spiritual leadership of his wife began immediately with informing her of God's communicated expectations for them in the Garden, which is consistent with the God-to-Christ, Christ-to-man, husband-to-wife pattern in 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-12 and Ephesians 5:24-26. Furthermore, it may help to explain why Eve's response to the serpent, when pressed to recall what God actually commanded, includes the embellishment of "nor shall you touch it (Gen 3:4). This fact could be consistent with a warning from Adam who added this condition in an attempt to protect his mate.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John M. Fritzius, "Where Was Adam When Eve Sinned?" accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.tlogical.net/adameve.htm>.

Certainly, Eve's role as Adam's helpmate included exercising oversight and dominion over the creation. This relationship is evidenced by God's joint mandate to the man and the woman in Genesis 1:28-30. However, Adam held a unique leadership role in this dominion mandate. First, as mentioned, responsibility for the Garden was issued directly to Adam without indication in the text that it included Eve. Second, Adam's naming of the animals was an exercise of dominion and authority that he did not share in common with Eve.

Adam's responsibility and leadership was not just limited to the Garden and its animal inhabitants. God extended Adam's leadership to his wife as well. This responsibility is seen in the way God fashioned Eve. The fact that God took Adam's rib and shaped Eve from it reveals the source of Eve, in one sense, being Adam. The biblical concept of a man's headship of his wife finds its foundation here with the man being created first and the woman being fashioned from man (1 Cor 11:7-12; 1 Tim 2:13).

The husband's God-ordained authority was purposefully depicted as Adam was given the privilege to name his wife, "woman" (Gen 2:23) and "Eve" (Gen 3:20). Also, the woman's supporting role was clearly defined by her God-given title of "helper suitable" or "helpmate" (Gen 2:18). By design, God wired the mental, emotional, and physical circuitry of men and women to match their assignments as head and helpmate.

Headship is also part of the biblical marital covenant between a man and a woman. Their union is, in part, a recognition of their place in relation to God and one another. Biblical headship accomplishes marital unity and oneness.<sup>2</sup> Today, the very mention of the idea can be highly controversial, but this should not be the case. Certainly, the stereotypical man depicted by feminism who browbeats his wife should not be the cultural poster-boy for headship. To the contrary, he has left the confines of headship

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<sup>2</sup>Douglas Wilson, *For a Glory and a Covering: A Practical Theology of Marriage* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 2006), 32.

and stands in opposition to God's plan for marriage. The culturally-tainted idea of headship permitting home-tyranny is false and an assault against biblical marriage.

Biblical headship has existed from eternity past within the Trinitarian unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 Cor 11:3). The union of Adam and Eve was an expression of God's unity, and the union of a man and woman was not possible without headship. Headship is an expression of God's Trinitarian nature reflected in the created order for the marriage of a man and a woman. It is further demonstrated for His creatures by God's fashioning Eve from one of Adam's ribs. God did not fashion Eve from the ground as He did Adam. Instead, he used a piece of Adam to depict the woman's source being in man. It is this created order and method that informs the New Testament's further verification of the doctrine of marital headship.

Clearly Adam's assignment as head necessitates provision and protection. However, families cannot afford for these functions to be culturally hijacked and derailed by depictions of machismo. Husbands must see their role as head through the lens of the Head of the Church, Christ. Seen through Christ's sacrifice on behalf of His Bride, the marital roles of provider and protector are acts of service. Therefore, the image of God in a husband is just as manifest in his role as head as it is his role as servant; the two are one. The head is servant. To be head of one's home is to be the servant of it; "servant" not in the sense of "slave," but in the sense of "caretaker," being responsible to meet its needs. A husband serving his wife does not imply acting in obedience to her, or being subservient to her, rather, it is to nurture and put her prerogatives before his own. It is the cultivation of one's wife in the sustained effort of fostering her sanctification for the glory of the Creator.

The headship of a husband can be biblically defined as a man's privileged position of responsibility and authority for the Christ-like loving leadership, provision, and protection of his wife. It is a husband assuming sacrificial responsibility for his wife. Ephesians 5 offers further clarification and is discussed again later in this chapter. It

becomes crystal clear in Ephesians 5 that headship is based upon the hierarchy of Christ being preeminent. Under Him is all mankind who is to live in submission to Him. Under a husband's authority is his wife. As much as culture seeks to redraft the lines of authority, headship is authoritative in nature. However, headship starts with a man being under God's authority.

### **Head of Home**

To be godly heads of their homes, men must understand that God is their Creator, and they find their source, being, and sustenance in Him. The very practical implication for a man and his home is that the man is not the center of his home.<sup>3</sup> His home should never be organized around himself, but God, who commands the worship of all things (Col 1:16; Phil 2:10-11). Man was created to worship and glorify God (1 Cor 10:31). If a husband can get that right, he will have no trouble being the kind of head he ought to be.

Unfortunately, headship warrants the clarification of some cultural misnomers. First, headship does not imply superiority in any way. Second, headship is not male domination. While authority is inherent in headship, headship is not limited to authority. As such, it is, third, not a license to force submission. Fourth, it is not an expectation or entitlement to be served. It is just the opposite. It is God's mandate for the husband to love and lead as modeled by His Son. It requires sacrifice and service. "Godly authority is given to build up not to tear down (2 Cor 10:8)."<sup>4</sup> Husbands are to be under God's authority so they can be godly authorities for their wives. How a man lives out his role as the head of his home is the measure of his submission to Jesus Christ (Matt 22:37-40). Only as a man submits to Jesus does his family thrive.

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<sup>3</sup>Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2002), 33.

<sup>4</sup>Wilson, *For a Glory and a Covering*, 59.

Ephesians 5:23 says that the husband *is* the head of the wife, not that he *should* be the head of his wife.<sup>5</sup> Obedience or disobedience to God's commands does not determine whether he is the head of his home. He is the head regardless, but he can either be an obedient head under authority or a disobedient head rebelling against authority.

How headship is specifically manifested in the home is described in detail throughout this project. However, two expressions of biblical headship are germane to Genesis 2-3: provision and protection. All manifestations of headship are extensions of one of these two expressions.

### **Provision**

Genesis 2 begins with God's provision for man. The very ground under his feet was a gift from God that produced tremendous bounty. Even the water for the Garden was provided as it came up from the ground (v. 6). The plants were waiting for man's appearance and all he had to do was nurture them. Man's work was bliss. It was only rewarding and fulfilling. There was no sweat or disappointment in Adam's work before sin. He did not answer or submit to another man. His workplace was free from conflict and power struggles. Money was not even part of the equation. His marriage before the fall was completely unaffected by the current number one cause of conflict in marriage: finances.<sup>6</sup> Adam never had to worry about paying bills or there being too much month at the end of the money.

Adam's job was to tend and keep the Garden. As a benefit to working in obedience to God, Adam and his family lived off Eden's resources. In this way, God provided for Adam who was in turn able to provide for his family. Adam's mimicry of

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<sup>5</sup>Wilson, *For a Glory and a Covering*, 58.

<sup>6</sup>Carolyn Washburn and Darlene Christensen, "Financial Harmony: A Key Component of Successful Marriage Relationship," accessed March 24, 2015, <http://ncsu.edu/ffci/publications/2008/v13-n1-2008-spring/Washburn-Christensen.php>.

God's provision came naturally because God created him in His own image. As such, it is expected that man would bear resemblance to God in his actions. Thus, man's role as provider is established early and permanently.

At the outset of man's placement upon the earth, the pattern of God's provision and man's resulting responsibility is established.<sup>7</sup> The Garden was given to Adam, and it came with responsibility. The animals of the earth were given to Adam, and they came with responsibility. God provided Adam with a wife, and she came with responsibility. Every good gift, every blessing from God that Adam received, came with responsibility.

Later, when Adam sinned and God cursed him, his role as provider was not revoked, but it was frustrated (3:17-19). God's permission to utilize the earth for food is reaffirmed in the curse, but difficulty is added. Adam sacrificed the tangible blessings of God for the deceptive musings of the serpent. The blessings of the Garden that Adam squandered by his sin, the fertile soil and lush foliage, thereafter became uncooperative, unruly, and unyielding. God's provision for man would no longer be as accessible as it once was. Even before the fall Adam needed to take responsibility for attaining God's provision; now after the fall, the burden of responsibility is heavier, and the work to attain it is harder. Still Adam's mandate to make it produce his family's sustenance is unchanged. Man was designed to function in the role of provider.

The husband's role of providing for his home is expressed in dramatic fashion later in the New Testament when Paul instructs Timothy: "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim 5:8). In its proper context, this expectation of a man appears to apply to material provision. The family head's role of provider is consistent throughout Scripture and is timeless. While God expected Adam to provide materially for his

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<sup>7</sup>Thomas W. Mann, *The Book of the Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), 16.

fledgling family by working the soil, biblical headship provides a wife and home with so much more.

Paul's quoting of Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5 illumines the fullness of what God intended from the very beginning by uniting a man and woman as one flesh in marriage. When a man becomes one flesh with a woman, he is to express his provision for his wife in the same way that Christ provides for the Church. He is to provide his wife with love, discipleship, service, care, intimacy, communication, and tender affection. With this understanding of God's expectation upon a man to provide, it is equally valid to say that a man who neglects the spiritual provision of his home "has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim 5:8). As a believer, a man should understand, and seek to understand better, what is expected of him as it pertains to his home.

### **Protection**

Not only is the role of provider seen in Adam's care of the Garden, but also that of protector. Part of caring for the Garden was protecting it. In Genesis 2:15, the Lord commissions Adam to "tend and keep" the Garden. The Hebrew word for "keep" (שָׁמַר *šā-mār*) is inextricably linked to the concept of "protection" throughout Scripture.<sup>8</sup> Not ironically, the same Hebrew word is employed in Genesis 3:24 when God sets a cherubim on the eastern edge of Eden to "guard" the way to the Tree of Life. Adam, therefore, was God's caretaker and protector of His Garden.

In the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, the scene unfolds with the serpent deceiving Eve into taking a bite of the forbidden fruit. Eve at this point is not charged with sin. Perhaps this is because the command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was issued to Adam prior to Eve's existence.

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<sup>8</sup>Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 1036-37.

What is clear is that as the leader it was Adam's responsibility to protect and provide for his family. This leadership role was clearly demonstrated when God talked with Adam and Eve following their sin. Even though Eve sinned before Adam, God sought out and questioned Adam first (Gen 3:9). "Adam, as the leader of the family, was held responsible, not only for his own sin of eating from the tree, but also because he did not provide adequate protection for his wife, allowing her to sin."<sup>9</sup> Scripture is clear that God held Adam responsible for sin spreading to all mankind (Rom 5:12, 15, 17-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22). Adam's rebellion against God in eating the forbidden fruit is the event that defines mankind's sinful condition today. Disobedience—sin—entered the world and with it the consequential curse of God.

Adam bought into the self-exalting lure of the enemy. The same lies that fed the great rebellion in heaven are the same lies that Adam embraced. His focus left his Creator. He forgot about His attributes. Adam embraced the twisted distortion of the Creator spun carefully by the serpent. In that moment of disobedience, Adam all at once forsook his role of protector.

God places the responsibility for the Fall squarely and fully on Adam's shoulders.<sup>10</sup> Eve may have been the first to partake of the fruit, but it did not happen without Adam's oversight. "Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning" (2 Cor 11:3), whereas Adam was not deceived (1 Tim 2:14). He ate at the invitation of his wife, understanding the consequences of his actions. He knowingly chose rebellion against God. His desire to be like God was greater than his desire to please and obey God.

Adam is today's poster-boy for the passive husband. Instead of assertively protecting his marriage, family, and home by confronting the serpent, he allowed his wife

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<sup>9</sup>Georgia Purdom, "Who Gets the Blame for Original Sin—Adam or Eve?" accessed September 13, 2014, <https://answersingenesis.org/sin/original-sin/who-gets-the-blame-for-original-sin/>.

<sup>10</sup>Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 32.

to fall prey to Hell's greatest salesman. Then when Eve passed the fruit to Adam, instead of standing up like a man and boldly refusing to transgress God's commands, he passively caves into his own personal desires and the deceived desires of his wife. "As a result, Adam cursed his family."<sup>11</sup>

The passive husband today may be ultra-protective of the remote, his favorite coffee mug, his recliner, or his prize car, but when it comes to being the gatekeeper of his home and protecting his loved ones from the onslaught of worldly influences, he forfeits far more than he knows. What other options could Adam have chosen in response to the snake? In a sense, Adam missed out on an opportunity to rid the world of that Serpent of Old. Perhaps the first death in the Garden should not have been the animal slain by God Himself to cover the first couple (Gen 3:21). Maybe the first death should have been Adam snuffing out the breath of the malicious reptilian by applying his heel to its head. One of the reasons the imagery of the messianic prophecy in Genesis 3:15 is so fitting is that it is precisely the action Adam should have taken against the serpent. Instead, Jesus Christ had to come and take responsibility for this failure on behalf of all mankind.

Passive men forget they are made for the glory of God and their pursuit of God's glory is for their good and the good of those under their care. Without the pursuit and presence of God's glory in his life, the passive man withers spiritually. He is a limp, lame protector, whose spiritual eyes have glazed to the point of distorting the reality in which he lives. The enemy has effectively disabled him from battle. His family is dangerously vulnerable.

### **Responsibility**

Adam's fall resulted in his loss of vision and disabled his ability to process and discern. So it is with men today. A spiritual stupor takes the place of the vibrant and

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<sup>11</sup>Mark Chanski, *Manly Dominion: In a Purple-Four-Ball World* (Merrick, NY: Calvary, 2005), 168.

intimate presence of God in a life. With his identity stolen and the lines of authority jumbled, the disoriented man finds comfort in others who will make decisions for him; he desires to be led because he is blind.

Massive conflict in the home has resulted from man's corruption and the corruption of his role as head in particular. In the Garden mankind was not only alienated from God, but man and woman were alienated from one another. Consequently, marital conflict was one of the first fruits of the Fall. Adam became the first in a long line of male blame-shifters. He betrayed his wife in an effort to justify his actions and save face before God (Gen 3:11-12). Likewise, men today find it easier to criticize and accuse their wives rather than confessing their sin. Adam's conflict with God undermined his relationship with his wife and conflict with his wife undermined his relationship with God, and so it continues in homes today.

God's confrontation of Adam and Eve's sin afforded Adam an opportunity to exercise his role as head by serving his wife through Christ-like conflict resolution. Instead of shirking responsibility for what happened, he should have taken responsibility. Instead of blaming, he should have confessed his sin to God and his wife. The atmosphere of marriages today stand to gain much from humble husbands who own their contribution in conflict and lead the way in confession and repentance.

Just as God called Adam in the Garden of Eden, husbands today are still called by God to cause good things to grow in their homes and to keep precious things safe, even under the curse.<sup>12</sup> God's curse upon mankind is redemptive in nature. It is not just a curse because it contains God's greatest, most precious promise—the gift of His Son. Even though the curse may be keenly felt in homes, God wants marriage and family to be instruments of redemption. The curse places couples in a position to be awakened to their need for a Savior. Under the curse, marriage is practically hopeless apart from the

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<sup>12</sup>Richard D. Philips, *The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2010), 70.

grace that can only be found in Jesus Christ. The struggles that couples experience are intended by God to drive them to their knees and restore Him as the center of their lives and homes. It is because of grace through the gospel that men today can fulfill their God-given calling as the heads, servants, providers, and protectors of their homes.

### **Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Requires Men to Model and Teach the Bible in Their Homes**

After God gives His children the Ten Commandments, He provides a brief summary instruction in Deuteronomy 5:32-33. These two verses are the hinge that transition God's fatherly instruction to instruction on how to father. He wants the men to be godly so they can be godly leaders. Spiritual leadership flows out of a personal walk with God. God first tells men how they themselves must walk before Him before He tells them how to train their children to walk in His ways:

Therefore you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.

Spiritual vitality and influence can only come from a person who walks with God. There is no substitute for spiritual vitality, and spiritual vitality can only come from a heart that is genuinely centered on God. God appeals to the heart in the Great Commandment (Shema)<sup>13</sup> of Deuteronomy 6 because the heart is the key to life (Prov 4:23). God commands men to love Him with "all your heart" (Deut 6:5). The heart is the vehicle through which men relate to God. The heart is the inner person, including the thoughts, desires, affections, and will. The heart is who a man is on the inside—the entire and essential person; the person God wants to completely possess.

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<sup>13</sup>The Shema is considered by Jews to be the most important prayer, which should be repeated multiple times daily. The verse following the Shema, Deut 6:5 is regarded as the most important commandment of the Old Testament. Jesus affirmed its importance in the New Testament when He quoted it in response to the scribe that asked Him which was the most important commandment.

Within the heart, at the very core of man, God seeks to plant a love for Himself. Love for God is manifested in obedience to God (1 John 5:3). God promises to bless out-of-the-heart obedience when He gave the instruction to “be careful” to “observe” and “keep” all His statutes, judgments, and commandments (Deut 6:1-3). A man cannot truly be a spiritual leader without loving God with all of his heart. Loving God with all of one’s heart means that God is governing all aspects of one’s life. Loving God impacts all of life. God starts with a man’s personal relationship with Himself, because loving God is the most effective way to influence others toward loving Him. A parent’s genuine love for God in the home is the most effective witness to children. Pastor and theologian J. W. Alexander is of the opinion that “where the head of the family is a man of faith, of affection, and of zeal, consecrating all his works and life to Christ, it is very rare to find all his household otherwise minded.”<sup>14</sup>

Proverbs 23:26 carries this pulse of fathers connecting to the hearts of their children: “My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.” The desire of a godly, loving father is to get to the heart of his child and shepherd it toward the Lord. This father in Proverbs does not say, “My son, give me your behavior.” He understands that loving God cannot be fabricated or faked by one’s behavior, but rather, genuine godly behavior is the fruit of a heart that has forsaken the love of self and opted to love God instead.

The text is careful to identify exactly who or what should command the allegiance and affections of the heart. It is “The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” This is to be a confession that only the God of the Bible will be one’s God.<sup>15</sup> Only one choice is given to the hearer—accept or reject the God of the Bible. It is a decision of one’s undivided loyalty. Here God commands His people to “hear,” and in so doing, He

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<sup>14</sup>J. W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1991), 32.

<sup>15</sup>Mann, *The Book of the Torah*, 150.

demands a response.<sup>16</sup> Listening to God is not passive; it is active. The Hebrew concept of “hearing” in the Old Testament is synonymous with *obedience*.<sup>17</sup> If a mother has to ask her child, “Did you hear me?” the Old Testament answer is obviously not, because he did not act upon what he heard; he did not respond and obey. His brain may have registered his mother’s voice, but he disregarded it and did not *hear*. When God commands His people to “hear,” He is commanding them to obey. Obedience brings blessing; disobedience results in cursing.

With blessing promised to those who walk in His ways, the Lord casts a God-centered, multigenerational vision for His children (Deut 6:2). Interestingly, this vision is specific to men, and namely, the heads of homes. The charge to patriarchs is to raise future generations of men who walk with the Lord and will in turn raise future generations to do the same. God desires the multiplication of influence. Spiritual vitality, if it is real, will not be dormant. True spiritual leadership multiplies itself.

### **Biblical Instruction**

Deuteronomy 6 clearly teaches that children are to grow up in an environment “dominated by the Word of God.”<sup>18</sup> The more a parent has internalized God’s Word the more effectively he will be able to instruct his children in the ways of the Lord. A man must model the truths he wishes to cultivate. It has been said that “more is caught than taught.” This maxim may be true, but the lesson here is that maximum influence is the result of both living and teaching the truth. God desires that vibrant faith be passed on to children from fathers who are themselves living it and teaching it. Instructing one’s children in God’s Word is no small task; it is a life-defining calling, which is why loving

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<sup>16</sup>Mann, *The Book of the Torah*, 147.

<sup>17</sup>Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 1033-34.

<sup>18</sup>Douglas Wilson, *Father Hunger: Why God Calls Men to Love and Lead Their Families* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 70.

God necessitates all of one's heart, soul, and strength. Endeavoring to pass down this faith calls for unprecedented measures of persistence, faithfulness, and diligence not shared with any other endeavor in life.<sup>19</sup>

Teaching the Bible to one's children is an explicit imperative in Deuteronomy 6:7, a matter of obedience for every father. Every question about teaching the Scriptures is answered in this text—who, what, why, when, where, and how. The question of *who* is to teach Scripture in the home is answered first in verse 2—fathers. Fortunately the passage also guides men with *what* to teach their children. Flowing from the text are some very practical specifics for instructing children.

First, fathers should teach their children to put God first. The Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 is a call to acknowledge the Lord and that He alone is God. The first of the Ten Commandments sets up the Shema with, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Deut 5:7). As fathers model fidelity to God, they must also instruct their children to flee from idols (1 Cor 10:14; 1 John 5:21), which means that nothing can and should compete with God's governance over one's life. Fathers will want to point out the supremacy and treasure of Christ above all other things. Training children to identify idols and ruling desires in their lives will help them to maintain the kind of faithfulness to God that they see in their father.

Second, fathers should teach their children to love and obey God (Deut 6:5). This love received from God and shown to Him becomes the motivation for obedience. Fathers want a love for God compelling their children's obedience. Children must be taught that to love God is to live in a way that pleases Him.

Third, fathers are to teach their children the Scriptures (Deut 6:6-7). The head of the home exerts spiritual leadership only to the degree that he brings the Word of God

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<sup>19</sup>John MacArthur, *Being a Dad Who Leads* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2014), 49.

to bear in his home. Apart from God and His Word, a man has no spiritual leadership and children have no hope.

Fourth, fathers are to teach their children biblical cause and effect (Deut 6:1-3, 10-25). Children need their fathers to interpret life's events for them through a biblical grid. Their father needs to alert them to evil and expose it for what it is. They need him to help them understand the consequences of sin. Children are not born with an intuitive understanding of consequences. They must be taught not to touch a hot stove. Cause and effect help children understand the *why* behind biblical instruction. Obedience leads to blessing, disobedience to cursing. God's instruction is for their good and is an expression of His love.

Deuteronomy 6 not only answers the *who*, *what*, and *why* of biblical instruction in the home, but also tells fathers *where*, *when*, and *how* to teach their children. Fathers are to teach biblical truths everywhere to their children; no setting is off limits. The father should teach in all environments, circumstances, settings, and surroundings. In this way they will connect the dots of Scripture and life, which is how children will come to see the relevance of the Bible for their lives. A father's biblical teaching in varied environments, under varied conditions, will shape his children's biblical worldview and make them biblical thinkers.

When are fathers to teach their children biblical truth? The answer to this question is equally all-encompassing. Dads should teach Scripture continuously—at all times. No waking moments should escape the purview of God's Word. When a child rises, when he is at play, when he is working, when he is eating, when is getting ready for bed—all occasions are occasions to insert timeless truths. There is no stopping point, or age limit for discussing Scripture with a child or grandchild.

Admittedly, ministering the Word at home does not come naturally to many fathers. Some feel inept and ill equipped, and are intimidated and avoid it all together, soothing their consciences with a few clichés throughout the day and maybe some

prayers at night. A man must give himself to this endeavor. Ministering God's Word in one's home must become a life-defining skill and ability that he hones and practices over and over again. The key is getting into the Word and then talking about it. A crucial aspect of God's command to heads of homes is that he *talk*.

As the spiritual head of his home, a father should be a "river of verbal instruction."<sup>20</sup> Biblical instruction should ooze from his pores. This may be hyperbole, but it is necessary because so many fathers do so little instructing. Unfortunately, too many operate on a teaching *whenever* policy, which actually amounts to teaching them *never*. Proverbs is also helpful as a definitive pattern for fathers to instruct their children in biblical truth. Seventeen times in the first seven chapters, the father implores his children to listen, hear, not forget, and give attention to his teaching.<sup>21</sup>

*How* should fathers teach their children? They should teach them diligently. The task cannot be relegated to someone else who appears better equipped. It cannot be forfeited during busy seasons. It cannot be sacrificed when life seems to be getting away. It must be a non-negotiable part of life.

Fathers should teach their children formally and informally. Deuteronomy 6 approaches spiritual leadership through both instruction and conversation. There are times when the father should have his Bible out and imparting truth to his family. Reading it out loud is good but it is not enough, dad must also teach through it. Other times the father will need to recall Scripture spontaneously to apply it in a conversation. This kind of informal teaching happens most often while a family is at work or at play and is the modeling of biblical thinking in the impromptu moments of life.

Fathers should teach their children closely. The list of teaching occasions in Deuteronomy 6:7-9 all implicate father/child proximity. Togetherness must be built into parenting relationships. Time must be devoted to it.

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<sup>20</sup>Chanski, *Manly Dominion*, 140.

<sup>21</sup>Prov 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1, 10, 20; 5:1, 7; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1, 24.

Fathers should also teach their children creatively. The items used to keep truth at the forefront of the home in Deuteronomy 6 are all common items. Yet, many dads do not think in terms of adorning oneself with truth, or decorating a home with it. Fathers need to be thoughtful about how they will apply the Scriptures to their children, and can reinforce the lesson with a meaningful touch. Perhaps it is a napkin with a note and a verse in a child's lunch, or a flashcard with a memory verse and McDonald's coupon that can be redeemed upon recitation.

Deuteronomy 6 clearly commands men to exercise spiritual leadership in the home by modeling and teaching the Bible. Spiritual leadership is nonexistent if ministry of the Word is absent. For the head of a home, only faithfulness to this lifestyle offers hope for the devotion of successive generations.

### **Joshua 24:14-15 Requires Men to Establish the Worship of God Alone in the Home**

The conquest of the Amorites forms the backdrop of Joshua's farewell address to the nation of Israel. God commanded Joshua to lead the charge against the Amorites to acquire their rich land in the fertile Jordan Valley (Josh 24:8). Their conquest was an act of obedience that God rewarded with the Amorites prime agricultural real estate. Their conquest also came with risk. They had to be wary that the conquered people's idols did not become their own. The Amorite way of life was saturated with idolatry. They created gods that they associated with the productivity of the land: "The fertility cult of the Amorites with its many corrupt and immoral practices held a special appeal to the Israelites, who were settling down to agricultural life after many years of wandering."<sup>22</sup> Against this idolatry, Joshua challenged the men to give the complete allegiance of their homes to the God of the Bible.

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<sup>22</sup>Donald H. Madvig, *Joshua*, in vol. 3 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 368.

Spiritual leaders steel loved ones against idolatry.<sup>23</sup> Joshua launched a preemptive attack against an infatuation with trendy idolatry before it could gain a foothold within hearts. The people were certainly being wooed by the lifestyle of the Amorites; however, under Joshua’s oversight, they remained faithful. Joshua’s clarion call was for sustained singleness of heart—away from any semblance of duplicity and syncretism. It could not be God plus other gods. The Lord would not allow His people to give themselves to whatever deity served their fancy for the moment. He does not cooperate with competitors (Matt 6:24).

Joshua’s appeal does not presuppose any idolatry on the part of the existing generation. Israel is represented only as serving Jehovah during Joshua’s time.<sup>24</sup> Joshua’s challenge to them was to reaffirm and strengthen their allegiance to God. Their reply demonstrates that they had not fallen to idolatry. The people’s faithfulness throughout Joshua’s conquest is a dramatic example of the power and influence of godly leadership. After his death, the nation faltered and the tragic cycle of the judges from faithfulness to rebellion ignited. Throughout Scripture the spiritual condition of people groups are paired with the influence of their leaders. The impact of godly leadership upon successive generations cannot be overstated.

Spiritual leaders put God in front of people. They unashamedly speak of the Lord’s work and glory displayed in their life. Joshua repeatedly gave testimony of God’s glory before men (6:16; 8:1; 10:14; 11:6-8; 13:6; 18:3; 21:43-45). He acknowledged God granting them victories and credited Him with their blessings. Joshua’s stand inspires the people and realigns their hearts. They respond in verse 18: “We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.”

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<sup>23</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Living on the Cutting Edge: Joshua and the Challenge of Spiritual Leadership* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1987), 155.

<sup>24</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 2:230.

However, genuine godliness cannot be forced by commands and prohibitions. Rules, hip music, compelling speakers, and even large-and-in-charge fathers cannot produce spiritual vitality. No formula or methodology secures men to their Savior. It is only the work of God (John 14:6). Yet, Joshua's legacy reveals that God delights in using fully devoted men to quicken hearts.

Spiritual leaders expose hearts. They do so by identifying and warning of idols and then confronting others with the holiness of God (24:14-15, 19-20). The holiness of God is the only thing that can reveal the true condition of a heart. Joshua knew that it was easy for the people to promise obedience to the Lord, but it was something else for them to do it, which is why he challenges their resolve in 24:19-20. His uncompromising follow-up was meant to suppress any overconfidence. He stops the momentum of potential emotionalism to make them look honestly at their hearts.<sup>25</sup> The final words of Joshua's farewell address are "incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel" (24:23). Joshua knew and lived the heart-condition that the Lord demanded of His people. He knew full well that God has zero tolerance for rivals anywhere and especially on the battlefield of the heart.

Spiritual leaders are willing to stand alone. Those that resolve to serve the Lord must be willing to do it alone if necessary. Joshua had no guarantee of the outcome. He did not know if the line he drew in the sand would ostracize him and his household. He was not influenced by anyone going in a different direction. Proverbs 13:20 warns, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed." Joshua viewed deviation from complete fidelity to the Lord as foolishness deserving of God's judgment (24:20).

Spiritual leaders are submissive to authority. Joshua knew how to submit to authority. He followed Moses' orders as his assistant for many years. He served Moses

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<sup>25</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Strong: Putting God's Power to Work in Your Life* (Colorado Springs: Cook, 1993), 155.

faithfully and humbly, proving that he was a worthy successor upon Moses' passing. Joshua was in a position to give orders because he learned to take orders. Even so, he understood his authority was from God. No earthly position could change the fact that he was under God's authority. Spiritual leaders submit to God and earthly overseers.

Spiritual leaders walk with God. The book of Joshua closes with Joshua being endowed the title of "servant of the Lord" (24:29). Joshua ended his life with the sole challenge repeated five times in verses 14-15 to the people to likewise serve the Lord. Joshua communed with God, looking to Him daily in His Word (1:8). He listened to God and obeyed His Word completely (11:15). He talked to God in prayer (7:6-9). These spiritual disciplines combined with God's operative grace in his life made Joshua the colossal leader he was.

Spiritual leaders are courageous. At the outset of accepting the mantle of leadership for the nation of Israel, Joshua was told four times to "be courageous" (1:6-7, 9, 18). Joshua led men into battle after battle. The reader is never told whether or not he was afraid. It has been said that courage is not the absence of fear, but of performing in the face of it.<sup>26</sup> Joshua also had the courage to confront sin in the camp of Israel (7:19). In the home, no less courage is required of the spiritual leader and the stakes are just as high.

The bold, decisive, spiritual leader's influence extends beyond his own home and helps shape homes within earshot. Men are inspired by men of bold conviction. Bold men of God grow other men's passion for the Lord, impart vision for spiritual conquest, and broaden their shoulders for increased capacity to influence others.

Spiritual leaders influence with urgency. Joshua made no allowance for the people to return to their tents and sleep on the choice before them. He does not even offer them the opportunity to pray about it: "Choose for yourselves this day." The

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<sup>26</sup>Wiersbe, *Be Strong*, 162.

spiritual leader is compelled to redeem time because it is evil, not working in man's favor (Eph 5:16; Col 4:5). Legacies are written in life, not upon death. Husbands and fathers must realize that their legacy is being left right now.

Spiritual leaders are decisive and unwavering. Joshua called for an immediate decision because he knew that indecision is itself a choice. A reluctance to choose God equals choosing unfaithfulness. Joshua makes his decision regardless of what others around him choose to do. He gives himself to being the immovable anchor of his home. Even if all the families of Israel rebelled against God and served idols, Joshua and his family would steadfastly serve the Lord. He refused to be influenced or drawn by the crowd to veer from the Lord.

A spiritual leader persuades his family to serve the Lord together. Joshua promised that he and his family would serve the Lord. There is no doubt that Joshua expended tremendous time, energy, and effort serving the Lord. An entire generation served the Lord with him as a result. Scripture calls the heads of homes to involve their entire households (Acts 16:31). One of the most beneficial things a man can do is to lead his family in serving the Lord together, through taking ownership of a ministry at church, participating in community outreach, reaching out to neighbors, and countless other opportunities that a family bathes in prayer.

Spiritual leaders do not quit. Joshua's challenge to the people to make their choice appears at the end of the book. Spending his life and leadership serving the Lord accrued credibility with his audience before issuing this final charge. Joshua was able to call people to serve the Lord with utmost integrity. He did not challenge them to do something he had not already done. The book of Joshua bears testimony of his spiritual leadership and conquest. Joshua certainly was not perfect. He made mistakes. He was defeated at Ai and admitted his personal failure, turned to the Lord, and later claimed the victory. When he foolishly allied with the Gibeonites, he confessed his sin. Proverbs 24:16 says, "For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked

shall fall by calamity.” Joshua never abandoned his commitment to serve the Lord and to lead others in his pursuit.

Joshua was the ruler of Israel, yet he did not allow his attention to public affairs become an excuse for neglecting spiritual leadership of his home.<sup>27</sup> His example challenged those even with demanding careers to take care of the spiritual wellbeing of their own. He refused to challenge other men to do something he was unwilling to do himself. The crux of his farewell address embodies his life. The loudest, clearest, most compelling message a man preaches is his life at home.

### **Ephesians 5:22-33 Requires Men to Sacrificially Love Their Wives**

The bottom line of Ephesians 5:22-33 is that “Christian homes are to be pictures of Christ’s relationship to His Church.”<sup>28</sup> Two concepts in this passage are controversial in society: the headship of the husband and the submission of the wife. However, they are not the focal point of this passage. Just like the rest of Ephesians, the focus is on Jesus Christ and how people can now relate to Him. This passage deals specifically with how believers relate to Him in the context of marriage.

The text begins by addressing wives and introduces a highly controversial ideal in today’s world: the submission of a wife to her husband. Because many men and women mistake the focal point of this passage, they draw faulty conclusions about their roles in marriage and formulate faulty expectations of their spouses. This is certainly true when it comes to women’s and men’s unbiblical view of submission. Fortunately, this text offers crystal-clear clarity for submission in the context of marriage. First, it is important to address the criticisms and abuses of marital submission in society.

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<sup>27</sup>Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1975), 2:117.

<sup>28</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Are You Losing the Things that Money Can’t Buy?* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1976), 145.

## **Misrepresentations of Submission**

Submission is not only for women and marriage (5:21). In the Bible, God commands all people to be submissive in some fashion. All believers should submit to God and His Word. In relationships, believers are to submit to one another in a different way. Obviously people do not submit to other people like they would to God. Horizontal submission in relationships is wonderfully articulated in Philippians 2:1-5. Christ's humility provides the pattern for all human relationships, and especially marriage. Husbands and wives bring glory to God when they submit to Christ by following His example in relating to people.

However, God's glory comes into clearer focus and radiates more dramatically when God's children submit to Christ within the roles He has called them to fill. God clarifies submission in the context of a husband/wife relationship. There is a general sense in which people submit to one another, but this submission is not a mutual submission in the context of marriage.

The general call to submission is to approach all people with humility, placing another's interests above one's own and being willing to serve. This concept certainly applies to marriage in that both the husband and wife are to submit to Christ and serve each other. This is the general deferential treatment of others that Paul teaches in Philippians 2:1-4. Yet in Ephesians 5:22, Paul moves from the general to the particular application of submission. The particular call to submission does not apply to all people and relationships; it applies only to wives. The husband does not submit to his wife, but rather serves her by considering her interests and leading in a Christlike way. The husband's role differs from the role of the wife in that the wife is to submit to her husband by trusting the Lord as she follows her husband's leadership. This context and shift in focus demonstrate that husband/wife responsibilities are complementary and equally important and valuable but different.

In Ephesians, wives are not the only ones called to live in submission. All people are to submit to God. In 6:1 children are to submit to their parents. In 6:5

employees are to submit to their employers. Submission, in some fashion, is the way of the Christian life for all God's children.

A wife's submission to her husband is not degrading (Eph 5:24). The current cultural fallacy is that subordination equals degradation. Biblically, subordination has never resulted in degradation. It is only in the context of marriage that the world views subordination this way. Jesus making Himself subordinate to the Father was not degrading. The church's subordination to Christ is not degrading or oppressive. Rather, it strengthens, purifies, builds up, and honors.

A wife's submission to her husband is not archaic. It is no secret that the world hates the concept of submission. It always has, and it rightly should when authority figures abuse their authority. However, submission in a marriage has especially fallen on hard times. The world hates marital submission because it hates Jesus. It hates the Bible. Romans 1 says that irreverent people "suppress the truth in unrighteousness." There will always be cultural movements to snuff out the truths contained within the Bible, and the world will always accuse the Bible of being archaic.

A wife submitting to her husband is not stifling. Submission does not make a woman a doormat when she crosses the threshold. Some have misunderstood this point, especially as it pertains to their interpretation of 1 Peter 3:1 when it advises winning unbelieving husbands "without a word." Submission is not passivity and remaining silent when sinned against. Living in submission to one's husband does not grant him the freedom to lead his wife into sin. If forced with a choice, a wife must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Ultimately wives are under the authority of God first, and then their husbands who are also under His authority. The wife's obedience to Christ trumps her obedience to her husband. However, as 1 Peter 3 demonstrates, the wife's attitude of submission both to God and her husband becomes compelling when she assumes a gentle, sweet spirit. When a husband sins against his wife, the wife must obey God and confront him (Matt 18:15). A wife's submission respects her husband even while

opposing the sin. A wife also has the option of turning to the governing authorities if she needs protection (Rom 13:1-5).

Submission does not mean that the wife has no influence. First Peter 3:1-2 talks about winning one's husband with godliness—that entails influence. Submission does not mean that wives cannot or should not lead. The wife is a leader in her own unique, God-designed way. The spiritual well-being of the family depends upon her leadership. The difference is that her leadership is subservient to and energized by her husband's leadership.

A wife's submission is not martyrdom. Some women equate submission with suffering, and think as if it is "just their cross to bear," or "just my lot in life; God must want me to be miserable." Seeing submission as God-sanctioned suffering has less to do with a woman's husband and more to do with her walk with God. The less a wife walks with the Lord, the more discontented she grows. This wife becomes a complainer and a troublemaker, and is disruptive to her household. She has a "Poor me!" attitude and is a poor testimony for Christ because of it.

A wife's submission is also not a way to manipulate the husband. Occasionally, Christian women can be seen or even heard quoting from the movie, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*: "If the husband is the head, then the woman is the neck . . . the neck turns the head any way she wishes!" This sentiment reveals a desire for manipulation and control. A young woman who once proudly repeated this movie line watched her parents' marriage deteriorate to a battle of control. Ultimately, the husband acquiesced to his wife's relentless demands. He bought into the world's slogan, "If Momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy!" Some women really believe that they must be in control. Only they are qualified to be competent, so they must control their husbands, control the kids, control the home, and more. One day their efforts to control will crash and burn, and the tearing of control from their grasp is a trauma that changes their life forever. If they look to the Lord, it is for the better; if not they become even bitterer.

Submission becomes manipulation when a wife uses it to receive something in exchange. Like one's submission to Christ, a wife's submission to her husband comes with no strings attached. It is a desire to please God and do what is best for the family. This tendency toward manipulation and control is part of the curse: "To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you'" (Gen 3:19). This statement means that a wife will struggle with wanting to control her husband. There will be power struggles in the home, in part because a woman's sinful nature is drawn to take over and usurp and commandeer her husband's leadership. For this reason, husbands should be all the more vigilant to lead in godliness.

### **Biblical Submission**

After identifying some of the common criticisms and abuses of submission, the qualities of biblical submission stand out like diamonds on a black felt backdrop. First, submission is the fruit of a right heart toward God (Eph 5:22). For a wife, submission is the natural expression of her heart toward her husband when her heart toward God is right. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord." A wife's supreme submission is to the Lord. She lovingly submits to her husband as an act of obedience to the Lord, regardless of her husband's spiritual state or whether she deems him worthy.<sup>29</sup> Her submission to the Lord is what empowers her to follow her husband.

Submission is precious to God. Just as the submission of the church is precious to Christ, so too is the submission of a wife to her husband precious to God (1 Pet 3:1-4). When a wife is in a right relationship with God, she will desire to please God, and have His desires become her desires.

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<sup>29</sup>John MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 288.

Submission is the fruit of fearing God (1 Pet 3:1-2). In the sinful state in which a wife lives, she does not have the will-power, gumption, or moxie to submit to her husband in her own strength. Submission demands placing herself right where she needs to be on a daily basis—at the feet of Jesus, wrestling with sin, going to God for forgiveness, giving Him frustrations and fears, renewing her mind in truth, and getting reenergized by the hope only He can offer.

Submission is winsome to a husband (1 Pet 3:1-2), just as the church's submission is winsome to Jesus (John 15:9-10; 1 John 5:3). First Peter 3:1-2 paints the scenario of a wife who has an unbelieving husband. The text also offers great insight for the wife who is frustrated by the husband who claims to be a believer but is not leading spiritually. What it does not say is, "Woe is you if your husband is not leading spiritually the way you want him to." It is not a wife's pass to self-pity. The text is talking about a husband who is lost, and whose life is characterized by rebellion. If a husband is a believer, then a wife has much to be thankful for, even though he may not be leading the way his wife may like.

Wives need to be careful not to mistake their husbands for Jesus. While he is called to lead and love his wife like Jesus, he is *not* Jesus. Some women dive headlong into heartache because they make their husband their emotional savior, as if he is supposed to solve all of her problems and insecurities, filling some kind of emotional void that she feels. The husband is not the answer. God may use him to help the process along, but she needs Jesus and His leadership far more than she needs her husband and his leadership. Wives must put their hope in Jesus; not their husbands.

A working definition, based on the Bible's presentation of marital submission, is trusting God enough to lovingly and respectfully accept and yield to the leadership of her husband. Going back to Genesis 2, fulfilling the role of helpmate means that the wife assists her husband in his overarching responsibility for the home. She uses the gifts and abilities God has given her to help execute the prerogatives of her husband's leadership.

A wife's submission is respecting and obeying her husband (Eph 5:24, 33). Titus 2:5 advises wives to be obedient to their husbands. Submission is always inherently expressed through respect and obedience. When one submits to the laws of the land, he or she is obeying them. As has been stated, this does not mean that a husband is at liberty to boss his wife around and be harsh and demanding toward her—he is to love, cherish, nurture, and honor his wife. However, the man may not make good on his end of the responsibility. The possibility of a husband's failure to fulfill his biblical role is one reason why submission requires faith. Submission is an act of trusting the Lord. Furthermore, submission is trusting the Lord while following one's husband.

Both husbands and wives need to understand that Ephesians 5 is not about them. The chapter discusses them and their roles, but they are not the focal point. The focal point is Jesus Christ, and the purpose of the passage is for people to see how they need to align their lives with Jesus so they can be more like Him. Husbands will do well to understand the passage is not about their wives or their submission to their husbands. Many men erroneously approach this passage wearing blinders. All they see is submission and respect, but that is not the focus. If the wife's submission is a man's preoccupation, it reveals something about his heart. When he reads this text, if all he sees is the submission of the wife, then his pride is revealed. The blindness of his pride keeps him ignorant and incapable of seeing his own faults while he points out his wife's. It also leads to the mistaken notion that "headship" equals superiority.

### **Misrepresentations of Headship**

Headship does not imply superiority in any way. Male headship is a wonderfully freeing, empowering, encouraging, equipping doctrine. It helps steer the family in a God-ward direction and is necessary for the spiritual success of the family. In the eyes of God, men and women are equal in value and importance. First Peter 3:7 says that a husband and wife are "heirs together of the grace of life."

Headship is not male domination. Male domination is a demonic, prideful, and abusive counterfeit of headship. It is an abused and twisted truth that many use Scripture to support. But those who find support for male domination in Scripture are going to God's Word with deep insecurities and putting blinders on that will only allow them to see what exalts themselves. Males do not bear more resemblance to the image of God because of their gender. Male domination is moral failure and can even lead to abuse. Male domination is the marital approach of a man who has neglected and forsaken God's vision for him as head. In contrast, biblical headship is the calling of God upon a husband's life to lead, provide, and protect his family in grace and truth.

Headship is not limited to authority. If a man mistakes headship strictly for authority, then assuredly, the leadership within his home is sinfully controlling. The role of the head carries inherent authority, but a husband's authority is no longer Christlike authority once he wrongly wields it against the wife.

Headship is not a license to force submission. Jesus never forced anyone to follow Him. He had authority, but He did not impose His will upon anyone else. Headship exercises gentleness and understanding in the home (1 Pet 3:7). The husband is not responsible for his wife's response to Christlike leadership—that is her responsibility alone to bear. The text says she is to respond in a Christlike manner to that leadership, and most women welcome that kind of leadership and will readily respond to Christlikeness.

Headship is not an expectation or right to be served. What some men think they have coming to them, because of their misunderstanding of this text, is their wife's indentured service as if they are entitled to it or their wife owes it to them.

### **Biblical Headship**

If a man is to understand his role as the head of the home, he must abandon all cultural distortions and abuses of headship and embrace a biblical definition. In the Bible, headship is a man's privileged position of responsibility and authority for the Christlike

loving leadership, provision, and protection of his wife. Biblical, Christ-reflecting headship is love and leadership that is patterned after Christ. Headship is like a double-sided coin; one side is love, the other leadership, but the face of headship is not Washington or Lincoln; the face of headship is Jesus. When the Bible speaks of the husband's being the head of the wife, God is talking about Christlike, loving leadership.

The first verse of instruction for the husband in marriage begins with the command to love (Eph 5:25). This supreme responsibility gives life and meaning to headship. Christlike love gives no thought to what it stands to gain or to get in return.<sup>30</sup> Headship is a giving love. Christ "gave Himself." Every other aspect of headship flows out of this Christlike love.

Qualifying headship further, men should be pursuing several characteristics of headship in their homes, each of which is a manifestation of Christlike love. These qualities are something that a man is—they are a part of his identity. He may even become increasingly known for these qualities by his wife, children, church, and certainly by his wife's friends. These characteristics are secondarily, something that a man does. Concepts of being manifest themselves in tangible action; they are qualities of his love and leadership.

First, headship is sacrificial service (5:25). "Love begins with giving of one's self, one's possessions, or—whatever it is that one has that the one to be loved needs."<sup>31</sup> The husband's example is Jesus Christ laying down his life for His bride, the church. Headship then, is servant-leadership. Servant-leadership is the expression of divine love that Jesus left as an example for husband's to emulate. He washed feet. He was humbly willing to do the most menial tasks to bless His disciples and teach them about the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His

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<sup>30</sup>Jay E. Adams, *Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, The Christian Counselor's Commentary (Hackettstown, NJ: Timeless Texts, 1994), 118.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

life a ransom for many” (Matt 10:28; Mark 10:45). Jesus communicated his love through the language of sacrifice. His bride was once His enemy. Just as Christ gave His life for His love, regardless of her disposition toward Him, so too must a husband daily lay down his life for his wife. Practically, this means he tangibly demonstrates he treasures his wife, that she is more important than his job, friends, hobbies, video games, and even his mother. A wife should know that her husband is earnestly trying to understand and meet her needs. She should even be able to observe her husband sacrificing his own desires to bless his wife.

Headship is spiritually engaged (5:26). The spiritual component of leadership is a hard one for both men and women to grasp. Women say to their husbands, “I just wish you would lead me spiritually.” The husband has no idea what she means by that, but he knows she has some concept in her mind of what she is looking for; however, her expectations of spiritual leadership are not always accurate either.

At its core, the spiritual leader is one who is himself a follower of Christ. A man who can lead spiritually has submitted himself to the lordship of Jesus and looks to Him for leadership. He has made himself a disciple of Jesus Christ, and because He is himself a disciple, he is able to disciple his family. He leads them in prayer; he makes God’s Word both a formal and informal part of family life and conversation. He leads his family in serving others, reaching the lost, and supporting his church. Spiritual leadership is discipleship.

Headship is eternally accountable (5:27). Much like man and woman were God’s crowning achievement of creation, the church will one day be presented to God as Jesus’ crowning achievement since creation. Husbands will be held accountable for what kind of head they were for their wives. Of course wives are responsible and accountable for their own choices and actions; however, husbands will answer for their responsibility to their marital covenant in helping their wives become more holy like Christ. Headship

therefore, requires a man to live under spiritual authority and accountability. In view of eternity, a husband best serves his wife by tending her heart.<sup>32</sup>

Leadership without accountability deteriorates to tyranny. A man may disrespect the headship of Christ, but then expect his wife to respect his headship over her. To hold a woman accountable for something he is not willing to do is a double-standard, and heavy-handedly sinful. The man who reminds his wife of her need to submit but is not himself submitted to Jesus is a hypocrite. He is a wicked, sinful, prideful man who needs to humble himself, repent, and look to Jesus for help. Leadership that is loving and servant-minded is always accountable to Christ. As God designed, wives are most receptive to the leadership of a man who is submitted to Jesus Christ.

Headship is tenderly attentive (5:28-29). God offers practical help for men who struggle to understand what spiritual leadership looks like. People, let alone husbands, have no difficulty loving themselves. It is a part of sinful human nature to love oneself. Here Paul applies the Golden Rule to marriage, which sounds very reminiscent of the way Jesus put it in Matthew 7:12: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Husbands will benefit from understanding the three verbs of Ephesians 5:28-29—to love, to nurture, and to cherish. The love in this verse is a Christlike love: known for being unconditional. No matter what a wife does or does not do toward the husband, whether she meets expectations or not, the man is committed to putting her and her interests before himself. “To nurture” in this passage means to make conditions optimal for growth. A husband’s nurture entails providing an atmosphere in which a wife thrives spiritually. Masculine nurture encourages a wife in tangible ways to pursue Christ. Keeping one’s wife continually exposed to God’s Word inspires her to grow in holiness. “To cherish” here means to tenderly comfort. A husband cherishing his wife

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<sup>32</sup>Philips, *Masculine Mandate*, 14.

communicates the idea of being kind and gentle. This approach to one's wife makes her feel loved and secure. Paul is saying that husbands are to treat their wives with the same level of attention that they devote to themselves.<sup>33</sup>

In the parallel passage, Colossians 3:19, husbands are given the instruction in love and gentleness: "Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them." The Greek word for "bitter" can also be translated "harsh" or "angry."<sup>34</sup> This command finds its compliment in 1 Peter 3:7 with the command to dwell with one's wife "with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel."

Headship is enduringly permanent (5:30-31): "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Eph 5:31). The Greek word for "be joined" means "to stick to, to adhere to closely, to join" as in being glued or cemented together.<sup>35</sup> Ephesians 5:31, quoted from Genesis 2:24, speaks not only to the intimacy and physical union of marriage, but also the spiritual union with its intended permanence. The permanence of headship means that when the groom says, "I do," he burned his ships. There is no going back to the motherland. Men cannot give provision for a back door or "plan 'B'" to marriage. Divorce cannot be an option. Christ's love and commitment to His bride is permanent. Romans 8:38-39 promises the believer that Jesus loves His own with a love from which they can never be separated. Therefore, a husband's love and commitment to his bride is to be as well. Christ's love for His bride is permanent in that it is eternal. A man's love for his bride is permanent in this life.

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<sup>33</sup>D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 191.

<sup>34</sup>Fredrick William Danker, *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2000), 812-13.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 881-82.

Marriage as God intends it not only brings two people together in physical intimacy, it also binds the couple's hearts and minds together. Marriage is a spiritual union that encompasses every aspect of life. When a husband and wife become one in marriage, they enter into a covenant relationship wherein their whole identity is redefined. Personal autonomy is exchanged for oneness with a spouse. With these truths in view, John MacArthur poses the question, "Can a man cast off his wife? Let me answer that with another question: Can Christ cast off His church?"<sup>36</sup>

In view of Paul's teaching on headship, the biblical concept can be defined as a man's privileged position of responsibility and authority for the Christlike loving leadership, provision, and protection of his wife. How a man lives out this role as the head of his home is, in part, the measure of his submission to Jesus Christ. Only when he submits to Jesus does his family thrive.

### **Ephesians 6:4 Requires Fathers to Raise Their Children in the Discipline and Instruction of the Lord**

Ephesians 6:4 is specifically addressed to fathers. The omission of mothers when they were just mentioned in 6:1 is meant to get the attention of the men.<sup>37</sup> The author's intent is corroborated with the specific address to fathers in the parallel passage of Colossians 3:19. The verse reinforces the Old Testament role of the father creating the spiritual climate of the home as was discussed previously regarding Deuteronomy 6.

The Old Testament makes quite clear that the father played a priestly role in his home; he represented God. One of the purposes God had for entering into relationship with that great patriarch, Abraham, is revealed in Genesis 18:19: "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep

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<sup>36</sup>MacArthur, *Being a Dad Who Leads*, 32.

<sup>37</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 406.

the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice.” And so it is to this day. The father remains even in today’s age responsible for shaping the beliefs, values, behavior, and instruction of the children. No doubt the children’s mother plays a strategic role in their spiritual rearing, but Scripture places responsibility and authority on the father. The wife’s spiritual influence is empowered and sanctioned by the loving headship of her husband.

### **Paternal Provocation**

The parallel passage, Colossians 3:21 instructs, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children,” meaning, “Do not embitter them or stir them up.”<sup>38</sup> The essence of meaning is the same as “do not provoke your children to anger.” There is hardly a father who desires to embitter his child, yet some are surprised that as children grow, some grow increasingly rebellious.

The warning to fathers to avoid provoking their children to anger is primarily a summons to put anger to death in his own life. Anger has contagious qualities. The surest way to produce a wrathful child is to immerse him in a seething caldron of anger. An angry home produces angry children. Proverbs 15:1 cautions against the spreading nature of anger when it says, “A harsh word stirs up strife.” The Hebrew word for “harsh” is elsewhere translated “venom” in the Old Testament.<sup>39</sup> The word offers an insightful illustration of a snake bite that “causes injury and/or death, possibly as an extension of heat as a feeling in the body when one is injected with the poison.”<sup>40</sup> In like way, anger is a toxin that can poison and debilitate a child. In particular view is critical speech. Critical speech is the mean-spirited, angry criticism of a father toward his child that makes

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<sup>38</sup>William Hendricksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 263.

<sup>39</sup>J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 254.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

that child in turn just as venomous. The same word is again used of the venomous, or “wrathful” man in Proverbs 15:18, where he is again said to “stir up strife” or “hostility.”

Some parents are fearful that disciplining their children will turn their children against them. Such a fear places children in authority over the parents. Ephesians 6:4 by no means places a father in subjection to his children. Instead, Paul in this passage presupposes the undisputed authority of the father in his home.<sup>41</sup> His intention here is to set the bounds for its use. Children are not to be feared, but they are to be treated with dignity.

God is concerned with a man’s anger before he mentions the danger of transmitting it to children. Back in Ephesians 4:29-32, God issues the command to put off corrupt speaking and to put on “what is good for necessary edification.” The venom of harsh, critical speaking is to be drained from a heart, repented of, and replaced with words that build up and encourage a child. Furthermore, in verse 31, God decrees that believers are to utterly eliminate all traces of sins of anger and evil speaking, and replace them with kindness, gentleness, and forgiveness. Once again, the believer is directed to his source and master, Jesus Christ, as a pattern for how to live and conquer besetting sins.

Ephesians 6:4 does not call fathers to perfection, but rather to respond to sin the way God desires. Fathers are going to sin against their children. A father’s sin against his child is not necessarily what embitters them. As the language of the verse indicates, children are embittered by the continuous action of provocation leveled against them. Continuous provocation fosters resentment and multiplies wrath.<sup>42</sup> Repeated provoking over time results in a child becoming angry and losing heart.

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<sup>41</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 407.

<sup>42</sup>MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 317.

## Paternal Nurture

The opposite of “provoke” is “encourage.” The text calls fathers to “bring up” or “nurture” their children. In the original Greek text this verb is in the present tense, which necessitates continuous, sustained action. “Bring up” is the exact contrast and answer to the sin of provocation.<sup>43</sup> In the language of Ephesians 4, provocation is to be put off, and nurture is to be put on. In a sense, paternal nurture is the New Testament corollary to the all-encompassing Christian approach to parenting that is taught in Deuteronomy 6, which requires a father to be fully engaged in the spiritual growth of his children.

“Nurture” is the more general term, with “discipline” and “admonition” qualifying how a father is to bring up his children. This fatherly nurture includes “everything we do for the children. It includes . . . cultivation of the mind and the spirit, the morals and the moral behavior, the whole personality of the child.”<sup>44</sup>

Fathers are called to create a Christian environment that woos a child’s soul to the Savior, not turn the child from Him. Bryan Chapell writes,

The essence of parental love is recognizing that we are the dispensers of God’s grace into our children’s lives. They learn to identify and reverence God’s character through the way we treat them both in moments of profound pride and in times of intense disappointment.<sup>45</sup>

Paternal spiritual nurture is only possible when a man is winsomely Christian at home rather than miserably Christian. The father’s delight will give light to the path of his children. His cheerful delight in God’s Word and the things in which God Himself delights, all of which bless a child, will spark a desire to be like Dad. A delightful dad makes Christianity and all the riches of the gospel attractive to children. Only a delightful Dad parents his children with the Spirit in which the Father parents His own.

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<sup>43</sup>Martha Peace and Stuart W. Scott, *The Faithful Parent: A Biblical Guide to Raising a Family* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 128.

<sup>44</sup>Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 291.

<sup>45</sup>Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2009), 319.

Consequently, children with Christian fathers should conclude that Christianity is the most wonderful thing in the world, that there is nothing like being a Christian.

For a Christian father to approach his children with Christlike love, he must view his children and his role as a parent the way God does. Affirming his conviction that children are a gift from God is a good place to start (Ps 127:3). Children are a solemn trust placed in the hands of a man to do with them what God expects. God places the father at the helm of the home as His representative, and will call upon him to give account for that which He entrusted to his care (Matt 25:14-30). Being entrusted with children is a tall order for which God wants to give wisdom and strength (Jas 1:5).

Ephesians 6:4 offers two ways in which a father is to nurture his children. First, he is to nurture them through Christian “disciplined training.” Corrective Christian discipline calls for balance, not to over-discipline or under-discipline. Extremes to one degree of discipline or the other provoke children to sinful resentment. How is this accomplished? The key is in the context. The house codes of Ephesians 5-6 come on the heels of the command to “not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit” (5:18).<sup>46</sup>

The believing father is to be wholly different from a drunken father who is given to excess, indulgence, and unpredictability. Inebriated people tend to be imbalanced, not only in their dexterity, but in their responses to life happening around them. Some turn lethargic and carefree. Others are easily offended and violent. The reactions of a drunken man are unpredictable. Loved ones are left guessing whether he will be found in a genial mood or a bad temper. Whichever extreme he is found in, one thing is always true of the drunkard: his inhibitions are diminished, and he lacks self-control. The Christian father is to be the antithesis of the drunkard. He is to be measured and balanced, disciplined, typifying Christlike behavior that is under control of the Holy

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<sup>46</sup>Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 278.

Spirit. In his parenting, and especially in his discipline of his children, he will exhibit the fruit of the spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9).

### **Paternal Correction**

A father must understand the nature of Christian discipline if he is to practice it in his home. Hebrews 12:5-11 reveals that the corrective discipline of a father is an expression of Christlike love. Christian discipline in the home is restorative, not negative, vindictive, or punitive, but positive and corrective. This method of training provides a child with structure and boundaries. Corrective discipline imparts wisdom to children that helps them to discern right and wrong; it strengthens their conscience and equips them to live successfully in the real world (Prov 29:15). Not to require obedience before faith is folly. Neglecting obedience is not loving; rather, it fosters disobedient habits that are detrimental to children. Not requiring obedience sets a child up for spiritual failure. Martyn Lloyd-Jones notes, “Anything that militates against the child’s soul, and its knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, should be rejected.”<sup>47</sup> Establishing boundaries for a child is an act of love. Boundaries protect children from things they cannot handle and provide an environment for growing in discernment, understanding cause and effect, and rewards and consequences.

Requiring obedience is not the same as requiring perfection. Since fathers represent God to their children, especially before they can know God through faith in the gospel, they are responsible for showing their children both justice and mercy. Not every disobedient act is punished. Some are noted, some are overlooked, some are reproved, and others are corrected. There is no precise manual for this mixture. Children should learn from their fathers that obedience is “all the way, right away, with a joyful heart.”

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<sup>47</sup>Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 294.

Correction must be exacted in love. Whether it is establishing rules, corrective rebuke, or corporal punishment, Christian discipline, if it is to be Christian at all, is exacted in love. The admonition to “speak the truth in love” applies just as much to parenting as any other relationship. The father’s goal for correction is the same as his Heavenly Father’s: to produce “the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb 12:11).

Second, a father nurtures his children in the Lord through Christian “admonition.” The Greek word for “admonition” means “counsel about avoidance or cessation of an improper course of conduct, admonition, instruction.”<sup>48</sup> It is a compound Greek word that literally reads “putting in mind.”<sup>49</sup> In the context of Ephesians 6:4, the word gives nuance to the nature of a father’s nurture; it is training through education. Whereas training through “discipline” entails the correcting of a sinful heart and resulting behavior. Training children through “admonition” is by nature instructional. A great biblical example of a fathering instructing his children in scriptural truths and wisdom is the book of Proverbs. Ephesians 6:4 is an admonition to fathers to treat life as a classroom; a training ground for their children. The idea is to use the parental resources that the Lord offers in His Word, including that which He exhibits toward His children in His Word.<sup>50</sup> More on the nature of this fatherly instruction is offered previously in this chapter with the section on Deuteronomy 6.

Baptist pastor, scholar, and theologian John Gill observes,

The parent who studies to subdue self-will in his child works together with God in the saving of a soul. The parent who indulges self-will does the devil’s work,

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<sup>48</sup>Danker, *A Greek Lexicon*, 679.

<sup>49</sup>MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 319.

<sup>50</sup>Adams, *Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 121.

makes religion impractical, salvation unattainable, and does all that is in him to drown his child, soul and body forever.<sup>51</sup>

The fatherly nurture of Ephesians 6:4 is intended to be a comprehensive approach to addressing the heart problems of his children. Sin is a manifestation of the heart (Mark 7:21-23; Luke 6:45). Modifying behavior is never sufficient; it never goes deep enough to reach the root of the problem. Fathers must address the condition of their children's hearts. In this way they are evangelists; missionaries to their own homes. Children's greatest need is that of redemption through the saving work of Jesus Christ, so that with a converted heart they may love God with all their heart, soul, and strength. Commenting on Ephesians 6:4, William Hendricksen concludes, "The very heart of Christian nurture is this: to bring the heart of the child to the heart of his Savior."<sup>52</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The exegesis of the passages in this chapter clearly demonstrate that the spiritual leadership of the home requires men to know and implement the appropriate biblical directives God has given to them. By living in obedience to these directives, God has blessed men with the opportunity to impact their wives and children for all eternity. Each directive requires a man to give his utmost attention and energy to the spiritual needs of his home. They require him to lay aside any self-serving prerogatives and take on the mind of Christ in serving the Lord by nurturing his family in Him. A man must himself be a disciple of Jesus Christ, a student of His Word. Men in the church must be taught the biblical precepts related to spiritual leadership in the home if they are to have any chance at understanding and applying them. Men must be trained by other men who have been in the trenches with them and understand the spiritual reality that "if you get the men, you win the war."

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<sup>51</sup>John Gill, *A Complete Body of Practical Divinity, Or, a System of Evangelical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures* (Charleston, SC: Nabu, 2010), 519.

<sup>52</sup>Hendricksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, 263.

## CHAPTER 3

### SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP OF THE HOME REQUIRES MEN TO GROW IN GODLINESS

#### **The Spiritual Leader of a Home Develops a Biblical Vision for the Direction in Which He Will Lead His Family**

Like iron on an anvil, men are often not moldable until the fire is hot enough. Life really needs to heat up before some men seek help. Yet, a man's spiritual leadership is the key to the health of his home. Many problems in the home are a reflection of a man's spiritual leadership or lack thereof. Often these problems can be preemptively addressed by equipping men to lead their homes spiritually.

Moving a man from spiritual inactivity in his home to contagious spiritual vitality is foremost a miraculous work of God. God knows just how hot it needs to get in a man's life before he will bend to His will. When a believing man reaches the point where he recognizes his need to lead, he is then in a position to forge a vision for his spiritual leadership.

God has given every man the capacity to formulate a vision for the leadership in his home (Josh 24:15). A visionary has the insight and foresight to optimistically see what can be. However, vision is not enough. Vision is incomplete without venture.<sup>1</sup> A man who ventures to accomplish his vision not only sees what can be, but commits himself to what can be. It means taking action to fulfill a desired outcome. Having a biblical vision for one's home is committing to God's grand design for the family. The

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<sup>1</sup>J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 56-57.

spiritual leader takes up the mantle of a God-forged vision for his home that is centered on God.

A life-defining vision requires a man to clearly envision the end goal. He must know how to measure spiritual success. For the Christian, the ultimate, life-defining vision is the glory of God (Isa 43:7; 1 Cor 10:31). Therefore, the spiritual leader's sights are ever fixed upon bringing God glory and honor. His nature, Who He is, His very character, and attributes bring God glory. Everything about God brings Him glory. So too should a man's life bring God glory in all he is and does. God's glory is what drives his leadership and shapes his influence upon his family. He orders everything in his life and home to line up in submission to glorifying God, which is the determining factor in his husbanding, fathering, working, recreating, serving and onward. The litmus test by which the godly man will measure whether his life and activities and that of his home are accomplishing the glory of God is whether or not they reflect His character in obedience to God's Word (Ps 103:17-18; John 14:15).

### **God's Character Shapes the Vision**

For a man to have a biblical vision for his leadership of his home, he must have a clearer understanding of God. He must know God intimately and be an imitator of His character if he is going to bring Him glory. One of the most important implications of the Greatest Commandment for the home is that a man who loves God well will love his family well. The man who loves God imitates Him (1 John 3:2).

The character of God is vast and inexhaustible in scope, yet personal. He transcends His creation and is unimaginable in His majesty, yet He is intimately and personally involved with His creation and each and every one of its creatures. To the degree that God is incomprehensible, He is also knowable and understandable. Growing in the knowledge of God is a worthy lifelong pursuit. Because man is created by God and in His image, he is logically instructed to be like God. Ephesians 5:1 says, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children." Man is instructed to clothe himself with certain

communicable attributes of God by virtue of the fact that they are qualities of God. Like a young boy who wants to wear a tie on Sunday because Daddy wears one, and wants to be a pastor because Daddy's a pastor, so too the Christian man should strive to emulate his Heavenly Father.

A man will gain more influence and credibility in his home the more he is characterized by the attributes of God. What follows is a short list with explanations of how God's attributes can powerfully shape a man's vision for the leadership of his home.<sup>2</sup> They also provide points of accountability by which a man can measure the growth of his Christlike leadership in his home.

God is truth. Therefore, God calls all believers to live in the truth and speak the truth (Eph 4:15; 1 John 1:6; Col 3:9). Spiritual leaders are marked by truthfulness, integrity, and strength of character. They are not perfect, but strive to hammer out the chinks in their armor and be honest in their dealings. It is the serious endeavor of the head of a home to apply God's truth by God's Spirit to the hearts of those in his home (Ps 119:24, 98-100; Col 3:16; 1 Thess 4:18). However, God's truth without love is not God's truth. It is legalism. The application of truth in a home happens in tandem with love.

God is love. God being love sets Him as the pursuer of men and not the other way around (1 John 4:10; Rom 5:8). Such a pursuing and sacrificial love seals the confidence that He will not desert the work He started in His children (Phil 1:6). Knowing and experiencing His redeeming love compels Christians to imitate His self-giving love (Eph 5:1, 2). His love poured out in the life of man delivers him from the miserable failings of shallow, conditional love and frees him to love deeply and unconditionally like Christ (Matt 5:43-48; John 17:26; Rom 5:5; Gal 5:22; 1 John 3:11-4:2). It is impossible for a man to conjure up Christlike love. It is not something he can simply dig deep for because it is not within him. Christlike love comes only from Christ, and only from Christ

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<sup>2</sup>The knowledge of God's shaping a biblical vision for one's leadership in the home is modeled by Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2002).

can a man draw love that seeks what is best for those he loves. The biblical command to love one's wife as Christ loves the church perfectly and profoundly wraps up a man's responsibility to his wife. There is not an area of marriage that this command does not touch because it is passed on from the character of an Almighty God.

God is gracious. He freely gives His children that which they do not deserve (Exod 34:6; Col 4:6). In turn, men are to emulate this quality, especially toward their families (Matt 5:38-6:4). The hardest place for man to show grace is his home. How a man treats his wife and children, how he responds to disrespect in his home, and how he confronts sin and communicates expectations are all opportunities to submit to God and lead in word and deed (Eph 4:29; Col 4:6; Heb 12:28).

God is merciful. He is compassionate and withholds punishment that men deserve as sinners. As a merciful God, He is full of pity, slow to punish, and ready to pardon (Exod 34:6-7; Ps 103:11-13). Because of the great mercy God bestowed upon His children, they are to be merciful (Luke 6:36-37). For a husband and father, merciful leadership in the home requires patience, kindness, gentleness, compassion, and understanding. As a steward of God's mercy, the spiritual leader is self-disciplined in this area so as not to deal harshly with others in his home (Matt 5:7, 38-42; Eph 4:32; Jas 2:13; 3:17).

God is wise and purposeful. God's wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals. Romans 16:27 declares Him "the only wise God." Job 9:4 teaches that God "is wise in heart." He is the grand craftsman of each life; no detail escapes Him and no plan is switched. He wisely works all things in life together for His good purposes for those who love Him (Rom 8:28). His wisdom is an aspect of His divine knowledge, which manifests itself in the selection of worthy ends and in the choice of the best means for the realization of those ends (Isa 40:12-13; Jer 10:12). Believers are called to live wisely and seek wisdom and are given the means to do so (Prov 4:7; Jas 1:5). Every spiritual leader endowed from God with the responsibility

of leading a family has a desperate need for wisdom from God (Job 28; 2 Chr 1:10-12). The request for wisdom should be the regular prayer and pursuit of the spiritual leader (Job 12:13; 28; 38:36; Prov 1-2; Col 1:28; Jas 1:5; 3:17).

One practical implication of developing a biblically-wise vision for leading the home is thinking long-range, having a big-picture view of life in mind. Taking time to give consideration to a matter and the implications of one's response proves to be a helpful safeguard against making mountains out of molehills in the heat of parenting, especially when it comes to discipline. Character is developed over the long haul, through habitual responses and actions.<sup>3</sup> A wise and purposeful vision for raising children includes godly character development. A vision for a child's character development will measure choices according to long-term impact. This vision helps frame the choices of children so they can see the implications of those choices. For example, it has been said, "Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." Sowing and reaping are important biblical concepts that help children develop their own vision for wise, purposeful, big-picture living (Gal 6:7-9).

God is holy. The holiness of God means that "He is separated from sin and devoted to seeking his own honor."<sup>4</sup> He is declared to be a holy God continually throughout Scripture (Pss 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24). While His holiness separates Him from His creation, God desires intimacy with His children and invites them to be participants of His holiness (Lev 19:2; 11:44-45; 20:26; 1 Pet 1:16). He tells believers they will be chastised in their sin in order to receive this high prize of "sharing in His holiness" (Heb 12:10). The believing man must keep holiness as the bullseye of what it means to please God and remember it is only because of and through the power of Christ's work that believers are made holy and blameless (Eph 5:26, 27).

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<sup>3</sup>Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd, 1995), 181.

<sup>4</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 202.

God is omniscient; He knows everything (1 John 3:20). There is no secret kept from, or unknown by God (Heb 4:13; 2 Chr 16:9; Job 28:24; Matt 10:29-30). His omniscience is a comfort and assurance of His intimate knowledge of man's needs. Matthew 6:8 states that He "knows our needs before we ask Him." His omniscience makes Him able to know man's actions, words, and thoughts (Ps 139). He is fully aware of who His children are and what they need to learn (Ps 139:23-24). Knowing that God is omniscient compels believing men to trust God's intimate, attentive interaction with their lives and circumstances. He already knows all there is to know about man's repulsive state as sinners and frail human beings, and yet He chooses to continually call them to a deeper relationship with Him. Being known by God and knowing God give the Christian husband and father impetus to be known by his wife and children and for him to know them intimately as well. The spiritual head of any home is to be a lifelong student of those with whom God has entrusted to him.

God is also a God of peace (1 Cor 14:33). He is utterly distinct and separate from confusion, conflict, and disorder.<sup>5</sup> God knows only perfect peace and harmony within the Godhead. There is no disunity among the Father, Son, and Spirit. He is One (Deut 6:4). God desires that man dwell in such oneness (John 17:21). Psalm 133:1 says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" This kind of peace and unity in a home communicates hope to lost people who are enemies of God (John 17:21). Additionally, out of His own nature God gives to man the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18). God's children are His ambassadors of peace to a world at war with Him. Even more should the spiritual leader be an ambassador of gospel-peace in his home.

Emulating God's character glorifies God and provides man with a biblical vision for leading his home. Following God's directives to lead one's family spiritually

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<sup>5</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 203.

is also a means of glorifying God (see chap. 2). However, the head of the home should never confuse his role or responsibilities as an end in themselves as if those traits or activities define success. He does not mistake external behavior for genuine godliness. He does not confuse mere religiosity for spiritual vitality. He is alert to imagined piety and leads his family-flock in scriptural realities that illumine the deceptive heart and the darkness of the world. A spiritually astute man will be wary of confusing Christian activity with Christlikeness. Activity is a means and never an end. The end, the goal, is Christlikeness—the glory of God. Because the man of God sees his purpose being the glory of God, he takes upon himself the roles that God has assigned him to bring Him glory.

### **Scripture’s Metaphors Shape the Vision**

The familial metaphors used of God’s relationship with His people further clarify a man’s biblical vision for his home. For example, the Bible refers to Christians as God’s “Bride” (Rev 19:7, 21:9). As was shown in chapter 2, Ephesians 5 clearly depicts man’s role and responsibilities as a husband. God’s vision for a spiritually successful marriage requires only that a man internalize the vision and make it his own. A husband is to husband his wife as Christ husbands His bride, the church. Such Christ-like husbanding entails a man sacrificially loving his wife by caring for her physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

The familial metaphors that liken God to a “Father” and Christians to “children,” “sons,” “family,” and a “household” likewise help men to envision their leadership in the home (1 John 3:1-2; Heb 12:5-8; Eph 3:15, 2:19). A man has much to learn simply from reflecting on how God has parented him. How has the Lord loved, nurtured, disciplined, and taught him? God Himself is every father’s ultimate model of a father. Scripture reveals how God has fathered His children throughout the ages and will in the ages to come. Therefore, parenthood does not have to be a source of confusion and conflict.

Having a biblical vision for parenting requires patterning parenting after the Heavenly Father.

### **The Family Shepherd**

Drawing a vision for the spiritual leadership of the home from God's relationship with His people brings the role of shepherd into focus. The head of the home sees himself as the family shepherd, just as God reveals Himself to be the Shepherd of His flock. The family shepherd is charged with the oversight and care of his family-flock. Two primary responsibilities come to light with the job of shepherd: protection and provision. Even though they were mentioned previously, these two responsibilities now merit further development.

**Protection.** A protector is alert, courageous, and ready to defend, laying his life on the line if necessary. The role of protector entails physical protection, to be sure. God ordained men to step into the role of protecting those in their care. Militarily, until recently men have been the only ones on the battlefield. Throughout history, including Bible times, men have been the ones to take up arms defending their homes. However, physical protection requires more from a man than armed force. Protection requires him to be aware of the dangers facing his family. A shepherd has nothing to fear when it comes to a coyote, yet the presence of a coyote endangers his sheep, especially his lambs. So it is with the home. A man must be alert to dangers that may not pose a threat to him but threaten those in his home. Today's world presents the home with threats like sexual predators, abductors, house fires, bullies at school, drugs, alcohol, pornography, and more. Educating one's children is the best precaution against danger. From an early age parents instinctively teach their children about the dangers of fire and traffic. Protecting children from physical danger through education continues until a child reaches adulthood. Fathers must be tuned in to their children's lives to sense the potential dangers that can gain a foothold in the backdrop of a child's life.

Effective fathers do more than protect physically; they protect their home spiritually. Forces of darkness relentlessly target young people (Eph 6:10-18). These forces may tempt one's son through tantalizing images on a screen, influence him to contemplate suicide, seduce a teenage daughter into a position of compromise, deceive her into cutting herself, or countless other scenarios. The father must be ready to go to war with the spiritual forces of darkness that grasp for the hearts of his children. Children are born into the kingdom of darkness; their default is not faith. Faith is a gift and work of God. If the father is to be prepared for the spiritual onslaughts awaiting his home, he must prioritize equipping himself spiritually to meet these forces head-on.

As a protector, his first priority is to guard his own heart with the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness (Eph 6:13; cf. Prov 4:23; 25:28). Any chance a man has at warding off the forces of darkness in his home rests on his exposure to the truth of the Word of God. The greater his exposure to truth, the greater his sensitivity will be to evil and sin (Ps 101:3-4). Commitment to truth will show itself in a righteous life that shields itself from wicked influences. His defense is strengthened by taking upon himself the shield of faith (Eph 6:16). Trusting in the Lord and His Word will strengthen a man's inclination toward obedience and blessing, further bolstering his defensive efforts against the permeation of evil in his life. The helmet of salvation provides him with a redemptive worldview, viewing his salvation as a gift of grace and his new life a sacrifice of praise. Christ's salvific plan becomes his own. The sword of the Spirit as the Word of God supplies a man with the means for not only defending himself but warding off attacks against those he loves.

It is not enough for the head of a home to guard his own heart. He must also wage war for the sake of the hearts in his protection. A man may have spiritually vulnerable children simply by virtue of their youth and naivety. The guardianship of their hearts is the responsibility of parents until the child possesses the spiritual capacity to defend his own heart.

The spiritual leader of the home is alert to the areas where his family is prone to spiritual weakness. Many families face attack from within, amongst each other; their home bears the scars of conflict. As protector, the man will shod his feet with the gospel of peace and models and teaches the Christian art of peacemaking to his family (Eph 6:15). He leads his home in obedience to the Scriptures with edifying speech that imparts grace to its hearers (Eph 4:29). The kind, tender-heartedness of the spiritual protector shields his home against legalism and the abuses of authority.

While a man may have a God-forged vision for truth obeyed in his home, that vision is flawed and dangerous if it is not a vision of love. A man must guard his home against the imposition of legalism and despotic rule-keeping. He realizes that his sinfulness inside the home can be used by the enemy to harden the hearts of his loved ones. Effective guardianship of his heart and the hearts of those in his home necessitates a vision that includes dealing biblically with his own sin.

**Provision.** The family shepherd is also a provider. His provision is both physical and spiritual. Physically, Scripture is clear about God's expectation for him to shelter, clothe, and feed those in his care (1 Tim 5:8). If a man is physically capable of working and earning a living, then he is responsible to the Lord for doing so. God designed men for work; to earn a living. Work is not to be viewed negatively; it is not a part of the curse. It existed before the fall in a world that God declared "good" (Gen 1:31; 2:15).

In modern America, it is important for men to understand what providing for one's family entails. Misnomers and false expectations abound in the work-a-day world. To dispel the cultural pull of "keeping up with the Jones's," it is vital for Christian men to understand what biblical provision is not.

Provision is not a father giving his children everything he wished he had growing up. It is not providing them with all the latest gadgets and toys. Among a generation-gone-by, what many children went without helped form the strength of

character that made them the men they are today. Spoiling children by granting their every wish and whim effectively imparts nothing more than a self-centered sense of entitlement. These children will be trained to believe that they must have the latest and greatest of everything. What will happen to these children once they are able to make their own financial decisions? A provider physically provides everyone in his home with what they need for survival and then goes on to wisely bless them out of his surplus.

A man should also consider how he may be spoiling himself. A grown man may sabotage his ability to protect and provide for his family if he himself nurtures a sense of entitlement in his heart. He must take care that his possessions do not become his idols (Matt 6:21). If he is defined by his possessions—he will want the next best thing on the market and be willing to go into debt so that he can have what he wants. At that point, the financial burden rests heavily upon his family, and the pressures of life begin to compound.

Beyond providing for the physical needs of his home, the spiritual leader must also provide for the spiritual needs of his home. Spiritual provision begins with a man's presence in the home. He must be present and fully engaged in family life if he is going to lead and influence his home for the Lord. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 emphasizes the proximity that a father must have with his children in order to pass down a legacy of faith. In order to lead his family spiritually, a father must give his family the very best of his time, attention, and energy. Some fathers mistakenly believe that they can put off regular time with their families in exchange for buying gifts or planning a vacation. They see family time as a big event or a major activity and miss out on simply being together as a family through life's day-to-day mundane. Still others, especially pastors and ministry leaders, mistake church activity as family time. While church involvement is positive, it is not a substitute for family time. Ultimately, the amount of time a father spends in his home with his family is a reflection of his commitment.

## **The Role of the Local Church**

A man providing for the spiritual needs of his family does not negate the family's need for the local church, quite the contrary. The local church helps meet the spiritual needs of families, and meets needs that a family cannot meet independently. For example, the local church can provide accountability to family members for how they are treating one another. The local church can also bring theological balance where imbalance may be present in a home. The local church can provide spiritual stimulation, fellowship and corporate worship that a family cannot.

Two groups of people matter most to the spiritual leader—his family and His family. A man with a vision for his family will have a vision for his church. His church will be a priority because he sees, as Jesus sees, his family's need for the body of Christ.

Scripture organizes church discipleship in a way that reflects familial relationships. Titus 2:3-5 admonishes older women to train younger women in the ways of godly marriage, parenting, and housekeeping. Likewise, older men are to be grounded in the Word of God and model Christian virtues for the younger (Titus 2:1-2, 6-8). In so doing, both the church and the family are edified and built up in the faith. The church is the spiritual counterpart of the biological family. As the family is strengthened, so is the church. As the church is strengthened, so is the family. The spiritual leader, then, will be intensely interested in seeing that both are strengthened.

The head needs discipleship from his local church, and so does the rest of his family. A man may make every effort to disciple his family in the things of the Lord, but their discipleship is insufficient if it does not include their local church. The head of the home should view his relationship with his church as a partnership, sharing the discipleship of his family. The family needs the spiritual enrichment of the local church with its corporate worship, biblical preaching, and ordinances of baptism and communion. Scripture places equal responsibility upon the family and the church to encourage marriages and disciple children.

The spiritual leader of the home is to disciple his family. But who is to disciple the spiritual leader? Discipleship is where the local church comes into play. Jesus charged the church with discipling all individuals and teaching them to obey all that Christ taught in His Word (Matt 28:20). The head of the home should seek to be under the influence of godly men who can disciple him in the ways of the Lord and family leadership. His need for discipleship does not necessarily mean he must seek out an older man, but rather men who are a step beyond where he is in his current spiritual development; it could be that younger men have more experience or some measure of spiritual wisdom to offer (1 Tim 4:12).

### **A Man's Sanctification**

Husbands and fathers are sinful people, so God's vision for marriage and fatherhood also entails their personal sanctification. A man's home as God's instrument for his sanctification is evident in the major house-code passages. In Deuteronomy 6:6, the Lord starts with the head of the home, instructing him that the commandments must first be in his heart before he seeks to pass them on to those in his home. In the great marriage passage, Ephesians 5:22-33, six of the eleven verses, verses 28-33 focus on the husband's love. People have no trouble loving themselves—that is their sinful default; they do so out of depravity. Marriage calls a man to love himself less. A man becoming one flesh with a woman requires the husband to love himself less and love his wife more. Sacrificial love places oneself aside and gives priority to another, like Christ did for the church.

A man does not have a complete, robust vision for his home without a vision for his home's role in his sanctification. The mundane happenings of a home test and try the spiritual moxie of a man. He will at times be sinned against, disrespected, unappreciated, and overwhelmed with responsibility. In all this he will be tempted—tempted toward anger, selfishness, pride, evil speaking, and on and on. His home presents him with opportunity like nothing he has ever faced. He can see it for what God intended,

an opportunity to grow in love and holiness, or he can squander it with his selfishness and pride and take his loved ones with him. Nothing can teach a man to love more like Christ than his family.

Spiritual provision in general brings vision for the home full circle. A man with a biblical vision will “create an environment of sanctification” in his home,<sup>6</sup> which is accomplished by modeling and teaching biblical truth. Specifically, God forges a man’s vision for spiritual leadership as he gets to know and emulate God’s character, obey His directives, apply His familial metaphors, and fulfill his duties as protector and provider. How one can fulfill such a vision and create an environment of spiritual growth in the home is discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

### **The Spiritual Leader of a Home Leads His Heart**

Men must be warned that their heart is “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9), which means the heart can be deceived and lie to its person. One’s heart cannot be trusted. It should not be followed, looked to for direction, or allowed to dictate decisions based on emotions. The man who follows his heart is incapable of spiritual leadership. The man who is led by his emotions cannot lead anyone, or he at least cannot lead anyone in godliness.

A man must humble himself and seek the Lord to honestly evaluate the condition of his heart on a regular basis if he is to lead it. The spiritual leader takes his own growth in godliness to the level of the heart, the core of one’s being, the command center of the person. Jesus modeled this approach to sanctification (Matt 5:27-28; 6:21; 12:34-35; 15:18-20; Mark 7:20-22; Luke 6:44-46). As the inner control center, the heart is where worship happens (Matt 15:8-9; 22:36-40). To expose one’s heart is to reveal what the heart is worshipping. By nature, men are worshippers; they are constantly

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<sup>6</sup>Ken Ham and Steve Ham, *Raising Godly Children in an Ungodly World: Leaving a Lasting Legacy* (Green Forest, AR: Master, 2012), 138.

worshipping something. Sin is present because God-worship is not. The spiritual leader does what it takes to right his worshipping heart's fixation back on Christ where it belongs.<sup>7</sup>

The Bible is richly replete with help for the heart as it identifies heart conditions. One's heart can be foolish, hard, fearful, angry, proud, unbelieving, etc. (Prov 12:23; Heb 3:7-15; John 14:27; Ps 39:3; Luke 24:38; Heb 3:12), yet because God redeems the heart, there is hope for change. The redeemed heart is the conduit of the love of God (Rom 5:5). It can be wise and understanding (Ps 90:12), and it can store God's Word and speak the truth (Pss 119:11; 15:2). It can be broken and brought to repentance (Ps 51:17; Jer 23:9), it can be pure and have integrity (1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22), and it can be glad (Isa 65:14).

God provided his disciples with specific instructions for the care of one's heart. God issues the command to guard one's heart, taking guardianship over the influences upon one's life (Prov 4:23). Paul reveals how one may guard his heart: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6-7). God also empowers His children to lead their hearts (Prov 23:19), which means inclining the heart to understand the truth and adjust life-course in response (Dan 10:12). Thus, taking responsibility for the leadership of the heart results in obedience from the heart (Rom 6:17). Only a mind that is consistently renewed by the truth of God's Word is capable of leading the heart.

Leading the heart according to God's Word not only results in obedience, but it enables the believer to have a pure heart. God commands believers to purify their hearts by drawing near to Him and dealing with sin (Jas 4:8). However, as anyone on the journey of faith can attest, there are seasons of discouragement where the heart is downtrodden. This is why care for the heart includes not losing heart. God offers an eternal perspective

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<sup>7</sup>Tim Chester, *You Can Change: God's Transforming Power for Our Sinful Behavior and Negative Emotions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 69.

on life and circumstances in His Word that revives the heart and empowers Christians for further service (2 Cor 4:1, 16; Gal 6:9). This eternal perspective is also why God encourages His children to stand steadfast in heart as they anticipate the coming of the Lord (Jas 5:8).

The process of renewing the mind is an issue of choosing one's influences. The flesh grows increasingly corrupt as it serves one's deceitful lusts. These sinful desires motivate sinful behavior. Ezekiel 14:3 refers to these lusts as "idols of the heart." They are deceitful because they promise what they cannot deliver, for instance, peace, joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment (Col 2:8-10). Instead of listening to lusts, truth takes over where once desires and feelings reigned supreme. When the mind or heart (one's inner control center) is guided by truth, thinking changes, resulting in changed behavior. Mind renewal makes the sanctifying task of putting off and putting on possible. Therefore, the battle for transformation is waged between one's ears (Rom 12:1-2).

God recognizes that change is hard, but can take place because God's commands assume God's enablement (Phil 1:6; 2:13; 4:13). God wants disciples to change to be more like His Son by putting off the old man and putting on the new man as a result of renewing one's mind (Eph 4:22-24).

The "old man" or "old self" in Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 refers to the habits of thinking and acting adopted by one's corrupt nature. The spiritual leader seeks to disrobe himself of these fleshly characteristics and put on the mind of Christ. The command is to "put off" these pre-salvation holdouts, meaning "lay aside, rid oneself of."<sup>8</sup> It is the spiritual exercise of stripping away these sinful character traits, behaviors, and attitudes, just as one would take off a filthy wardrobe.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Fredrick William Danker, *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2000), 123-24.

<sup>9</sup>John MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 176.

Listed in the text are several examples of sins that are put off. However, these and any other sins are not just quit “cold-turkey”; they are replaced. The believer forsakes the former ways of his unredeemed flesh and puts on the virtues of the Lord Jesus Christ. To “put on” means to clothe oneself and is metaphorical language for the taking on of characteristics, virtues, and intentions.<sup>10</sup> “Putting off” and “putting on” are ways of expressing the ideas of dying and rising with Christ. One is identifying with Christ as he “dies to sin” and “walks in newness of life” (Rom 6:1-4). The process of sanctification is a process of putting off the old and putting on the new, neither of which are possible without “renewing the mind.”

Together, renewing the mind, putting off, and putting on, are a biblical process for leading one’s heart. They lead one’s heart, or inner man, to be transformed into the image of Christ. Submitting the heart to the lordship of Christ is the key to growing in godliness. In turn, it makes spiritual leadership of the home possible.

The spiritual leader leads the hearts of those under his care. He appeals to their consciences as he ministers the gospel and the whole counsel of God’s Word to them. All spiritual activity flows from the heart, so it is the heart that a vision for spiritual leadership targets (Prov 20:5). The way a man leads on the heart level is by exploring the “why” behind the actions of others.<sup>11</sup> It is always the condition of the heart that explains sin and calls for the application of the gospel.

## **Repentance**

In response to sin, the spiritual leader leads his heart to repentance. Repentance is so much more than a one-time event at the moment of regeneration. While it is that, it is also the faith-walk of the believer who still sins and sins often—the need

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<sup>10</sup>Danker, *Greek Lexicon*, 333-34. W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 501.

<sup>11</sup>Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, 172.

for repentance is just as regular. Repentance is an inward change of direction that turns one to God and away from sin, which then results in an outward change of lifestyle.

True repentance is the believer's method for dealing with sin during his time on earth. It is a crucial part of the believer's progressive sanctification. While repentance is the starting block from which the sinner launches into the race of faith, it also becomes the mile markers all along the journey as the believer regularly renews his walk with the Lord and turns from sin.

Confession of sin is the beginning of repentance. It is an important indicator of repentance. The spiritual leader is quick to give verbal affirmation of their surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ. He desires to obey God's Word and forsake sin. The repentant person confesses sin as an offense against a holy God. There is a sobering realization that God is grieved and disappointed by one's sin. Godly sorrow bothers the offender to the core, driving him to the saving mercies of Jesus who alone atones for his sin. Anything less amounts to mere behavior modification. Puritan Thomas Watson observes, "Sin may be parted with, yet without repentance," and furthermore, "Sin may be exchanged and the heart remain unchanged."<sup>12</sup>

Humility is the open door through which repentance can enter a life. True repentance is sparked when pride is confronted. For many people it takes a firm blow for pride to turn to humility and make repentance possible. Pride is why repentance is often the result of consequences and confrontation. Therefore, one of the key ingredients for moving a man toward repentance and spiritual leadership is to address his pride and encourage him to exchange it for humility.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), 16.

<sup>13</sup>Stuart Scott, *From Pride to Humility: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2002), 23-25.

## **The Spiritual Leader of a Home Practices Spiritual Disciplines for the Purpose of Growing Himself and His Home in Godliness**

The spiritual discipline of a man is the most effective means by which an atmosphere of sanctification is created in a home. As a man grows in godliness, so too will his family (Ps 128). Robert Hull writes that “the road to godliness is a road of discipline.”<sup>14</sup> First Timothy 4:7 charges the believer to “exercise (oneself) toward godliness.” Godliness is not possible apart from spiritual discipline. The benefits of the head of a home practicing regular spiritual disciplines are immeasurable. Time with the Lord is the only thing that can enable a man to realize a biblical vision for his home.

Men must be equipped to engage spiritual disciplines. However, spiritual leadership goes farther than doing the disciplines. Genuine spiritual leadership is robust with a vision for reproducing leadership. The spiritual leader views the disciplines not as lonely endeavors, but as attitudes, thinking, and practices to be reproduced. The spiritual leader will want to regularly employ eight spiritual disciplines in his life and home: worship, Bible reading, Scripture memorization, prayer, evangelism, service, fellowship, and stewardship.<sup>15</sup>

These disciplines are not rout duties to be checked off the leader’s to-do-list; they are his life-blood, his spiritual sustenance. Many men perceive spiritual leadership as an outward display, like going to church or having family worship; they view it formally. If this is the case, a change of perspective is needed for a man to have influence. The sad reality is a man may be active in spiritual disciplines and yet not be godly. It is the informal aspect of the disciplines that demonstrates a man’s ownership of his walk with Christ. The Word may be going into him, but is it coming out of him? He may be serving, but is it out of dull duty, or does he passionately engage that service? Does he

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<sup>14</sup>Robert W. Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006), 197.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 193.

have a vision for what the Lord might use him to accomplish? Is the man passionate for the things the Lord is passionate about? Spiritual activity does not equal godliness. Spiritual discipline without spiritual vitality is only legalism.

Each of the disciplines represents an area of spiritual engagement between a man and God, but also between a man and his family. They are means of entering into the spiritual journey of each member of his family. They do not represent sermonettes, monologues, or lectures. They are springboards for spiritual conversation. Spiritual leadership in the home is not a monologue, it is a dialogue with the man engaging his family in spiritual activities and conversation.<sup>16</sup> As a man naturally practices these disciplines, he will engage his family in them as well. Implementing them will help a man create an atmosphere of sanctification in his home.

## **Worship**

To worship God is “to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission” to Him.<sup>17</sup> Worship is the state of recognizing God as He is. God-honoring worship is the humble prostration of oneself in light of the truth that is known about Him, which is what is meant by worshippers worshipping “the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). The spiritual leader loves God for who He is and what He has done. To love God properly is to worship Him, placing Him as one’s highest priority in life (Mark 12:30).<sup>18</sup> As a spiritual discipline, worship is a discipline of the will, the humbling of one’s heart to align oneself with the prerogatives of God.

Singing God’s truth is a well-known means of worship—music influences. Music has an uncanny ability to stick in one’s head. No wonder God originally saw fit

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<sup>16</sup>Tripp, *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, 72.

<sup>17</sup>Danker, *Greek Lexicon*, 882.

<sup>18</sup>Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 160-61.

for David to set the Psalms to music. According to Ephesians 5:17-21, a man's spiritual influence in his home is enhanced by worshipful music. A worshipful man is an influential man. As a dispositional discipline, worship breathes life into the other spiritual practices.

A man's family will sense his submissive disposition and sensitivity to the things of the Lord. Perhaps the humble disposition of worship impacts a family and creates an environment of sanctification like nothing else. Worship shows that spiritual disciplines are not limited to physical activities. They include disciplines of the will and spirit. This chapter's intent is not to consider every activity that could be considered a spiritual discipline, but rather to cast a vision for how the disciplines applied to a man's life profoundly impact his home.

### **God's Word**

The discipline of engaging God's Word receives priority in this writing because John 17:17 declares the primacy of God's Word in the process of sanctification: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." Because the Bible is God's inspired book, the spiritual leader will desire, study, memorize, and love it (1 Pet 2:2; 2 Tim 2:15; Ps 119:11, 97).

Scripture's application guides one to denounce sinful thinking and behavior by helping one to think upon things that are good, pure, and true (Phil 4:8). Applying God's Word to one's life will complement the process of transformation through renewing the mind (Rom 12:2). With God's help and the believer consistently yielding himself to God, spiritual growth is not only possible, it will happen (Eph 4:17-32; Col 3:1-17). God's Word is where men find instruction for growing spiritually. A man who is not growing spiritually is not leading spiritually. Only within the pages of Scripture can a man learn the value of Scripture memorization, how to pray, worship, witness, serve, fellowship with other believers, and be a good steward. The Christian who is growing to his fullest potential will have a balanced diet of spiritual disciplines (Acts 2:42-47).

The spiritual leader envisions and ventures for his family to grow in God's Word. God entrusted Abraham with family for this precise purpose:

“For I have known him,” says the LORD, “in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” (Gen 18:19)

However, God's vision is not exclusive to Abraham, but includes all fathers throughout the ages (Deut 6:1-9; Ps 78:1-8; 127; 128; Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4). A man's spiritual disciplines are not exclusive to the man—he fleshes them out in the home and uses them to minister to his family and create an environment of sanctification. A biblical vision for the home includes formal and informal spirituality. Equipping men for these leadership endeavors is vital to their success in the home.

Deuteronomy 6:7 instructs men to provide their children with formal biblical instruction—appointed times when a family will gather around the Word of God: “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house.” Ephesians 6:4 also indicates the place of systematic biblical instruction in the home: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” For the dad just starting out and gathering his family for worship, keeping it simple is key. Family worship may be as simple yet as important as sharing a verse from his devotions and how it applies to his life and his family. The dinner table is a wise setting for a father to regularly gather his family for worship. Psalm 128 does not directly teach family time at the dinner table, but it is interesting to note that the author locates the children thriving as fruitful olive trees at the family table.

Informal biblical instruction is the second part of Deuteronomy 6:7, and includes, “When you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up,” which means to converse about spiritual truths in the mundane moments of living among family. Because the spiritual leader views life biblically, he speaks biblically, and he frames the experiences of his family biblically so that they too see and interpret life biblically.

Informal instruction is vital to the development of a biblical worldview. It is the “caught” side of the “more is caught than taught” equation.

Both informal and formal instruction spiritually equip the other members of one’s household. Both require rich communication, not talking *at* one’s wife and children, but talking *with* them, which means dialogue, not monologue, and conversation, not lecture. This informal spiritual atmosphere helps a man understand his family. He can get to know the spiritual aspects of each person in this way. Formal spiritual instruction is necessary and just as important, but the informal is the as-you-walk-by-the-way influence that truly empowers a man’s leadership. Purposeful conversation through the mundane happenings of life, coupled with one’s example of spending time in God’s Word sends a formative message to one’s children. Engaging the Lord and one’s home in these ways provides a robust environment for spiritual nurturing. As-you-walk-by-the-way informal instruction is a powerfully effective way for a man to help those in his home establish their own personal walks with God.

## **Prayer**

A conviction of the necessity of prayer comes from observing the prayer life of Jesus. Prayer is intimate communion with God.<sup>19</sup> Prayer is more than simply asking God to do things on one’s behalf. It can include rehearsing God’s attributes so as to humble oneself before Almighty God and have the heart drawn into worship (Ps 145). It can include confession whereby one acknowledges and repents of known sin (Ps 66:18). Prayer also includes thanksgiving, where the believer expresses thoughtful gratitude for God’s work and gifts on his behalf (Ps 107). Supplication and intercession are also important components of prayer; supplication being a humble and earnest request, while intercession is supplication on behalf of others (Phil 4:6).

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<sup>19</sup>Derek Prime, *Practical Prayer* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 1986), 15.

Prayer keeps the spiritual leader's vision sharp and focused. It reorients his heart to the spiritual priorities of life. "Prayer gave Jesus the courage to endure the perfect but painful will of His Father," and it gives men the means to do the same.<sup>20</sup> Prayer is a way of life to the spiritual leader (Phil 4:6; 1 Thess 5:16-18). He is constantly communing with God on a moment by moment basis. D. L. Moody writes, "Man can as well live physically without breathing, as spiritually without praying."<sup>21</sup> The capacity to lead a home does not come from intellect, upbringing, or even training, but by the power of prayer. It is a product of authentic communion with God.

Prayer, therefore, is not only a practice of the man at the helm, but it is the practice of the home. Rightly it is said that "the family that prays together, stays together." Prayer brings the family together. It rallies them around their collective need for God and the burdens of their heart. Prayer nurtures spiritual camaraderie and intimacy. It unites family members as fellow warriors in spiritual warfare. Puritan Thomas Brooks wisely penned, "A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all the storms of heaven."<sup>22</sup> The patriarch Job modeled parental intercession when he "would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did regularly" (Job 1:5). The spiritual leader envisions and ventures to pray with his family, with each member, regularly, as needs arise and in occasions for rejoicing and thanksgiving. The imperative to "pray without ceasing" applies just as much to the family as it does the individual (1 Thess 5:17).

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<sup>20</sup>Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 87.

<sup>21</sup>D. L. Moody, *Prevailing Prayer* (Chicago: Moody, 1967), 15.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas Brooks, quoted in Joel R. Beeke, *Family Worship* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2009), 12.

## Evangelism

Leadership always tests a man's resolve and courage, but nothing puts a man's boldness to the test like witnessing to others of the saving work of Christ. The spiritual leader sees himself as an ambassador, whose mission it is to plead with others to be reconciled with God (2 Cor 5:18-21). In the thrilling endeavor of evangelism, even within his home, a man finds his vision advancing and reproducing.

As a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the spiritual leader shares his faith boldly in all the arenas of his life—work, church, recreation, community, and home. Because his faith is where he finds his identity, he is compelled to share it. The spiritual leader drinks deeply from the love of God that persuades him to make it known to others.<sup>23</sup> His compassion swells over the lost condition of his fellow man. Lost people weigh heavy on his heart. If a man is not concerned about the spiritual destiny of others, especially those of his own household, there is good reason to be concerned about *his* spiritual destiny.<sup>24</sup>

Compassion and care for others naturally flows out of a growing love for God produced by genuine spiritual discipline.<sup>25</sup> The spiritual leader has a heart for people and keen interest in their spiritual condition, but his compassion is not weakness. Compassion is a spiritual strength born out of life-altering encounters with God's grace that have so permeated and shaped his life that he cannot help but care for the spiritual burdens of others. First on his list are the people in his own home. A man cannot get very far fulfilling his vision for spiritual leadership if his family is not won for Christ and unable to grow with him in godliness. Scripture gives precedence for spiritual influence

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<sup>23</sup>Sammy Tippit, *Fire in Your Heart: A Call to Personal Holiness* (Chicago: Moody, 1987), 35.

<sup>24</sup>Ray Comfort, *The Way of the Master* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2006), 266.

<sup>25</sup>Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples: Every Christian an Effective Witness through an Enabling Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 61.

to begin in a man's closest social circle and extend outward (Ps 78:1-8; Acts 1:8). Home is "Ground Zero."

The spiritual leader is not only concerned for people but he has confidence in the gospel message.<sup>26</sup> Because this man has so honed his spiritual senses in God's Word and prayer, his alertness to opportunities is heightened, enabling him to preach repentance and faith in Christ compassionately and unashamedly (Acts 4:31; Rom 1:16).

### **Ministry**

A man venturing to fulfill a God-forged vision for the spiritual leadership of his family is a servant-leader just like Jesus. Jesus said of Himself, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt 20:28). This servant mentality is a discipline of the will and spirit that only comes through renewing one's mind. The Spirit of God, through the pen of the apostle Paul, commanded, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil 2:3-4). This mindset is only possible when a man will "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5). Serving is the outworking of a Christ-renewed mind.<sup>27</sup> It is leading the way Jesus led.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, spiritual leadership cannot be Christlike apart from ministry. A godly man will serve his wife and children; he will serve his coworkers and friends, and he will certainly serve his church family. A wife and children will recognize a man as a spiritual leader not just by tangible acts of service but through the spirit with which he serves. When serving the Lord is a delight to the man, it is a delight to the home. The

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<sup>26</sup>R. Larry Moyer, *Free and Clear: Understanding & Communicating God's Offer of Eternal Life* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 225.

<sup>27</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve: The Art of Unselfish Living* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1981), 80.

<sup>28</sup>Hull, *Book of Discipleship*, 149.

spiritual leader involves his family in serving the Lord. It is a part of their identity—more than sports, hobbies, and any other extra-curricular activities. When serving is a priority and delight, it creates an environment of sanctification.

### **Fellowship and Accountability**

A spiritual leader's vision always includes other men that can help him sharpen his vision (Prov 27:17; Titus 2:1-2, 6-8). He realizes that God never intended Christianity to be lived in isolation—that he is a part of a body who needs him and whom he needs as well (1 Cor 12:12-26). Jesus invested heavily in deep friendships with the twelve disciples regardless of their shortcomings and even hurtful behavior.<sup>29</sup> Scripture does not allow the discipline of fellowship and friendship to be optional. Proverbs 18:1 declares, “A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment.”

A God-forged vision for spiritual leadership in the home forsakes self-preservation not only for the sake of the man himself, but also for his family's sake.<sup>30</sup> Men need to know and be known by other men. They need accountability and prayer from other men. Over the course of a man's life he will undoubtedly need to draw from a variety of men and in turn hold a variety of other men accountable. Men need other men who have a window into their life and can encourage and challenge when appropriate. If a man is being a rascal and mistreating his family and not dealing with his sin, he and his family need other spiritual men in place that can be turned to for help. These spiritual relationships position a man to receive help should he fall into sin (Gal 6:1). Whether sin-related or not, burdens in a man's life will beckon other brothers to help carry the load (Gal 6:2).

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<sup>29</sup>R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 58.

<sup>30</sup>Eric Geiger and Michael Kelley, *Transformational Discipleship: How People Really Grow* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 125.

A vital component of equipping men to be spiritual leaders that is often overlooked is assimilation into a local church. Discipleship and men's ministries are not to be Christian holdouts where men can continually retreat for help without entering the bonds of a church family. Real life-change happens best in the context of a local church. It is God's design for the spiritual health of every believer (Eph 4:11-16). Every New Testament epistle is set in the context of the church and assumes that individuals are connected to one another through this God-given institution. Without church, men will not have the spiritual resources they need to lead others.

In the fellowship of a church family, a man has spiritual resources nowhere else available. Only in church can the believer find true belonging (Rom 12:5; Eph 2:19), encouragement (Heb 10:24), accountability (Gal 6:1-2; Jas 5:16), and equipping for ministry (Eph 4:12). Only in church will the believer discover the life-changing benefits of corporate worship (Acts 2:47), biblical and pastoral instruction (2 Tim 4:1-5), care of one's soul (Heb 13:17), meaningful spiritual relationships (Heb 10:24-25), and sacrificial ministry (Rom 12:9-13; 1 Pet 4:10). Only in the context of the church can a man truly fulfill his calling to lead others spiritually. The church is the hope of the world; Christ's body left behind to do His work. A man is not a Christian spiritual leader without being a part of the church. It feeds him, his vision, and his passion. He loves the church because his Savior loves the church. Therefore, he leads others to it. The spiritual leader sees the necessity of leading others into fellowship with a local church as he is leading them to Christ. It is not one or the other; it is both/and.

### **Stewardship**

A man with biblical vision for leading his family sees himself as God's steward with his family temporarily entrusted to his care by God Himself. All he is given is given to Him by God; nothing belongs to him. God owns everything. A man is merely the

Lord's manager.<sup>31</sup> This stewardship applies universally to everything in man's life, not just his money. For example, a man's children are on loan from God. They are in his home for a brief window of opportunity for him to train and nurture in the Lord and then release into independence (Ps 127:3-4).

Biblical vision sees the need to teach stewardship informally and formally in the home. Not only does this modeling and instruction contribute to an environment of sanctification, it fosters godly habits and character. Stewardship habits in such a home include tithing, generosity, service and ministry, healthy living practices, and time management that prioritizes the things of the Lord. When practiced as a family, stewardship combats idolatry right along with its many sinful expressions like laziness, anger, greed, and despair.

Vision without stewardship is limp. It is self-serving and only capable of fostering pharisaicism in the home. Vision empowered by stewardship will not only assist the leader with creating an environment of sanctification in his home, it will also help him to reproduce a biblical vision for life and family in the hearts of the future leaders he is raising in his home. Stewardship is always in pursuit of God's glory. As such, it is a contagious pursuit among genuine believers. Stewardship is winsome to the redeemed and ignites vision and sows the seed of leadership in a home.

Spiritual disciplines are not the measure of spirituality, so completion or checking off a list of requirements should not be equated with success. Spiritual disciplines are merely tools to help one abide in Christ. They will also become habits that the leader puts on to replace his old sinful habits. Spiritual disciplines, then, should be practical expressions of obedience to God's Word (Jas 1:22-25).

While there is sequential order to the spiritual disciplines in this paper, it is important to recognize that often these elements do not work out in people's lives in such

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<sup>31</sup>Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle: Unlocking the Secret of Joyful Giving* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2006), 25.

a neat, orderly fashion. Someone discipling a man toward spiritual leadership needs to expect that his disciple will not likely take on all of these spiritual disciplines at once. However, in the course of time, as he grows spiritually, his shoulders will broaden and he will desire to carry an increasing load. His capacity and desire for spiritual nourishment will grow along with him.

The head of the home must accept that the process of change toward spiritual leadership is exactly that. As a process, it demands time. Perfection is not attainable this side of glory. Neither he nor his family will arrive, nor will they have complete victory this side of heaven. Practical sanctification is a gradual process that requires a great expenditure of effort. The writer of Hebrews said, “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” (12:4). He is referencing Christ’s epic and bloody battle against sin on the cross. He is making the point that the reader has not gone so far as Christ in his war against sin. There is always work to be done on the believer’s part in mortifying sin, figuratively going so far as to shed one’s own blood in the effort. The author is speaking of the radical amputation or mortification of sin that Jesus taught (Matt 5:29-30, 18:8-9; Mark 9:43-48).<sup>32</sup> Paul speaks of spiritual growth in dramatic fashion as well, likening to the work of sanctification to the most physically and mentally demanding of human endeavors: farming, racing, wrestling, fighting, and warring (1 Cor 9:24-27; Eph 6:10-12; 2 Tim 2:3-6, 4:6-7). A man will find that the spiritual leadership of his home is the hardest and most rewarding work of his life. It will require every ounce of spiritual resource made available to him by the Lord. Even then, the Lord will take him beyond putting his trust in resources and show him his need for heavy doses of trust in Himself.

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<sup>32</sup>Stuart Scott, *Killing Sin Habits* (Bemidji, MN: Focus, 2013), 48.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of the curriculum developed for this project was to equip the married men of Grace Baptist Church (GBC) in Batavia, New York, to be spiritual leaders in their homes. One month before project implementation, the Spiritual Leadership Surveys were distributed to married men. The sermon series was promoted for one month prior to the first sermon. Each sermon was video recorded and posted in the sermon archives on GBC's website.

The sermon series was divided into two sections. The first section contains six sermons dealing with the biblical directives men need to know and implement to lead their homes spiritually. The outlines for these sermons were developed in weeks 1 and 2. Each sermon was fully developed in the same week it was taught.

Two lead pastors were recruited to verify the theological, biblical, and practical reliability of the developed sermons using an evaluation rubric.<sup>1</sup> The material was received well by the two men who frequently noted that the material was biblically and theologically sound. They also made frequent reference that the material was practical and that they would use it in their own ministry per diem.

The senior pastor determined that Grace Baptist Church would be best served by preaching the sermon series during Sunday morning and evening services. There were several reasons for choosing this venue. (1) The senior pastor felt it important that women, wives in particular, be taught a biblical view of a man's spiritual leadership in the home. (2) The series would provide a biblical vision for spiritual leadership to younger unmarried

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 2.

people, especially those considering marriage. (3) The series would help cultivate an atmosphere of expectation that married men would be growing and leading their homes. (4) Guests would receive a candid, careful exegetic presentation of male leadership in the home that would communicate it as an important value for the families of GBC.

One month prior to the implementation to the project, a letter was sent to 25 married men who were members of Grace Baptist Church requesting their participation in a men's small group program.<sup>2</sup> The letter included the pre-series survey (Spiritual Leadership Inventory). These men were chosen and mutually agreed upon by myself and the senior pastor. All of the men agreed to participate. The men were split into two groups; I led one group of 12 men, and the other group of 13 was led by a man mutually agreed upon and regarded as an effective spiritual leader by myself and the senior pastor.<sup>3</sup> The groups met for three hours in men's homes on the first Friday of each month September through May. The duration of the project evaluated only the first fifteen weeks of these groups. Four monthly meetings fell within this time frame (weeks 3, 7, 11, 15).

Group time consisted of discussing the sermon series, the men's Bible reading and the book of the month, sharing prayer requests and praying together, and evaluating how well they were held accountable and held others accountable that month. Men took turns hosting the group in their homes to help facilitate getting to know one another so that discussion, prayer, and accountability could be enhanced.

Each participant was charged \$75.00 to help cover the cost of monthly books and devotional materials for the year. Grace Baptist Church subsidized the remaining cost for each man. Charging a fee was intended to encourage men to invest in their growth as spiritual leaders. The church was also willing to scholarship men with financial need.

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<sup>2</sup>See appendix 3.

<sup>3</sup>The two groups contained 26 men, including myself. However, I did not participate in the surveys, leaving 25 men surveyed.

## **Pre-Series Survey Results**

Of the 25 married men, 23 completed and returned the pre and post-series surveys. Two men dropped out of the groups after the first meeting, citing busyness and over-commitment in other areas of life as their reason for dismissing themselves. Pre-series surveys were returned at the first small group meeting prior to the first sermon. I analyzed the survey results in weeks 2 and 3. The results of the survey revealed the greatest areas of needed spiritual leadership improvement. I then discerned which areas of need could be addressed by the biblical directives in part 1 of the sermon series. The remaining areas of need determined the topics and formed the outline for the second part that gave men additional instruction for growing and leading in godliness.

The six possible answers to each question in the survey were assigned a numerical value from 1 to 6. Totaling the participants' answers to each question revealed areas of strength and weakness for the men as a group. Because 23 men completed both surveys and each question had a point value up to 6, 138 total points were possible for each question. Question totals tallying 69 or less identified the greatest areas of need in the men's spiritual leadership of their homes. These areas were identified as significant weaknesses that called for biblical instruction because the men scored half or less than the total possible sum in the survey.

Fortunately, the six sermons in the first part of the sermon series covered many of the areas in which the men showed weak leadership. The first part of the sermon series covered the biblical directives for a man's leadership of his home. The areas of need most closely related to the biblical directives dealt with the man's personal walk with God, his spiritual disciplines, and the cultivation of family worship in his home. More specifically, the lowest scores included personal Bible reading, Scripture memory, and personal prayer, as well as encouraging these disciplines in the home. Each sermon from part 1 of the series expounded a biblical directive to men as the heads of their homes and included admonition and instruction for implementing spiritual disciplines in their

own lives and into the activities of the home. The goal was to strengthen the men's leadership in areas where they proved weakest.

Additional areas of leadership scored poorly on the pre-survey that fell outside the specific scope of the biblical directives to men regarding the leadership of their homes. Consequently, part 2 of the sermon series devoted seven sermons to the following five areas of weakness: leading the home with vision, leading one's heart and the hearts within one's home, leading the home in spiritual warfare (two sermons), developing godly friendships (two sermons), and leading the home in conflict resolution. Outlines for these sermons were developed over the course of weeks 7 and 8 as part 2 of the sermon series.

## **Weekly Sermons**

### **Sermon 1 and Small Group (Week 3)**

At the end of week 3, sermon 1 was implemented, which was an exegetical message based on Genesis 2 that was taught during a Sunday morning service. The introduction included statistics that linked the lack of involvement of fathers in the home with national crime rates. From there the congregation was taught that God designed the family and gives order to its functioning in His Word. More specifically, the foundation for the spiritual leadership of the home is established by God in Genesis 2.

This first sermon detailed five reasons God appointed the man as the leader of the home. (1) God established the man as the leader of the home by virtue of the order of the creation. Adam is given the position of authority based upon birth order (Gen 2:7; 1 Tim 2:13). (2) The order of accountability establishes the man as the head of the home. God first holds Adam accountable for violating His prohibition (Gen 2:15-17; 3:9-11). (3) God's designated roles for the man and woman establish the man as the leader of the home. God designed the woman to be a "helper" to complement Adam (Gen 2:18-20). (4) The man's exercise of authority in obedience to God verifies his role as leader. When Adam called Eve "Woman" (Gen 2:23; and later "Eve," 3:20), he was exerting a leadership role God gave to him alone. It would be his responsibility to care for her and

protect her. (5) The order of Satan's temptation verifies the man's leadership role in the home. God speaks to the man, and the man speaks to the woman. The serpent, then, subverts this order God has established. He does not confront the man first or even God Himself. Instead, he approaches the woman so that God's order is reversed.

This ordering appears before sin entered the world, and is thus part of God's good creation to be embraced as the norm for all marriages in all homes. Genesis 2 presents the first parents as the paradigm for all marriages that follow, which is why both Jesus and Paul always quote Genesis 2—never Genesis 3—when explaining the meaning of marriage and gender roles (e.g., Matt 19:5; Eph 5:31).

The sermon also offered four practical ways in which men are to lead their homes, again taken from the precedent set by Adam in the Garden. Men are to lead their homes spiritually, by exercising dominion, through provision and protection.

The precedent for leadership in the home that was established by God via Adam pre-fall is foundational to biblical complementarianism. The pre-fall precedent for male leadership of the home is later employed by Paul in the New Testament. By the end of sermon 1, the students understood why this series was necessary for men, families, the church, and society at large.

The two men's groups also met for the first time during week 3, on the first Friday of the month. In this first meeting I collected each man's completed SLI. Then the men were oriented to the purposes of the group, and gave personal updates for others to uphold them in prayer and hold them accountable over the course of the month. A devotional resource was distributed that assigned daily Bible reading, contained brief commentary on the day's passage, and provided space to journal a personal response. In order to challenge men in their relationships with God, the first month's assigned reading was *The Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges. Accountability partners were assigned and men were instructed to establish weekly checkpoints with their partners whereby they could touch base to ask one another how they were doing with spiritual disciplines and in

the leadership of their home. The devotions and the book would be discussed, as well as an evaluation of their accountability with their partner for the month, at the next meeting in week 7.

### **Sermon 2 (Week 4)**

The second sermon was implemented in week 4 of the project. It was an exegetical message of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, which requires men to model and teach the Bible in their homes in hopes of passing down their faith to proceeding generations. The importance of the Hebrew “Shema” was explained. This text identifies precisely which God is to be worshipped. The One True God commands His people to “hear,” and in so doing, He demands a response. To Him, listening and obedience are synonymous, which is a helpful parenting insight for the spiritual leader of the home.

Deuteronomy 6 is considered the most thorough Bible text on parental spiritual formation because it answers all six of the basic interrogatives: who, what, why, where, when, and how. Beginning with whom, it identifies the father as the primary source of spiritual influence in the home. Grandfathers are also implied as the text commands speaking the truth to one’s grandson (Deut 6:2). The text further identifies the content of what should be taught to children in the home. Doctrinal truth is vital to spiritual formation as indicated by the use of the Shema in verse 4. Love and obedience to God are to be taught and modeled as made clear by the Greatest Commandment in verse 5. The reason men should be motivated to lead their homes spiritually is because of the obedience and blessing that results (Deut 6:2-3, 10-25). Where men are to lead their families is answered through a variety of examples that lead the reader to conclude *everywhere*. The question of when men should lead their homes spiritually is also answered. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 reveals a father who imparts God’s truth on a moment by moment basis. There is also no age limit placed on a man’s leadership and spiritual influence. The text also offers instruction for men on how to teach and model the Bible. Teaching the Bible should be executed diligently, closely, creatively, formally, and informally. In answering all of the

interrogative questions, the text offers men a comprehensive plan for the spiritual development of their families.

### **Sermon 3 (Week 5)**

The practical implications of the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4 as they are revealed in Joshua 24 formed the third sermon during week 5. The objective was to help men implement the worship of the God of the Bible alone in their homes. This sermon was an exegetical message on Joshua 24:14-15 that drew from Deuteronomy 6:4 as its foundation from the previous week.

Parallels were drawn between the two texts so that students could appreciate the importance of fidelity to God in their role in the spiritual formation of their families. Both passages identify spiritual leadership of the home beginning with a man presenting himself to the Lord. For a man to lead spiritually he must serve the Lord himself. Idolatry is a constant temptation that threatens a man's fidelity to God and weakens his spiritual influence. Joshua 24 gives helpful insight into the problem of "syncretism." Syncretism was defined as Jesus revealed it: the attempt to serve two masters (Matt 6:24). Idolatry and syncretism have as their root the love of self. A man is serving himself if he is not serving the Lord.

As context for Joshua 24:14-15, four highlights of Joshua's life were explained to show how Joshua became so resolute in his faith. These were taught as "keys" to implementing the worship of God alone in one's life and home. (1) Joshua was influenced by godly people. He had proximity to Moses (Exod 24:12-13). (2) Joshua positioned himself to experience God (Exod 33:11). (3) Joshua took ownership of his faith to the point that it defined him and he was known for it (Num 13:16). (4) Joshua stood alone even if no one followed (Num 13:17-14:10). Also emphasized was that while parents' faithfulness blesses a home, it is no guarantee that fidelity to the Lord will be embraced by proceeding generations. If anyone serves as an example of interrupted multi-generational faithfulness, it is Joshua.

## Sermon 4 (Week 6)

Sermon 4 was taught during week 6. The objective of the sermon was to challenge and encourage men to grow in spiritual maturity. The sermon was an exegetical message based on 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 and was preached during a Sunday morning service.

As an introduction, negative examples of the culture's view on manhood were given. They were obviously false and proved bothersome to the men participating in the training series to this point. The introduction demonstrated the need for men to change the cultural perception of men as incompetent liabilities to the family and society.

First Corinthians 16:13-14 was issued to the Corinthian church which was familiar with the challenges of living in a culture of corruption and abandoned values. The two verses are five imperatives with a chiasmic structure, placing the third command as the focal point. The Greek word ἀνδρίζομαι is a New Testament *hapax legomenon*. Extra biblical literature demonstrates its basic idea is to be a mature, courageous man. It is the equivalent of the today's charge to "be courageous," "man up," or "grow up." The two imperatives that appear before and after give definition to what Paul envisions as a mature man. First, a mature man is spiritually alert. Scripture uses the word "alert" in response to five threats facing believers: Satan (1 Pet 5:8-9), temptation (Mark 14:38), apathy (Rev 3:1-3), false teachers (2 Cor 11:13-15; 2 Pet 2:1; 2 Tim 4:3-5). The fifth is not so much a threat as it is a promise in which believers are to be alert to its fulfillment. The promise is the Lord's return (Matt 24:42; 25:13; 2 Pet 3:10-12). Second, a mature man is firm in his faith. In the context of earlier chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul shows the expression "firm in the faith" to mean a mature commitment to Jesus Christ that is not influenced by the foolishness of the world. Third, the mature man is to be strengthened. He does not strengthen himself. Rather, he draws strength specifically from God's Word and the "grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 2:1). Fourth, the mature man of God is loving. Love makes a man gentle, understanding, patient, kind, and self-sacrificing. Love keeps a man's alertness, firmness, and strength from becoming controlling, heavy-

handed, obnoxious, and combative. Jesus Christ is every man's example of a mature man. He embodied these characteristics, especially love.

### **Sermon 5 and Small Group (Week 7)**

Sermon 5 was an exegetical message based on Ephesians 5:22-33 and 1 Peter 3:7, preached during the Sunday morning service of week 7. Its objective was to call men as the Christlike heads of their homes to sacrificially love their wives.

Two concepts in the text were identified as being culturally controversial: submission and headship. However, they are not the focal point of the passage. The focal point of the passage, just like the rest of the book of Ephesians is on Jesus Christ. The text deals with how believers relate to Jesus Christ by the way they live out the biblical directives for marriage.

Erroneous cultural notions of headship and submission were identified and refuted with Scripture, and then defined in their biblical context. Headship was simply defined as "Christlike leadership." Submission was defined as "acting on behalf of another for their benefit and blessing." Because the sermon series targeted men, the remainder sermon focused on headship; specifically six qualities of headship from Ephesians 5:25-33.

First, Christlike headship leads a wife lovingly. First Peter 3:7 calls men to love their wives by understanding them. Practical ways of understanding one's wife that were offered to husbands included studying her, making intentional efforts based on that study, and making provision to examine one's marriage regularly.

Second, headship willingly sacrifices personal prerogatives. The pattern for husbands is Christ giving Himself for His church (Eph 5:25). Third, headship strives for personal holiness and his wife's holiness. Just as Christ sanctifies His bride with His Word, so a husband is to provide a home-environment that nurtures his wife's holiness (Eph 5:26). Fourth, headship is eternally accountable. One day Christ is going to present His bride perfect to the Father. Husbands will be held accountable for what kind of head

they were for their wives. The question is not if a man is the head of his home; the question is what kind of a head is he. Fifth, headship offers provision and protection. The verbs “nurture” and “cherish” in Ephesians 5:29 mean that a man is making the conditions of a home optimal for spiritual growth, in part by being kind and gentle. Sixth, headship is a position of permanent commitment. Ephesians 5:30-31 is quoted from Genesis 2 and speaks not only to the intimacy and physical union of marriage, but also its intended permanence. The man is the subject of the sentence, the one taking permanent action. The final summation of the text is that the way a man lives out his role as head of his home is a measure of his submission to Jesus Christ.

The two men’s small groups met for the second time on the first Friday of the second month of the project. The time began with food and fellowship and then the men gathered to share prayer requests and pray together. Then the men discussed their devotions and *The Pursuit of Holiness* (the book of the month). The time concluded with men giving reports on what went well and what needs to be improved regarding their spiritual disciplines, relationships, and accountability. *What Did You Expect?* by Paul Tripp was assigned for reading and then discussed in the next meeting in week 11 of the project.

### **Sermon 6 (Week 8)**

Sermon 6 was preached during the Sunday evening service of week 8. The message was an exegetical sermon based on the imperatives to fathers in Ephesians 6:4. Sermon men how to raise their children in the training and admonition of the Lord without provoking them to wrath was the objective of the message.

God issued the charge in Ephesians 6:4 specifically to fathers. The two imperatives, “do not provoke” and “bring them up,” formed the outline for the sermon. Mistaken notions of provocation were dispelled before discussing the true thrust of the command toward not cultivating an angry, impulsive lifestyle in one’s children. Ways of provoking children were identified, as were ways of avoiding provocation. The biblical

examples of Saul and Eli's sons served as negative illustrations. Three practices for parenting without provocation were shared from Proverbs: gentleness (15:1), wholesome speech (15:4), and fun (17:22). Several practical suggestions were shared for rebuilding a father-child relationship after a child has been provoked.

The biblical concepts of "training" and "admonition" were taught to clarify the command to "bring them up." False cultural ideas about discipline were identified and refuted. Several essentials for effectively correcting children were taught from scriptural principles. Methods of admonishment were reviewed from Deuteronomy 6 as well as content crucial to passing Christian faith onto children.

Sermon 6 was more thorough than time allowed for presentation. Some sections were passed over with encouragement for the audience to review the handout notes on their own.

### **Sermon 7 (Week 9)**

In week 9, sermon 7 marked the beginning of the second part in the sermon series: spiritual leadership of the home requires men to grow in godliness. The objective of sermon 7 was to present the heads of homes with a biblical vision from Psalm 128 for the direction in which he can lead his family. Seven desirable assets are ascribed to the blessed man in Psalm 128: provision for the home, prosperity of the home, a precious wife, productive children, promised blessing, protection of the home, and a promising legacy.

The text also offers insight for how these blessings may be obtained. (1) Blessings can only come through a relationship with God. (2) Relationship with God results in obedience. (3) The biblical vision for the family is transferred through a man's ministry of presence in his home. He must be present in his home to cultivate and reap the blessings in Psalm 128. (4) The ministry of a man's presence in his home enables him to have a ministry of gospel promotion with his family. (5) As a man applies the truths of the gospel to his home, he carries out the ministry of spiritual formation.

A growth cycle was developed and taught to illustrate how a man can intentionally enter relationships with his family and move them toward spiritual formation.

### **Sermon 8 (Week 10)**

Sermon 8 was an exegetical message based on King Josiah's reign in 2 Chronicles 34 and was preached during a Sunday morning service in week 10. The objective of the sermon was to teach heads of homes how to lead their hearts.

The message began by detailing the significant attention God devotes to the human heart in the Bible. Men were thus challenged to give the appropriate amount of attention to the condition of their hearts.

“Wholeheartedness” was identified as a regularly repeated sub-category of the heart theme in Scripture. God used wholeheartedness as a criterion for godly leadership in His evaluation of the kings in 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles. God also measured the wholeheartedness of a leader by obedience to His Word. Both of these aspects were identified in the historical account of Josiah in 2 Kings 23:25.

An exegesis of Josiah's reign in 2 Chronicles 34 offered specific action steps and qualities of a wholehearted leader. (1) He is resolved to obey. (2) He removes sin from his life. (3) He rejects ungodly influences. (4) He is repentant and consistently humbles himself before the Lord. (5) The wholehearted leader remains faithful in spite of opposition. (6) Wholeheartedness revolutionizes the influence of a leader.

### **Sermon 9 and Small Group (Week 11)**

Sermon 9 was the first of a two-part topical message on spiritual warfare preached during the Sunday morning service of week 11. The objective of sermon 9 was to teach the spiritual leaders of homes how to engage in spiritual warfare. Ephesians 6:10-12, 1 Peter 5:8, Matthew 4:11, and Genesis 3 were used to expose Satan's activity of targeting spiritual leaders.

Sermon 9 began with an admonition for men to avoid extremes in spiritual warfare. Satan is real, yet he is not the focal point of history or the Bible. Therefore, he should not be the focal point of Christian living, but neither should he be neglected. Satan's objective is to dethrone God and destroy His children. Those passages also unveiled Satan's strategies for hunting spiritual leaders. First, he uses deception. Like a lion hunting prey, he maximizes a leader's blind spot to set him up for an ambush, which is why the believer is commanded in 1 Peter 5:8 to be alert and vigilant. I discussed some blindspots I have commonly observed in counseling family men including a man's change in mood, busyness and the resulting stress, self-righteousness, and unbelief.

Satan's second strategy is diversion. In Matthew 4, Satan tries to divert Jesus' attention away from what the Father wants and fixates on objects of temptation. Throughout Scripture, Satan is observed getting people to ignore what God wants in order to advance what they want. He uses diversion to convert good things into idols. Men were persuaded to view isolation as a warning signal. A man isolated from godly influences is vulnerable to spiritual attack (Prov 18:1).

Third, Satan employs division in relationships as he targets spiritual leaders. Division and conflict are the result of Satan breaking down a relationship through deception or diversion (Gen 3). Satan wants to keep men from relationships that can benefit them most and those people they may influence for Christ (Eph 6:1-10; 2 Cor 12:7; 2 Tim 2:24-26). Men as spiritual leaders must resist pride and selfishness as they stoke the satanic fires of division (Isa 14:12-15; Acts 5:3). Based on my counseling experience, men were also warned not to be easily offended and allow Satan to keep them from reconciliation.

Sermon 9 concluded with the assessment that spiritual defeat is not final. Aimed at men who may have been discouraged and weary from spiritual failure, this point was illustrated by the account of the apostle Peter's denial of Christ. Jesus revealed that Satan desired to sift Peter as wheat (Luke 22:31). Yet, even after Peter's denial, Jesus welcomed

him back into His band of disciples and then used him to preach the gospel and establish the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2). God used Peter to build His church and give an example that spiritual defeat does not have to be final.

The two small groups met for the third time on the first Friday evening of the third month of the project. The time began with food and fellowship followed by sharing prayer requests and praying together. The groups discussed their devotions and *What Did You Expect?* (the book of the month). The time concluded with men giving reports on what went well and what needs to be improved regarding their spiritual disciplines, relationships, and accountability. *The Faithful Parent* by Martha Peace and Stuart Scott was assigned for reading and then discussed in the next meeting, week 15 of the project.

### **Sermon 10 (Week 12)**

Sermon 10 was the second of the two-part topical message on spiritual warfare. This message was preached during a Sunday morning service of week 12. The objective of sermon 10 was to teach the spiritual leaders of homes how to engage in spiritual warfare. Second Corinthians 10:3-5, Ephesians 4:27 and James 4:7 were used to develop and teach a practical spiritual warfare strategy men could employ in their homes.

The introduction featured brief character descriptions of the patriarch Job and the apostle Paul. In spite of their character, both men suffered from spiritual attack. The point was made that even the godliest people may find themselves in non-stop spiritual warfare by God's design.

The spiritual warfare strategy presented in sermon 10 included five imperatives. (1) Genuinely repent. In Ephesians 4:25-32, the put off/put on principle is made possible through repentance. The virtues listed in that text are fruits of repentance. (2) Be receptive to God's Word. The parable of the soils in Mark 4 reveals that Satan removes God's Word from hearts that are hardened to it. Being humbly receptive to Scripture is vital for a Christian's spiritual health and defending against Satan's raid against God's truth in a heart. (3) Demolish strongholds, or erroneous ideologies that the enemy implants within

the mind of believers to sabotage their faithfulness came from 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. (4) Build towers of truth. Second Corinthians 10:5 charges believers to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. If the believer is to demolish strongholds, then erecting towers of truth means that believers, particularly the heads of homes in this case, will gain knowledge of key scriptural rallying points; passages that can be consulted in times of spiritual struggle. Seven truth towers were offered to the men, each precisely countering Satan's identity and his resulting work that seeks to hinder the believer's spiritual progress. Each of Satan's names was listed and then I taught how specific Scriptures counter all of Satan's activity. (5) Obedience at all costs. Jesus demonstrated in Matthew 4 that the best defense against Satan is the Word of God and obedience to it. Resisting the devil in James 4:7 is also a reference to obedience to God's Word. Obedience is crucial to the success of the spiritual leader at engaging spiritual warfare in his home.

### **Sermon 11 (Week 13)**

Sermon 11 was the first sermon on biblical friendship for men. This exegetical message based on 1 Samuel 14 was preached during the Sunday morning service of week 13. The objective of sermon 11 was to teach the spiritual leaders of homes how to evaluate their current friendships with other men and challenge them to develop biblical friendships using the example of Jonathan and his armor bearer.

Seven traits of a godly friendship were taught from 1 Samuel 14:1-23. The first was that godly friendships require discomfort (vv. 1-2). Jonathan and his armor bearer were willing to band together to accomplish a cause greater than themselves but also to great risk to themselves. These kinds of friendship require personal cost to oneself. At times, they can take a person to spiritually risky places where they may be confronted with uncomfortable truths.

Second, godly friendships call one to break away from the crowd (vv. 1-3). Jonathan is contrasted with Saul in 1 Samuel 14. In verses 1-3, Jonathan breaks away

from the comforts of the crowd with his armor bearer while Saul remains in the shade of a pomegranate tree amidst the security of his army.

Third, godly friends face difficulties together (vv. 4-5). The biblical account details the geography of the difficult terrain Jonathan and his armor bearer overcame to face the Philistine garrison. Jonathan's narrative again diverges from Saul's avoidance of difficulty.

Fourth, godly friends do not flee when life gets hard (v. 6). Jonathan invites his armor bearer to face the Philistine garrison after traversing treacherous rock formations. The armor bearer responds with wholehearted eagerness to follow Jonathan into battle knowing the two will be outnumbered.

Fifth, godly friendships are founded on a mutual pursuit of God's glory (vv. 3, 6-7). Again, Jonathan and Saul are contrasted. Jonathan is fighting for God's glory alongside his armor bearer and is confident the Lord will work on his behalf. Saul, however, is sitting in the shade with Ahijah, the descendant of Ichabod, whose name literally means "glory gone." The imagery is intended to be a commentary on Saul's impotent reign and piety.

Sixth, godly friends fight courageous battles together (vv. 12-14). Godly friends defend one another and come to one another's aid in times of trouble. In terms of spiritual warfare, godly friends wage war together. They pray for one another, serve one another and make personal sacrifices for the spiritual wellbeing of one another. Having ungodly friends may position one to face their struggles and battles alone. Worse yet, ungodly friends may embroil one in unwanted difficulties.

Seventh, godly friendships multiply one's effectiveness for God. First Samuel 13:22 makes the reader aware that only two swords could be found in Saul's army. Saul and Jonathan possessed those swords. What implement the armor bearer took into battle against the Philistine garrison is unknown. However, it is clear he was responsible for the deaths of several men (14:13). It is clear that God gave the victory and all the glory

belongs to Him (14:23). However, it is important to note that He used two like-minded friends, intent on His glory, to accomplish His purposes.

### **Sermon 12 (Week 14)**

Sermon 12 was the second sermon on biblical friendship for men. It was a character study on David and Jonathan's friendship as portrayed in 1 Samuel. It was preached during the Sunday evening service of week 14. The objective of sermon 12 was to teach the spiritual leaders of homes how to develop biblical friendships with other men.

Sermon 12 began by breaking the congregation into smaller groups of three to four. Their assignment was to read and compare 1 Samuel 14 with 1 Samuel 17:32-50 and discuss the similarities between the two accounts. After some time, the groups were asked to share their observations. The point of the exercise was to demonstrate how the common denominators of the accounts revealed important building blocks for godly friendships. In 1 Samuel 14, the reader learns about Jonathan's friendship with his armor bearer. In 1 Samuel 17, very similar circumstances lead to Jonathan's famous friendship with David.

First Samuel 18:1 says that "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David." I used this verse to explain to the men how the souls of godly friends are knit together in friendship. (1) Godly friendships are formed through shared experiences (1 Sam 14, 17). The shared experiences of David and Jonathan's victories were foundational to their friendship. (2) Godly friendships require shared values (1 Sam 14:6). The most compelling aspect of David and Jonathan's scriptural narratives is their mutual pursuit of God's glory. (3) Godly friendships require unselfish love (1 Sam 18:3-4; 20:4). David and Jonathan both acted on each other's behalf out of self-sacrificial acts of love. Their relationship serves as a great illustration of Christ's sacrificial love for His friends (John 15:13). (4) Godly friendships require deep loyalty (1 Sam 19:1-7; 20:13-17). David and Jonathan remained loyal to one another through extraordinarily trying times that would

strain the strongest of relationships. Proverbs 17:17 affirms that “a friend loves at all times.” Proverbs 18:24 adds, “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

(5) Godly friendships require real transparency (1 Sam 20:1-3). Any level of accountability in a friendship is contingent on transparency. Transparency also builds trust. (6) Godly friendships call a man to stronger faith (1 Sam 23:16). As two friends mutually pursue God’s glory, the result will be that the two will strengthen one another’s faith. (7) Godly friendships are founded on dependable kindness (1 Sam 20:8, 14-15). David and Jonathan’s kindness covenant in 20:8 was patterned after God’s unconditional covenants with his people. Inherent are promises of faithfulness. God’s covenants assumed a mutual faithfulness between both parties that entailed service. Friendships, if they are to be God-honoring, will pattern themselves after God’s dealings with men. Out of a desire to honor God, David and Jonathan deal kindly with one another.

Sermon 12 demonstrated from David and Jonathan’s God-honoring friendship that friendships face a variety of pressures throughout the course of two people’s lives that seek to sabotage their growth in God. Though when God is the substance of a friendship, there is a special level of trust because one is not just trusting a person, they are trusting the Lord. They trust that the Lord is with this individual, alive in their soul, working in them, and moving them. Friends who are so inclined toward the Lord can give the assurance that they have their friend’s best interest at heart.

### **Sermon 13 and Small Group (Week 15)**

Sermon 13 offered help from the Bible with resolving conflict in the home. The sermon was entitled “Resolving Conflict through Christ” and was preached during the Sunday evening service of week 15 as the closing message in the preaching series. The sermon first sought to answer the question, “Where does conflict come from?” Three sources of conflict were identified in Scripture: Satan (Isa 14:12-13), the fall of man (Gen 3:9-13), and the hearts of men (Jas 4:1; Mark 7:21-23).

“The Slippery Slope of Conflict” from Ken Sande’s *Peace-Making for Families* was taught. Sande’s book identifies possible sinful and godly responses to conflict. Sermon 13 also discussed seven questions one should ask oneself prior to bringing up a potentially tumultuous situation: (1) “Am I responding to gossip that I shouldn’t have listened to” (Prov 17:4); (2) “Do I have the facts right” (Prov 18:13); (3) “Should love hide it” (1 Pet 4:8); (4) “Is my timing right” (Prov 15:23); (5) “Is my attitude right” (Eph 4:15); (6) “Are my words loving” (1 Cor 13; Eph 4:15); (7) “Have I prayed for God’s help” (Prov 3:5).

The sermon concluded with six means God uses to empower peacemaking. (1) God empowers peacemaking through the gospel. Because believers are reconciled to God, they are charged with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-21). Married couples especially should show forth the peacemaking power of Christ in their marriage as they reflect Christ’s love for His bride. (2) Love is a major theme in Scripture that answers the problem of conflict. First Corinthians 13 reveals the true nature of love that can resolve conflict. (3) A man’s determination or desire to live peaceably with others ought to trump any desire that stokes the fires of conflict in his relationships (Rom 12:18). (4) A man needs to pray his way through conflict, both doing business with God personally and praying for the person with whom he is in conflict (1 Tim 2:8). (5) God’s Word is a source of great help for those wrestling with conflict. It must be turned to for wisdom from above, the only wisdom that can truly bring reconciliation to warring hearts (Matt 5:9; Rom 14:19; Eph 4:1-3). (6) God uses accountability to godly men to help men grow in wisdom and successfully resolve conflict (Prov 13:20; 27:17).

The two small groups met for the fourth time on the first Friday evening of the fourth month of the project. The time began with food and fellowship followed by sharing prayer requests and praying together. The groups discussed their devotions and *The Faithful Parent* (the book of the month). The time concluded with men giving reports on what went well and what needs to be improved regarding their spiritual disciplines,

relationships, and accountability. *Peacemaking for Families* by Ken Sande was distributed and assigned reading for discussion in the next meeting.

The post-series surveys were distributed, completed, and returned by the 23 participants. The two groups continued to meet monthly for the same purposes outside of the scope of this project.

### **Post-Series Survey Results**

The results of the Spiritual Leadership Inventory revealed that the spiritual leadership sermon series and small groups made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of married men's spiritual leadership practices in their homes ( $t = 3.284, p = 2.074$ ).<sup>4</sup>

Several particular results of the survey are relevant to the success of this project. The results of each question in the survey increased, showing improvement in every area of spiritual leadership surveyed. This was likely due to repeated emphases during the sermon series and discussion in small groups on each area of spiritual leadership in the survey. Twenty-one of 23 men, or 91 percent, surveyed reported improvement in the spiritual leadership of their homes.

The results of the survey also revealed areas still in need of improvement. While they showed improvement of more than 10 percent, two areas of spiritual leadership still did not score above 50 percent for their possible points after the sermon series: Scripture memory and reading the Bible with one's wife. Admittedly, these two areas could have been addressed more sufficiently in the sermon series. No plan, program, assignment, or resources were distributed to the men to aid them in shoring up these two areas. In hindsight, resources for every area of spiritual leadership in the home addressed by this project should have been made available to the men. Scripture memorization and

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<sup>4</sup>See appendix 4 for  $t$ -test statistical data.

leading one's wife in Bible reading could have been two additional points of accountability in the men's small groups.

The three areas of spiritual leadership that showed the most statistically significant improvement were daily Bible reading ( $t_{(22)} = 5.13, p < .0001$ ), regular accountability with other men ( $t_{(22)} = 4.2, p = .0002$ ), and daily personal prayer ( $t_{(22)} = 3.96, p = .0003$ ). The sermon series addressed these three issues several times and from different perspectives. The monthly men's groups also made these three areas a major emphasis because the pre-series survey indicated them as significant weaknesses. Resources for these three areas were made available to the men. Men were given a devotional book that assigned daily Bible reading, contained brief commentary on the day's passage, and provided space to journal a personal response. Men were assigned accountability partners at the outset of the project. Accountability was based on a man's spiritual disciplines and the state of his marriage and parenthood. Prayer requests were taken at each meeting along with a personal evaluation from each man concerning his spiritual disciplines, his leadership of his home, and how he did holding other men in the group accountable. This project concluded that corporate accountability amongst a small group most effectively motivated the implementation of those spiritual leadership practices emphasized in the sermon series.

The categories next in line for showing most improvement were having a daily time for prayer ( $t_{(22)} = 3.51, p = .0010$ ) and Bible reading with one's children ( $t_{(22)} = 3.51, p = .0010$ ). These aspects were repeatedly taught as being crucial to the head of the home cultivating an environment of sanctification. As might be expected, there is a correlation between a man growing in his relationship with the Lord and helping his children to grow in the Lord.

Closely following improvement in the spiritual nurture of children, husbands showed growth in having an established daily time of prayer with one's wife ( $t_{(22)} = 3.43, p = .0012$ ). This particular correlation was emphasized repeatedly throughout the sermon

series. I did my best to model prayer with my wife and encourage the men to make prayer a regular part of their marriages.

According to the surveys, the men of Grace Baptist Church responded most favorably to personal challenges to grow in godliness, especially regarding the practice of spiritual disciplines. The strongest improvements were in men's personal spiritual disciplines followed by their spiritual nurturing of their children and then wives. However, improvement in men's personal worship did not always result in the implementation of worship in a corporate way at home. One might hope to see that growth in personal disciplines would result in leading wives and children in those same disciplines. On two occasions the correlation was taught at length, once from the exposition of Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and again from Joshua 24:15. The lack of men's personal worship resulting in corporate worship at home appears not to be due to a lack of substantive preaching, but a lack of modeling. Areas such as praying with one's family that were modeled for the men and became points of accountability showed significantly more improvement than others that lacked modeling.

One of the most significant lessons learned from this project is that people need to be shown how to carry out personal and corporate spiritual leadership practices and disciplines. Simply telling people to do them, even when it is commanded from Scripture, is not enough for them to successfully implement those practices. Spiritual disciplines are not intuitive. Preaching and sermon are important aspects of training spiritual leaders, but they are no substitute for the empowering that comes from mentoring and direct accountability.

Computing the *t*-test for dependent samples was an anxious process. Sometimes in ministry it is doubtful whether one's efforts are making a difference. That the Spiritual Leadership Inventory results revealed a statistical improvement in men's spiritual leadership of their homes was a great blessing. The greater blessing is the assurance that this project impacted men's lives, and not just the men, but those who are in their homes.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROJECT EVALUATION

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the fifteen-week program designed to equip the men of GBC to be the spiritual leaders of their homes. The project was implemented from September to December 2015. This evaluation includes assessing the project's purpose and goals, weighing both the strengths and the weaknesses of the project, suggesting improvements for future implementation, and reflecting both theologically and personally on the project and its process, from conception and design through implementation.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip the married men of GBC in Batavia, New York, to be spiritual leaders in their homes. The results of the SLI<sup>1</sup> reveal that the spiritual leadership preaching series and small groups made a statistically significant difference resulting in the increase of men's spiritual leadership practices in their homes ( $t = 3.284, p = 2.074$ ).<sup>2</sup> The project was effective in equipping the married men of Grace Baptist Church, Batavia, New York, because the men who participated in the survey averaged a 22.5 percent increase in their knowledge and practice of spiritual leadership in their homes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup>See appendix 4 for *t*-test statistical data.

<sup>3</sup>See appendix 5 for survey totals.

## Evaluation of the Project's Goals

### Goal 1: Assessing Spiritual Leadership

The first goal of this project was to assess the spiritual leadership practices of the married men who are members of GBC. This goal was measured by administering the SLI<sup>4</sup> to twenty-five men who are husbands and fathers. Men were surveyed regarding their spiritual leadership practices in the home. This goal was considered successfully met when twenty-three married men completed the SLI, and the inventory was analyzed, resulting in clarification of the spiritual leadership practices among GBC married men with dependent children still in the home. The purpose of the pre-program survey was to identify men's weakest areas of spiritual leadership and then design teaching and programming to strengthen those areas.

The SLI gave significant direction to the second part of the sermon series and the men's groups. The topics for second part were determined by the needs indicated in the SLI. The first part of the sermon series was already determined by specific Scriptures addressed to the heads of homes. The lowest collective scores from the pre-series SLI included personal Bible reading, Scripture memory, and personal prayer, as well as encouraging these disciplines in the home. These topics were covered in part 1 of the sermon series because the biblical directives addressed them. The areas of leadership that scored poorly on the pre-series SLI and that were not covered in the biblical directives to men, formed the topics for part 2 of the sermon series. Consequently, part 2 of the sermon series devoted seven sermons to five areas of weakness: leading the home with vision, leading one's heart and the hearts within one's home, leading the home in spiritual warfare (two sermons), developing godly friendships (two sermons), and leading the home in conflict resolution.

The questions that received the strongest affirmative responses dealt with what men believed about their role as the heads of their homes and their desire to fulfill that

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<sup>4</sup>See appendix 1.

role. For example, the statement that received the highest score was “In God’s plan for marriage, the husband is called to be the spiritual leader.” In close second was: “I desire to lead my home according to God’s standards.” In both the pre and post-program surveys, responses to these questions averaged six, indicating participants strongly agreed with these survey statements. Knowing that the men were already confident in a complementarian position and had the desire to be faithful to their beliefs showed the author that what men needed most was training in how to fulfill their role as the spiritual leaders of their homes.

## **Goal 2: Teaching Series Preparation**

The second goal of this project was to develop a thirteen-week sermon series on male spiritual leadership in the home for the men of GBC. This goal was measured by the pastors and deacons of the church, utilizing a rubric to evaluate the sermon material.<sup>5</sup> The evaluation rubric focused on the biblical and theological quality of the sermons, whether the material was relevant and practical, and whether the sermons were clear and compelling. The goal was considered successfully met because 100 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficiency level.

The content of part 1 of the sermon series was determined by several Bible passages that speak directly to the heads of homes and consisted of six exegetical sermons from those biblical texts.

The content of part 2 of the sermon series was determined by the SLI results that indicated the greatest areas of weakness in the surveyed men’s spiritual leadership of their homes. Part 2 consisted of seven exegetical sermons based on biblical texts that directly addressed the areas of weakness.

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<sup>5</sup>See appendix 2.

### **Goal 3: Men's Groups Implementation**

The third goal of this project was to equip the men of GBC to be the spiritual leaders of their homes by implementing a small group for married men with children at home. There were two groups with 12 participants and one leader in each group for a total of 26 men. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post-survey of the men's preparedness for spiritual leadership. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre and post-series scores.

Personally interacting with one of the men's groups showed me that a sermon series on spiritual leadership would not be adequate to equip men to be the spiritual leaders of their homes. The men responded very positively to interaction regarding their personal spiritual leadership beliefs and practices. In many cases it was dialogue in these groups that proved to be the catalyst for men to take decisive action to implement spiritual leadership practices in their personal lives and in their homes.

### **Goal 4: Sermon Series Implementation**

The fourth goal of this project was to equip the men of GBC to be the spiritual leaders of their homes by implementing the thirteen-week sermon series. This goal was measured by administering a pre and post-survey of the men's preparedness for spiritual leadership. This goal was considered successfully met because the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre and post-series scores.

The sermon series was offered to a much wider audience than was intended in the beginning stages of the project. Upon evaluating the first few sermons, the senior pastor determined the series would prove beneficial to GBC at large. The timing of implementation also proved providential. The senior pastor was scheduled to be away from the pulpit for six weeks during the implementation phase of the project, which

further affirmed the merit of my teaching the material to the congregation during Sunday services.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The launch of the monthly men's groups was met with anticipation and energy. A level of transparency caught me off guard and quickly brought the groups together in a spirit of enthusiasm. There was excitement to grow in ways that some of the men had yet to experience. A sense of neediness for the groups was a reoccurring theme in the first meeting. Men felt the weight of responsibility but felt inadequate for the task. The dichotomy was a catalyst for men to give time and energy to putting some practices in place that would help them grow in their walk with God so that they could help their families grow spiritually.

Men's ownership of responsibility for the spiritual leadership of their homes was evidenced when in following meetings men came prepared having done daily devotions, met with accountability partners, read the book of the month, prayed with their wives, and led their families in worship. Many of the men gave testimonies in the fourth and final meeting for the project that this was the first time they had engaged in some of these spiritual practices.<sup>6</sup> The sweetness of fellowship in the meetings was rich as men shared weaknesses and failures, praises and victories. The fellowship of Romans 12:15-16 became reality: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion."

The anonymous surveys indicated that two men actually declined in their practice of spiritual leadership in their homes. Had this project been limited to a sermon series, this struggle and decline may not have been identified, and the men may not have received the help they needed. However, in the small group context it became obvious

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<sup>6</sup>See appendix 6 for participant testimonies.

that two men were experiencing some very trying circumstances. The group element of the project proved to be a great strength. Participants rallied around the two struggling men and one of them along with his wife sought biblical counseling with me. Since the conclusion of the project, both of the struggling men have received encouragement and help and are showing marked signs of improvement.

As candid as the men's testimonies were, transparency can be feigned. Perhaps a more telling indicator of the impact this project had on men and their homes can be told by the men's wives.<sup>7</sup> The participants' wives were genuinely enthusiastic about the improvement they saw in their husbands' spiritual leadership at the end of the fifteen weeks. Requesting feedback from wives reaffirmed the importance of men establishing accountability on multiple relationship levels.

The spiritual leader cannot hide his sin behind the secretive walls of his home. The walls of one's home are for the protection of the family, not for keeping men's sinful secrets hushed. Anyone in an accountability relationship can paint a favorable picture of themselves. However, accountability takes on a whole new light when permission is granted to double check with members of one's home to see how the man is doing. This realization took accountability to a new and for some an intimidating level. I led by example in granting the men in my group permission to ask my wife how I was doing walking with the Lord and leading and loving my family. The men agreed that conversations with other men's wives regarding accountability should only take place at church or other public places. Men's wives were not to be sought out privately. It was understood that any man desiring this level of accountability would need to seek permission from his wife and grant permission to the men.

The congregation at large sat under the sermon series in its entirety and the messages were posted on the church's website. People outside of the target group

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<sup>7</sup>See appendix 7 for wives' testimonies.

responded very favorably to the series. Two single mothers and a man who is separated from his family asked how the series applied to them. All three asked the question not to challenge but out of a genuine desire to honor the Lord and influence their loved ones. All three also affirmed that the series was helpful in giving them direction when they felt confused and inadequate.

A group of young single men began meeting because they were inspired by what they were seeing come out of the men's groups. The young adults patterned their group after the model employed by this project. Another noteworthy response came from two young single men in the armed forces who gathered their units weekly to view the teaching series online. On the opposite end of the stage of life spectrum, older men with grandchildren said they wished they had been exposed to the kind of teaching presented in this series while they were raising children at home; however, they affirmed that they were challenged to apply the material to their influence upon their adult children and grandchildren.

The most surprising strength of the project was that it helped the pastors identify and develop potential future leadership for the church. Seven participants were identified as potential future deacons by the completion of the project. Four men were identified as potential trustees. These 11 men either demonstrated considerable growth during the project or demonstrated a level of maturity and spiritual leadership at home that made their qualification observable. Related to the development of church leadership is the growth observed in participants' service at GBC. The number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that "My wife and I serve the Lord together in our church" rose 117 percent. This statement was the only spiritual leadership issue that appeared on the survey but was not addressed in the sermon series or men's groups.

The project proved to inspire the men to take responsibility for their personal spiritual growth and the leadership of their homes. The number of participants who indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that they established a set, daily time for Bible

reading increased 100 percent. The number of participants who said they agreed or strongly agreed that they established a set, daily time for personal prayer increased 74 percent. The post-project survey demonstrated a dramatic increase in the number of men engaging in personal spiritual disciplines.

The number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that they have a set, daily time for prayer with their wives increased 100 percent. The number of men who agreed or strongly agreed that they established a set, daily time of Bible reading with their wives increased 67 percent. The number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that they initiate resolving conflict with their wives in a way that honors God increased 200 percent. The number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that they know how to help their wives grow spiritually increased 225 percent, and those who actually encourage their wives to grow spiritually increased 160 percent. These increases, in part, explain the positive responses of participants' wives in appendix 7. Several of the wives' testimonies mention the men's implementation of these practices in the home.

The number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that they have a set, daily time for prayer with their children increased 166 percent. The number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that they have a set, daily time for Bible reading with their children increased 400 percent. The wives' testimonies in appendix 7 affirm the increase of the implementation of these practices in the home as well.

The number of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that they established a regular accountability meeting time with at least one other man increased by 275 percent. Similar increases were observed with participants identifying at least one man to hold them accountable for their spiritual disciplines and leading their families spiritually. The implementation of accountability through the men's groups appears to be the greatest strength and motivator for spiritual leadership in this project.

The men's groups provided opportunity to interact with the sermon material. Without the personal interaction of the material in a group setting and the resulting

accountability, it is unclear how successful this project would have been if it was limited strictly to a sermon series.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The greatest encouragement of the project was also the greatest frustration. Analyzing the pre and post-surveys yielded very encouraging results; however, the analysis also revealed that there were men who struggled and declined in some aspects of their walk with Christ or leadership of their homes. For example, according to the survey, some men never evidenced a routine of spending daily time with the Lord, praying with their wives and children, handling conflict in a God-honoring way, or developing a mutually satisfying sex life. Some of those struggles were exposed in the group context, though not all of them were brought to light. Such is the nature of an anonymous survey. I am not proposing that the survey participants should have been identified, because disclosure may have discouraged transparency and skewed the results. Not knowing who among the participants was struggling with which issues was not necessarily a weakness, but perhaps more of a frustration. Not all people who need help necessarily want help or want others to know they are in need of help.

One area of spiritually leading a home that did not come up in the sermon series was the challenge of broken and blended families. How should spiritual leadership be applied to a single mom, father whose ex-wife and children are out of state, or a believing woman with an unbelieving husband? These issues were not raised in the project because the scope was limited to married men with children in their homes. However, the issues were raised by congregants who were a part of the sermon series audience because it was taught as a Sunday service series. While conversations with individuals in these situations was positive and instructive, it is unknown how many present were struggling with similar issues and did not come forward. The concern is that the sermon series may have discouraged some from a broken background because it focused so heavily on the ideal, God-ordained family structure.

Because men participated in the project by invitation only, there were two men who expressed disappointment that they were not invited to join the men's groups. Whether others felt the same way is unknown and a real possibility. The two men who made their disappointment known were assured they would be considered as the men's ministry grows and expands.

One point of feedback from the participants was that the agenda for the group time was too aggressive. Men felt they were being challenged in many areas from many angles. Each meeting the discussion included lessons from the teaching series, the month's book, personal Bible reading, and the sharing of personal updates. The discussions were lively with no lack of topics for conversation. Many men commented that it would seem we would just get to the heart of a matter and then be on to the next discussion point. My desire was to keep the discussion moving and dynamic so that men would be energized and stimulated. Resolution of issues was not the goal. Therefore the discussions did not always have a sense of closure. The reason for this approach was to motivate men to further study, further discussion with one another outside the group, and further internal wrestling over matters of spiritual weight.

While men felt discussion may have been shortchanged, it was not because needs in the group were ignored or bypassed. The conversation was clipped when it came to topics that were more intellectual or academic in favor of more attention given to personal application and needs within the group. The men who desired to mete out discussion topics more thoroughly, were the same ones who felt the time allotted for personal prayer requests and updates would go too long. Some felt discussion related to the books was more important, and others felt that spending more time in prayer was more important. Repeated communication was necessary for reminding men why we gathered and what most was most important in our time together. Meaningful, purposeful prayer and accountability were the highest values for me. My supposition was that men were not gathering for these purposes in any other venue. Intellectual stimulation does

not necessarily equate to life-change. Developing spiritual friendships through mutual prayer and accountability, however, can be an effective catalyst for spiritual growth. Furthermore, it can lay the relational foundation for men's interaction with each other beyond the duration of the project.

Another weakness lies within the varying degrees of commitment and motivation of the project participants. The greatest challenging was motivating men who do not want to put the work in. Along with the old adage, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink," men can be shown the way and given the resources, but ultimately, they have to take ownership of the responsibility and act. I was motivated even when some of the participating men were not, not only by my own passion for leading these men into spiritual growth and leadership, but also by the requirements to complete my degree. Yet, if the head of a home is not self-motivated or disciplined enough to follow through, he and his family lose out on valuable opportunities for growth. Unmotivated leadership is a weakness common to many church programs. Cultivating accountability among leadership is one way of addressing this weakness. I modeled accountability in this project and it was reciprocated and implemented by most of the men. Several men testified to accountability being the motivating factor for self-discipline and self-control. When accountability was brought to bear, suddenly needed changes were made in the home.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

Implementing this project for the first time required attention that was not conducive to developing closer mentoring relationships. In future implementations, it will be helpful to have purposeful one-on-one time with some of the men in the group. Efforts to equip men to be the spiritual leaders of their homes would be helped by mentors having one-on-one meetings with men who may not be as far along in their spiritual development and stage of life. Personalized mentoring outside of a group context will enhance this project by providing men with more accountability, encouragement, and

leadership stimulation. With two men's groups in place and still running, it is my intent to add subsequent groups along with a mentoring component. In the course of this project, men seemed to have a real desire to learn from men who were further along in life.

Realistic expectations are important when launching a ministry initiative. Programming in the church should start where people are in their spiritual development and challenge them from there. For the doctoral student who has been stimulated by books, discussion, and writing, it is tempting to want participants to experience the same learning curve and then program too aggressively. This project was received enthusiastically by participants, and all who remained in the small group testified of its value. While men and their families saw results in fifteen weeks, the pace and demands of the small group are not sustainable long-term for some men. Men face a variety of challenges that might hinder them from engaging this project in its totality. Some work extensive overtime, some have difficulty reading, and yet others carry significant ministry loads in the church. In future implementations, I would lighten the requirements in hopes to create a more sustainable pace for the men over a longer period of time. Ideally, groups would meet monthly once a month from September through May. Having the summer free is wise because it will help the leadership prepare for the next cycle and give the men a reprieve.

For some men, participation in the small group was overwhelming. Several claimed to have never read a book in its entirety before this project. Prior to this project, some men were not praying with their families, leading family worship, developing accountability relationships, initiating spiritual conversations, or having their own personal time with the Lord. A lot of ground was covered in fifteen weeks. Perhaps for some men it was too much too fast. In the future, books can be broken up by parts or chapters and discussion spread out over the course of multiple meetings. Spending more time working through resources may lead to more effective discussion and application.

## **Theological Reflections**

When it came to Jesus' inner circle of influence, Jesus called to Himself those whom He wished (Mark 3:13-14). There were no volunteers. In contrast, often ministry programming is opened to whoever will participate. This project broke with tradition, at least at GBC, in recruiting participants rather than extending an open invitation to "whosoever will." The seriousness and dedication with which the participants embraced the program was unlike anything I have experienced in ten years of ministry. Jesus demonstrated a valuable insight for men's ministry. Men are more responsive when they are singled out and called upon for leadership. An open invitation or public challenge to meet a need is not as compelling to a man as being chosen to be a part of something he can sense has the potential to change his life.

Jesus did life and ministry with twelve men. He ministered to and spent time among the masses, but the bulk of His attention, as it is recorded in Scripture, was among the twelve. Small groups are a proven medium for effectively influencing people. The early church was founded on small groups of believers engaging one another in their spiritual growth (Acts 2:42-47). While there is no biblical command to meet in groups of twelve with an additional leader, the group dynamics experienced in this project were powerful and yielded results.

Jesus' inner circle can be further delineated. Jesus had an inner circle comprised of Peter, James, and John, and he confided in these three. He took them on special outings (Matt 17:1), allowed them to witness His greatest glory (Mark 9:2-3), and His deepest temptations (Mark 14:33-34). He prayed with them (Luke 9:28), taught them things He did not teach the others (Matt 17:2; Mark 5:37-43), and even introduced them to Moses and Elijah (Matt 17:3). They were his closest friends and confidants. Moving in a circle closer, it is widely recognized that the designation "the disciple whom Jesus loved" refers to the apostle John. John stands out among the apostles as being the only one to have witnessed the crucifixion and afterward, took Jesus' mother home to live with him (John 19:25-27). Positioning men for closer relationships with one another proved to be an

important aspect of this project. The men's groups were further broken into accountability partners. The goal was to build intentional relationships with one another on an even smaller scale among just a couple of men for more intimate prayer and accountability. Every man who participated in this project expressed appreciation for the closer friendships that developed.

Deeply considered and developed in this project was my view of masculinity. Biblical masculinity is a concept that few Christians are able to define, and not something I could have defined prior to this project. The culture skews masculinity by emphasizing a man's earning power, promiscuity, and capacity for alcohol along with a host of other shallow, backward non-virtues. This project has affirmed God's call for a Christ-like masculinity that provides for and protects his family. However, the Bible takes a wrecking ball to the false notions of masculinity that see men belligerently ruling their homes with an iron fist. Rather, masculinity emerges from submitting oneself to the Lord. Masculinity is not found in dominance. It is found in submission.

Submissive masculinity leaves a legacy that is more enduring than prolific fertility and inflated retirement accounts. Challenging men to be the spiritual leaders of their homes is a call to submissive masculinity. True masculinity fervently loves others from a redeemed heart and sees others through the living and abiding Word of God. It is a masculinity that willingly exposes itself to the iron-sharpening-iron of open and honest accountability relationships. Submissive masculinity guards the hearts in his home. He puts away rash, cutting words that pierce like a sword and hurt those he loves. Masculinity of spiritual strength understands the power of words, and he uses words to bring healing to his home.

The submissive masculinity I seek to cultivate in my home fixes its eyes on Jesus and turns its eyes away from all the vain things of this world that hold a potent charm over other men. Jesus-focused masculinity is concerned that others find their

delight and purpose in God. Biblical masculinity is about what a man does with the Lord's beckoning to yield.

Theology came to life for many of the men, myself included, during the course of this project. Perhaps the clearest theological lesson gleaned was that obedience leads to blessing (Deut 11:26-28; Luke 11:28; Jas 1:25). Many men experienced the flourishing of their families as they obeyed God's commands to lead their homes spiritually. Family members were challenged and encouraged spiritually when men engaged them in prayer, God's Word, and spiritually-driven conversation. Investment in God's design for the family with the man as the spiritual leader yielded blessings for every family who had a man participate in this project.

### **Personal Reflections**

The catalyst for this project was a single statement from my wife: "I like you better when you have men in your life holding you accountable." That wake-up call prompted me to evaluate my spiritual state before the Lord, my leadership of my home, and my calling as a pastor. The conclusion was that I was building a facade that inflated my pride and fed my idol of significance in ministry. The dichotomy between who I am at church and who I am at home was widening. Getting men involved at an intimate level in my life became a top priority. I was weak in the spiritual leadership of my home. Consequently, this project was engineered for self-improvement reasons: addressing my deficiencies in the spiritual leadership of my home. Pastoral involvement and counseling in particular, verified that other men at GBC and their families could benefit from a small group designed to equip men to be the spiritual leaders of their homes.

Launching a project that was birthed from my personal need for growth, established precedence for honesty and transparency among the participants. This project did not begin as an effort designed to meet someone else's needs. The project with all its components was deeply personal. From the beginning this project felt less like a project and more like natural relationships being intentionally formed out of a sense of need for

one another. The leadership was not attempting to pull off a program; they were simply taking whatever steps necessary to grow, recognizing it was going to take a community of men partnering together. Men gravitated toward and responded to this kind of transparent leadership.

Accountability became a refreshing, encouraging component of the program. While all of the men expressed a desire for personal transparency and accountability, the process was not instantaneously successful. Accountability is a discipline that is grown into and takes time to develop. Men need time to intentionally connect and relate the details of their lives to other men's experiences. Sharing experiences with other men begins on the surface, but with increasing trust, transparency, and time, accountability is forged.

Taking credit for any positive results of a ministry initiative can be very tempting. When the outcome is favorable, it can bring more than satisfaction. Success can spark pride. I am susceptible to thinking that I accomplished a great thing, and that men and their homes are better because of me. In reality, I am only a sower of seed: it is God who brings the increase. In His grace, the Lord orchestrated the events of the lives of a group of men to lead to the execution of this project. This project was His way of equipping me and 23 other men at GBC, as well as blessing their families, with spiritual leadership.

### **Conclusion**

This project was a start in equipping the men of GBC to be the spiritual leaders of their homes, but it is not sufficient to make them so. There is no “silver bullet” in ministry. No matter how carefully designed and implemented a program may be, it will never be sufficient to perfectly accomplish the desired maturity of people. People's growth is anything but perfect. However, spiritual growth is helped when Christians get honest about where they are in their growth—then they can be encouraged to take the next steps. The participants of this project came together under the banner of transparency and grew

from there. A special bond was formed between the men in the course of this project that made it more organic than programmatic. The process made them feel as though they were a part of something very unique, something few men ever experienced. In fact, the participants began referring to themselves as “Year One.” They recognized they were the start of something special, the beginning of a new precedent for men at GBC. Their hope is that the small groups will continue and expand to include more men. Indeed, the leadership of GBC intends to see the small group component of this project implemented annually.

APPENDIX 1

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP INVENTORY

**Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify your current understanding and practices of spiritual leadership. This research is being conducted by Pastor Jeff Bartz for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. In order to remain anonymous, yet allow the researcher to compare your first and second surveys, please record the last four digits of your social security number as your "Personal Identification Code." Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

<p><b>Personal Identification Code:</b> _____</p>
---

- |   |       |    |
|---|-------|----|
| 1. Are you married?                                 | Yes   | No |
| 2. Do you have children 18 or under living at home? | Yes   | No |
| 3. How old are you?                                 | _____ |    |

For each question below, please circle your response to the following statements using this scale:					
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

**Spiritual Disciplines and Leadership**

- |   |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 4. I have a set, daily time for personal prayer.                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I have a set, daily time for Bible reading.                      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. I have a system for memorizing Scripture.                        | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. God requires the husband to be the spiritual leader of his home. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

*Continued on the next page.*

For each question below, please circle your response to the following statements using this scale:

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 8. I understand what it means to be the spiritual leader of my home.                                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. My spiritual condition is directly related to my ability to be the spiritual leader of my home.         | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I am leading my home according to God's standards.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. I desire to lead my home according to God's standards.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. I am equipped to offer biblical advice to other men about how to be spiritual leaders in their homes.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. Accountability with other men is vital to my spiritual growth.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. I have an established, regular accountability meeting time with at least one other man.                | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. There is at least one man in my life who holds me accountable for my spiritual disciplines and growth. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. There is at least one man in my life who holds me accountable for leading my family spiritually.       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

**Marriage**

- |   |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 17. I understand what the Bible teaches about leading my wife spiritually.                  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. I understand what it means to love my wife as Christ loves the church.                  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. I demonstrate love for my wife that is patterned after Christ's love for His church.    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. I understand what it means for my wife to submit to me as the church submits to Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 21. In God's plan for marriage, the husband is called to be the spiritual leader.           | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 22. My wife and I regularly discuss spiritual things.                                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 23. I have a set, daily time for prayer with my wife.                                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

*Continued on the next page.*

For each question below, please circle your response to the following statements using this scale:

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

- |   |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 24. I have a set, daily time for Bible reading with my wife.                                | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 25. I regularly sacrifice for my wife.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 26. I regularly serve my wife.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 27. My wife and I serve the Lord together in our church.                                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 28. My wife sees me as the spiritual leader of my home.                                     | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 29. In God's plan for marriage, the wife is called to submit to her husband as to the Lord. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 30. Scripture is the ultimate authority for marriage.                                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 31. My wife and I communicate with one another in a God-honoring way.                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 32. My wife and I have a healthy, mutually satisfying, God-honoring sex life.               | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 33. I know my wife's spiritual struggles.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 34. I know how to help my wife grow spiritually.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 35. I encourage my wife to grow spiritually.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 36. I initiate resolving conflict with my wife in a way that honors God.                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 37. I understand that a spouse's relationship with God affects his/her marriage.            | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

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*Please continue only if you have children 18 or under in your home.*

**Parenting**

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 38. I understand what the Bible teaches regarding raising my children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 39. Talking about God in my home is natural for me.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 40. My children see me as the spiritual leader of my home.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 41. I have a set, daily time for prayer with my children.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 42. I have a set, daily time for Bible reading with my children.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

*Continued on the next page.*

For each question below, please circle your response to the following statements using this scale:

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 43. My children feel comfortable coming to me with their concerns and spiritual questions. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 44. I find ways for my children and me to serve the Lord together.                         | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 45. I know my children's spiritual struggles.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 46. I know how to help my children grow spiritually.                                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 47. I encourage my children to grow spiritually.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 48. I use everyday situations to teach my children biblical principles.                    | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 49. I lead my children in resolving conflict in a God-honoring way.                        | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 50. My wife and I are in agreement regarding how we parent our children.                   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

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Please be sure you have written the last four digits of your social security number as your Personal Identification Code. You may place your completed survey in an envelope and return it to Cindy Heale in the church office.

Thank you for participating in this study!

APPENDIX 2

LESSON EVALUATION RUBRIC

Spiritual Leadership in the Home Lesson					
Lesson Evaluation Tool					
<b>1=insufficient; 2=requires attention; 3=sufficient; 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
<b>Biblical Faithfulness</b>					
1. Interpretation of the text is accurate.					
2. Application of the text is appropriate.					
3. The lesson content is biblically sound.					
<b>Relevance</b>					
1. The lesson content is suited for married men (with children when appropriate).					
2. The lesson content is practical.					
3. The lesson is compelling.					
<b>Clarity</b>					
1. The main points of the lesson are clear.					
2. The main points of the lesson support the thesis.					
3. The lesson is sufficiently thorough.					

## APPENDIX 3

### LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

August 1, 2015

Dear Brother,

It is no secret that there is a great dearth of godly manhood present in our society and some would argue in our homes. Most likely you've even seen statistics – divorce, domestic violence, promiscuity, abortion, drug abuse, debt servitude etc. Sadly, there does not appear to be much difference in the stats between Christians and the rest of society. The stats beg the question, “Where are all the men, and what are they doing?” What has happened to the respectable, honorable masculinity of the men of Scripture and even our own forefathers? Why are men not the picture of stability, character, and admiration that they used to be? Perhaps a more pertinent question in relation to the stats may be “What are *you* doing?” What are *you* doing to invest and insure a godly legacy springs forth from your home?

Let's be a tad more pointed and personal. Do you really understand the depths of your own sinfulness and your sinful impact upon those around you? How mature are you in discerning the deep permeation of the world upon yourself and your family? Can you explain what is happening from a biblical perspective in the world, your community, church, family, and yourself? Are you struggling in your marriage? Does your wife respect you? Do you feel qualified and capable of being the spiritual leader of your family? If you are anything like me, you'd like to answer these questions confidently in the affirmative. I am persuaded that I am not the only one. That's why we are assembling two groups of men for the purpose of tackling life's most important questions together.

#### **Now we're asking you to join us!**

Our men's groups will begin Friday, September 4, 2015 and meet the first Friday of each month through May. Men will take turns hosting the group in their homes. Hosts are asked to provide seating for the group to meet in a circle and drinks and finger foods for a time of fellowship. Should you agree to participate, you will be notified of your placement in a group and the group's first meeting location. Meetings will be from 6-9:30 PM. It is a tall order to be a godly man these days. The demands of this study will be no less challenging. Your personal investment in this study will be your time and \$75 (checks made payable to Grace Baptist Church). Each man will be challenged to develop a daily devotional time with God. There will also be a biblical manhood reading requirement each month.

Included is an anonymous survey to help us make these groups as effective as they can be. Information gathered from these surveys will also be used in my doctoral

project. Your participation will not only be a blessing to me personally, but I pray it will be for you and your family as well. Please talk with your wife and prayerfully consider locking arms with 12 other men traveling in the same direction. **Please inform me of your commitment by August 16 at [jbartz@xxxxxxx.org](mailto:jbartz@xxxxxxx.org) or text me at 585.xx.xxxx and mark your calendar!**

Onward!

Pastor Jeff

APPENDIX 4  
T-TEST RESULTS

Table A1. *T*-test: paired two sample for means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	172.73913	195.478261
Variance	1174.20158	1762.80632
Observations	23	23
Pearson Correlation	0.63746666	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	22	
t Stat	-3.2839748	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0016942	
t Critical one-tail	1.71714434	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0033884	
t Critical two-tail	2.07387306	

APPENDIX 5  
SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP INVENTORY RESULTS

Table A2. SLI results

Pre-Series Survey Totals	Post-Series Survey Totals	Difference
153	137	-16
195	206	11
160	180	20
142	161	19
125	280	84
196	221	6
115	169	-31
142	172	30
127	141	14
151	168	17
211	229	18
171	154	-17
162	176	14
208	241	33
201	242	31
212	240	28
129	126	-3
205	208	3
211	220	29
228	263	52
152	164	12
171	184	13
206	214	8
	Total Difference	375
	Average Difference	16.3
	% Increase	22.5

## APPENDIX 6

### PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIES

Participants were asked to write a short testimony in response to the following question, "How have you grown as the spiritual leader of your home since being involved in the men's program?" Men were instructed that they would share these testimonies with the other men at the fourth men's group meeting at the completion of this project. The testimonies below were written and sent to me upon request. Names have been changed to family relationships to protect anonymity.

#### **Testimony 1**

When asked to be a part of the men's program I wasn't really sure what to expect. Looking back over the past year I definitely don't regret making the commitment. Prior to this group I believe that I was pretty much coasting along in life appearing OK on the outside but fairly stagnant on the inside.

This group has really been the catalyst in my relationship with God. I'm not so sure that I learned anything new over the past year, I think I just needed a good thump over the head to get my butt in gear. I have come to realize my spiritual role as a father and a husband and how important it is to cultivate these relationships. This starts with my own personal relationship with God. How can I lead my family spiritually if I am not leading myself first? At our first meeting together I asked for prayer about devotions and my prayer life. I have come a long way since this time last year. I have probably read more and prayed more over the past year than I have over the past several years combined and it was because of the accountability from Joshua's Men – knowing that there was always a chance during our meetings that I would be asked how I was doing. I haven't arrived by any means in this area of my life as there are many days that I miss reading or spending time in prayer, but God has certainly given me a desire in my heart to be in His Word and praying on a regular basis and it has been something that I look forward to.

Bible reading has been something I have struggled with since I became a Christian and some people may tend to over look it. How am I to grow if I am not being fed by God's Word? How am I to lead my family? How am I to be a deacon who is fulfilling my biblical responsibilities? How am I to be an effective witness at work? How am I to be a Sunday school teacher telling kids how important it is to read their Bibles (I'm not a Sunday school teacher but I was in the past)? The list goes on and on but these are things that I have thought about and relate to my life. It's time to be real and stop pretending and that's what this group has helped me to be. Aside from this, I

think from the beginning of this group I started praying with [my child] before she goes to bed and I have loved it. Now she is the one who often initiates me praying with her. I'm not so sure this would be going on if I hadn't been a part of this group.

## **Testimony 2**

Great group and great men! Thanks for including me.

It's been a fantastic journey for me. I feel like I've grown and have been challenged a lot spiritually during our time together. I have looked forward to every meeting and I really appreciate the fellowship.

I gained a ton from every book we read. A lot of conflicts and confrontations I have had over the past year have ended well. I truly believe our group deserves a good deal of the credit for that.

At the beginning of our meetings we outlined some things we expected from our group. A couple of those things stick out in my mind.

Walk with God: this group has helped me stay on track with that. Although I realize I need to continue to improve in this area.

Transparency: I'm learning the importance of this trait and not just in our group. [My wife] and I have been trying to be honest with each other, family members, co-workers etc... We have found that being open, honest and not holding back or sugar coating our feelings really gets the job done. Of course there is always the need to inject gentleness to balance this.

I say these things with the deepest understanding that I have not arrived and I fall short. That may be the biggest lesson or realization. Every book we've read has gotten under my skin and reminds me of this.

I would just like to conclude by saying "I feel blessed that the Lord has provided me with a group of men to pray with".

I'm looking forward to see what's next for us.

## **Testimony 3**

This year I feel has been marked by steady growth for me personally. I can honestly say that my involvement with the "terrible twelve" has played a significant role in that growth. I felt spiritually pushed by the content covered and the pace at which we covered it. I felt consistently challenged by the men who transparently conveyed their hearts motivations and battles on a monthly basis. It would surely be difficult to say that nothing changed after all the work we accomplished as busy men working hard at life.

One area that has been significant for me is my speech. I have never really been one to talk much and have been at times misunderstood in light of this. I have genuinely been trying since being involved in our group and in the last couple of years to be careful what I say and how I say it. *The Pursuit of Holiness* was a book that definitely brought this back to the forefront for me as I engaged being a Husband, Father, Son, Brother, Business Owner, etc...It is always challenging to me as I look back at a given day and try and find something within that had redeeming value. Sadly it is hard some

days to find those things, and other days it is not. I am no doubt a work in progress but have really been challenged to be a man of purposeful speech (as well as body language).

Another means of challenge and encouragement has come through interaction with such a phenomenal group of guys. I would be willing to meet more and engage even harder in this battle with everyone. The no nonsense rubber meets the road time that we share together is not something that can be found on TV or the internet. These times have given me a window into the lives of men and given me a chance to learn from them and pray for and with them for things that otherwise I would know nothing about. This shoulder to shoulder camaraderie has been another strategic influence throughout the course of our time together.

From here I would like to continue to dig deeper and work harder at work, at home, and at church. To do this while linking arms with 12 solid men of God endeavoring to make a difference together is (for me) not a hard decision to make. I'm in.

Thanks Guys.

#### **Testimony 4**

Our time together has been a real challenge to me. As I had said before I am not one to sit down and pick up book, and real time management is not something that has come into play in my life until this past year. At the start of the men's group I was not sure I was going to be able to read all those books, but I felt this was something God was calling me to be a part of and I am thankful He did.

I have been challenged both mentally and spiritually through the books we have read and the conversations that followed. Specifically, I have been challenged to not take this life for granted, and to not get caught up in this earthly life that is so full of distractions. I have been challenged to not let anyone have a greater spiritual passion for my wife, children, extended family, friends and church. I have been challenged to take up my role as a servant at work, home and church. I want others to see a difference in me and our group has played a big role in bringing that out. I have been challenged to be aware of the mission field I am on each day and I don't want to ever feel like I have missed an opportunity.

With all that being said, I have a long way to go. I still struggle in each of these areas, yet knowing I have a group of men (you guys) behind me is very encouraging. I look forward to whatever lies ahead for us - challenges and all.

#### **Testimony 5**

I was not aware of the biblical weight of the issue of peacemaking until Pastor Jeff began meeting with us and preaching his series on manhood. What really struck me was that peacemaking is what we do and who we are as an expression of the reconciliation we experienced with God because of what Christ accomplished on the cross. I model either peacemaking or warmongering, or at the very least, provocation, in the way that I handle conflict at home. "A soft answer turns away wrath" takes on new meaning here as I look to diffuse my own reactions and those I love. This is an issue my family spent considerable time on these last couple months, and I'm happy to report we've seen the Lord moving in our home helping us to be kind to one another!

Also, my need for “battle buddies,” men who are fighting the same war, who share the same trenches, was reaffirmed over the course of the last year. Loved those messages! I need the constant presence of fellow soldiers in my life to keep me accountable and keep me from secret sin, to keep me working hard and keep me from laziness, to keep me fighting and keep me from retreat, to keep me sharp and alert and keep me from coasting and falling asleep on my watch. Thank you, each of you for being my battle buddy.

## **Testimony 6**

I have been involved in several different groups/organizations, whether professionally, personally or community oriented. None of them have come close to impacting my life or my family's the way this group of men has.

That being said, the greatest way this group and all of you have affected my life is for me to realize that I am not alone with what I struggle with, whether as a Christian man, husband, father or business owner.

There were times previous to the start of this group that I felt alone. I would think I was alone with my struggles. Either in my devotions or honoring my wife or family or whatever the challenge was. Of course I would talk to [my wife] about things and I respect what she offered, but it wasn't from the male perspective.

Interesting enough, we were having a debriefing after our consultant left a few months ago at work. My brother and I were having a pretty serious conversation and something from that really stuck out. Long story short, he was saying how he had no one to talk to about work, etc., including his wife. After I had time to reflect on that conversation I realized just how blessed I was to be a part of this group of guys. A group of guys who weren't afraid to have some pretty serious conversations and let their guard down. Later on that night, before I finished telling [my wife] about that conversation I had with my brother, she also mentioned our group and how great it has been for all of us and how it was obvious my brother was missing something like that.

Don't get me wrong there were several moments and learning experiences that I will remember as part of this group, but, again, realizing that other men struggle with some of the same things I do ranks at the top of my list.

Thanks for a great 4 months, looking forward to the rest of the year...

## **Testimony 7**

When Pastor Jeff first approached me with this idea, I was really excited. I knew at the time--and I still do--that I need something like this group in my life to help keep me focused on what's really important. I have a tendency to drift off on rabbit trails in the walk of life, and too often they are trails that lead nowhere--or worse. So, the opportunity for focused discussion on topics that I know I struggle with, and with men whose thoughts and opinions I respect and trust, sounded very appealing to me. I'm not sure what I really expected to get from the group going in, but I knew that I would get something beneficial, and so I was quick to say yes when I was asked if I wanted to be a part of it. Honestly, I did not know how hard it would be.

It wasn't the reading that was too hard, although I have to confess that there were times that I did not put in my best effort in that regard. It wasn't making it to the

meetings, because even on my busiest days, I knew I wanted to be there. It wasn't the thought of facing the group if I had slipped, or if the discussion topic(s) hit close to home. The hardest work was, and will continue to be, the daily living out of what I know and believe to be true about myself and my life. The reason that is so difficult is because of the truth that God has shown me through this group, and that truth is summed up in a remarkably simple, yet deeply profound reality that I have long manipulated to my personal advantage. The truth is, I am not a perfect \_\_\_\_\_ (man, husband, father, employee, boss, leader, friend, etc.) I know, that's ridiculously simplistic, and I don't mean that it took our time together to reveal that to me. What the group has done for me though, is show me how I have used that truth in the past, and how I need to use it in the future--and they're very different.

In the past, I would often find myself using my imperfection as an excuse-- "Well, nobody's perfect, so it's no big deal if I do (or don't do) \_\_\_\_\_." Kind of a fatalistic view--I can't win, why try. On the other hand, I would use the reality of my shortcomings as another type of avoidance excuse--"God can't use me to do \_\_\_\_\_ because I am not good enough due to \_\_\_\_\_." I avoided a lot of responsibility that way. What I have seen over and over again throughout this year is that God knows I am broken, but He can use me anyway, and He doesn't expect me to be a perfect \_\_\_\_\_ because He knows that by definition, my human attempts will always fall short. What I am in the process of realizing, accepting, and implementing, is that my efforts do not need to be perfect--they just need to be made, and they need to be made in obedience and with the full understanding that it isn't me that will ultimately decide the level of my success in any endeavor. It is God, and only God. Life can be scary at times, and the specter of failure seems to loom large on a daily basis. In the past that looming shadow seemed to be a good reason not to make the attempt. Now, I have found myself recognizing the importance of facing those daily challenges head-on, and worrying less and less about the outcome. Not because I don't care, but because I realize that nothing I do is what dictate the final outcome anyway. God has given me the tools and the skills that He knows I need, and He expects me to use them. It's still difficult, and I still have a lot of work to do, but I am reminded often of 2 Timothy 1:7--"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." It can be scary to consider some of the issues we have dealt with so far--peacemaking, purity, parenting, giving, loving, being resolute, communicating--but I have learned, in a much clearer way than I ever thought I could, that God has asked me to excel in these areas, and He has equipped me to do just that. Part of the equipment He has given me is this group, and I know that if I am to continue growing in the ways I need to grow, this group needs to be a part of my life. I have a long way to go, but I take comfort in the fact that I am not on the journey alone.

## **Testimony 8**

Since we began meeting God has subtly caused my heart to change. Granted, change for me is a very slow process not an event, and I usually resist change. I learned that in order to put off the selfishness and the desire to be right, I needed to put forth an effort to be thoughtful, others focused, and practice silence. I find silence in tense situations most difficult. God has used the books we've read and our discussions to help see myself for who I am and what I need to become--a godly and more intentional dad and husband.

I have also experienced God in a different way. I believe He has allowed me to see Him mighty in what would have looked to most as loss. What was certainly a sad experience, He allowed me to see like never before, His hand in every event of the whole experience after it all unfolded. I saw his awesome work before my very eyes which

helped me lead [my wife] and the kids through sadness and disappointment. I believe God used you men to make me more aware of His sovereign hand in my life due to a better grasp of who I am and what He is.

I am very happy to say that I have had 4 wonderful months with [my wife]. This is no coincidence. God is the reason. He has changed [my wife's] heart too. She has gotten a knack for putting me right in my place without saying a word. Exactly! She gets it. In fact she'll bring me a cold one, ice water of course, after her grumpy husband gets home from work and complains about some frivolous thing. Wow, sometimes I wonder, maybe she got more out of this than I did. Seriously, I believe she saw that subtle change God is working in me that inspired her. I have seen a side of [my wife] I haven't seen in a long, long time. I believe God is slowly peeling away the layers of hurt and bitterness. Now she is able to overlook the small stuff and be a peacemaker in the home.

Last but certainly not least, I enjoyed getting to know everyone. Sharing in each other's concerns, successes and joys during our share time has been a blessing to me. I do apologize for my lightheartedness in what should have been a more serious tone at times and may have been out of line.

Thanks guys.

## **Testimony 9**

Gentlemen, I don't think I need to put on paper for you exactly how this group has affected my life. I said from the very first meeting "I did not want to coast through this", as you very well know from my transparency during the meetings, the timing of this could not have been any better, and I absolutely owe my current relationship with my family and the Lord to this and for you men who have been there to hold me accountable and be "iron" for the sharpening process...thank you.

As I reflect back on the numerous books we read together (which is more than I have ever read), God's word and these books book and the time of my life in which I read them has been life changing, gentlemen....to this point, it has SAVED MY MARRIAGE!! Corporate America and all of its evil desires had pressured me into being a selfish, get to the top at any cost, motivated individual, I truly thought I had it all together; make some money, raise a family and retire, what could be anymore black & white than that, I was completely oblivious to the true feelings of the most important person in my life..[my wife], as the song "Lead Me" goes "she felt all alone", and for years, she was doing my job as the leader of our family, well not anymore!

I have recently had the opportunity to work through a situation with [my son], who is now 14 and is also lured into the things of the world, I find myself approaching conversations and choosing my words in a more alert and compassionate manner than I did a year ago, I may not win this war with him, only God knows the outcome, but at least I'm engaged in the situation and can hopefully share some of my mistakes in life with him and he won't have to learn from the same mistakes I did.

It appears to me, that we have all had plenty of opportunities to put our training into action over the past year with real life hands-on experiences, is it only a coincidence that these issues surfaced, or were they there the whole time and now were simply more aware and willing to get in the game and deal with them as the leader of the family should? It was a pleasure being involved in this with you guys and I appreciate your prayers and support, I look forward to what the future of this endeavor has in store for all of us.

## Testimony 10

This past year has been filled with spiritual challenges. I've been through a few situations which could have caused deep bitterness within my heart and fractured relationships. With the help of God's word, I'm on the tail end of working my way through these tough heart struggles. However, I can't say that I'm completely over them, but God has been working with me to show me their insignificance compared to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. One situation I'm speaking of involves going through the process of forgiving another Christian who had insulted me. In my heart and mind I'm to the point where I can look at this person without wanting to walk the other way, but I still have very little respect for them. This is leaps and bounds better than I had been, but still not where I need to be.

In many ways I feel like the past year of my life has been my weakest or at least seen the least amount of growth spiritually since becoming a Christian. This has very little to do with what we're trying to do together. I attribute it more toward the lack of a steady diet of evangelism and absence of theological stimulation. Our group has been great. I have enjoyed and have been challenged by most of the books. The fellowship has been encouraging too, but I feel we haven't met often enough to make a suitable impact.

It would be nice, looking forward, to have more of a Bible study during our time together as well. Many of the times we have met I've felt like the better part of our meeting had to do with us sharing just how much most of us (myself included) had messed-up in the prior month. By the time each of us had shared there was very little time left to discuss the books or God's word. The discussions are what I personally enjoyed most about the group. I'm not downplaying the necessity of praying for each other I just thought the time got away from us during the sharing segment of our meetings.

Looking forward, I think we need to meet more often, open our Bibles more, and email our prayer requests out to each other.

## Testimony 10

"Good enough" is not enough. That sums up pretty well the past four months. Being in the group has revealed a blind spot in my life that I think would have, and if kept unchecked still could, cause devastation in my marriage, family, and ministry. The blind spot is an area of pride in thinking that I'm good enough. I would say to myself, "I'm a pretty good husband, and I know guys who are worse than I am." I would also think to myself how the arguments, disagreements, unkind banter with [my wife] weren't my fault. I would shift the blame and make her responsible for even the words that I spoke.

So these four months helped reveal that blind spot in my life. God used you guys to show that it isn't about just being good enough. He used the books and the interaction with His Word to show that I need to be transformed in the way that I think, speak, and act. I still struggle at being a peacemaker at home, but me being a peacemaker in my home had never crossed my mind until Pastor Jeff's challenge. I may need to do it at my job, or in the church setting, but I thought at home is where I could "get away" without it. What needs to happen is that I need to be quick to forgive and quick to move towards restoration. I need to lead my family in how I seek restoration because in doing so I am modeling Jesus. Yet, my pride still gets in the way. When I don't want to seek restoration, and when I don't want to be the first one, it is because I feel as though I have

been the one wronged, and therefore I shouldn't have to move first. What I hypocritical way for me to act! While I still have work to do with being a peacemaker, being involved in the group and has challenged me to not wallow in the mud of anger, but to step up and lead my wife and family as I strive to make peace and be a peacemaker

My tongue and my words have a long way to go. Sometimes I feel like if I just didn't say anything I would be better off. While I know that that isn't the right course of action, I have been mindful (but not always using my, oh so great depth of wisdom) of how I say something and the impact that it has on both [my wife] and [children]. My words reveal what's in my heart and that is a sobering thing. I need to be constantly mindful and seeking to use my words in a redemptive manner.

Sometimes I feel like I'm good enough. Other times I feel like a failure. I need a group of men in my life that both help shrink my head so I can fit through the door, point out blind spots, and also encourage me on this every day by day journey of faith. I am in for whatever's next because I need it. My family needs it. Thanks guys!

## APPENDIX 7

### TESTIMONIES FROM PARTICIPANTS' WIVES

Participants' wives were asked to write a short testimony in response to the following question, "How have you seen your husband grow as the spiritual leader of your home since being involved in the men's program?" Wives were instructed to share their testimony with the author and give it to their husbands in the form of a letter after the fourth men's group meeting at the completion of this project. The testimonies below were written and sent to me upon request. Names have been changed to family relationships to protect anonymity.

#### **Testimony 1**

I'm very thankful for the opportunity that [my husband] has had in participating in Joshua's Men. I appreciate his dedication and commitment to it despite the "busyness" of life right now. It has been great to see how God has been working and growing him in his leadership role at home, as well as at church. He's been relying on God more when times have been trying and when things have been tough with the business. I've seen how he's been increasingly reliant on God in situations where he would have been overcome by stress in the past.

I've noticed an improvement in his patience with the boys in those trying times, as well as patience with me in my less than lovable times. His responses to me have been more gracious in times where I have been disrespectful.

I've also noticed an increased effort on his part to be more "active" at home after a long day at work. This is probably what has stuck out to me the most, and also what I appreciate the most. When he gets home after a very long and physically and mentally straining day, I've noticed his effort to not "check-out". I'd have to commend him on jumping right into the game at home, when the house is a mess, dinner is not ready, and the boys are loud and chaotic. And whiney. And naughty. He's also really stepped up to the plate on discipline, despite the fact that he's been drained.

I've been humbled by seeing his growth in character over the past year and I'm "proud" of the fact that he has decided to continue on in the men's program, and he's embracing that challenge.

## Testimony 2

I would like to take a moment to thank Pastor Jeff for his role in leading the group of men. It has proved to be a blessing in our relationship and in our efforts to train up our children in the way they should go. [My Husband] has grown in several ways from this experience, and I was excited to hear that this group will continue to meet and encourage each other in their roles as spiritual leaders in their home, church and community. I know from experience that “lasting” change is done over a period of time, with the help of the Holy Spirit and by having a teachable, flexible and humble heart. The first thing that I noticed was that [my husband] was committed to reading the material in a timely manner. I would often wake on a Saturday morning to find him reading his book of the month, while the rest of us were still sleeping. He was never one to pick up a book for recreational purposes, and it was very encouraging to see him filling his mind with godly material, rather than the worthless junk on the television. I love to witness him reading his devotionals at the breakfast table and always taking time before he eats to meditate in prayer. I am thankful that he does this in front of our children, praying that someday our children will follow in his steps and recognizing their need to start everyday with Him.

The biggest change for us and probably the saving grace of our marriage was his commitment to me during the assignment of the marriage book. We have had some rocky times in our marriage, especially since [my husband's] salvation. I think I had this preconception, that we would experience wedded bliss after his conversion, but soon realized that Satan had all the more desire to see us fail. We knew that because we were saved, we needed to stay together...and we both felt like we were “stuck” in our marriage, wanting out...but knowing that we were accountable to God. We needed to recognize the pride in our hearts and learn how to humble ourselves, in order to make the necessary changes for the good of our relationship, and to find that “love” for each other again. At the beginning of the book, one of the challenges was to ask me a few things that I’m irritated by or make me uncomfortable. It was a chance to open up in a non-threatening way to some of the feelings I had regarding our relationship struggles and it gave me the opportunity for me to voice my desire that we begin praying together. I felt as if God had to put us through some rough spots numerous times for us to finally figure out that we can’t rise above our selfishness, pride and hurtful words and actions without His help...showing us that we needed to ask His blessing on our marriage. We had been used to praying with the kids during devotional time, but to intimately pray for one another and our relationship, brought us to a new level of commitment and understanding. Certainly there are times when we don’t feel like praying, or sometimes we can’t find the words to speak...but we have been faithful to do it anyways and God has been faithful in pulling us out of a crazy cycle before it spins out of control. I am humbled by [my husband's] willingness to look past my irritable moods and love me through them, as that has always been an irritant to me. A woman wants to know she’s loved unconditionally. I am still working on my irritable mood swings, and love when [my husband] prays me through them. Words have never been my positive attribute, and I’m praying that I would learn to build my husband up, and encourage him on his journey, and in his role as husband and father. I am most humbled when he takes the initiative to spiritually lead our family, and consistently takes the time to defend me, holding the kids accountable. Prior to this, I had almost felt like he used to ignore the disrespect I receive from time to time from our children. When [my husband] and I are united we are more able to fight the fiery darts of the evil one, and [my husband] takes more initiative to explain to the kids the consequences of their choices and behavior. I do realize that we have not arrived, and that there will be many days when we might feel defeated, but I am confident that if we continue to seek God in our relationship and seek His wisdom and counsel, we will not only succeed in our marriage and parenting, but we will succeed in giving Christ the honor and glory He deserves. In closing, I would like to

reiterate my thankfulness for the men's program, and for the role that each man has played in encouraging, edifying and helping to build each other up and keep each other accountable. I am praying it is as much a blessing to all of them as it is to the women and children who love them and look to them to lead us.

### **Testimony 3 (Report Card Style)**

*Godly Friendships: A+*. It was very evident that there was significant growth in this area.

*Encouragement: A*. The men's group had a huge impact. Opened eyes to how much God has blessed our marriage as well as, the support of knowing other men go through similar struggles/situations.

*Spending Time in Prayer: A-*. There were improvements along the way, personally and in marriage. Ups and downs did occur. Still looking for a consistent routine (because we want to seek God, not to check it off the good night list) in our marriage, but I know you have had some growth personally with prayer that I haven't been fully exposed too.

*Spending Time Reading God's Word: B*. Noticed more time in the Bible, but not necessarily a hunger for it. Something we both need to work on, but it is necessary for the survival of our marriage, parenting, and life.

*Spending Time Reading Godly Books: A+*. Most definitely read 100% more books this year than normal! It was encouraging to see when the books you connected with impacted you and made you think. Please beware of a critical spirit when you think something is boring, inapplicable, or too basic.

*Communication: A*. Even though there could be 18 subcategories of this, I will keep it broad. Throughout the year we had good communication most of the time. Currently, it is a bit stifled, due to stress and busy schedules.

*Openness with Your Wife: A*. Ground was made in this area, both with you sharing and me asking/you answering. I have appreciated when we "connect" and I don't always have to pry it out of you. As I am sitting here, trying not to cry, which I know has been par for the course these past few weeks (see end comments on communication + add in pregnancy) I realize more and more how important this is to me. It is not that I seek security in it, but it allows my mind to rest. I don't have to make things up or wonder about what you think about X or why this is Y.

*Work: A+*. This year, like all years has had blessings and curses. There has been a noted improvement as a boss/business owner. It is appreciative to all to know that you do care about the work being done and the people doing it. It is neat to see God teaching you (weekly) in this area. Continue to want to thrive for His glory.

*Additional Comments:* I am very thankful that you have been able to be a part of a group of men like this. I know that it is a great tool that God is using in your life. I am also thankful that you want to be a part of it and that you do desire to grow. Nothing could mean more to me as your wife and as our children's mother. This past year has forced you to be more aware of yourself, especially on a spiritual level due to the accountability. I know that God has used that and I pray that He will continually humble you to become a man who loves Him, seeks Him and wants to please Him. Through this year, I have also learned things about our marriage and how I need to approach things

differently as well. I am thankful that God has paired us in a marriage where we both are pursuing God. Thank you for being the same at home, at work, and at church. I know that as [our child] continues to grow you will continue to step up to the plate to lead him, correct him, and come along side of him. Not trying to put too much pressure on you, but we do need you to be strong. To lead. To love. To help. To serve. To give of your time. And so much more. I am thankful that God has equipped you with a can do, will do attitude and that you are looking to Him for life. You are a diligent worker for us and more than sufficient provider. I am so thankful that you care about doing your best. This coming year, I hope that we work at carving out more time to “catch the little foxes” in our marriage and point each other to Christ instead of point fingers at each other. I hope and am trusting God that we will continue to work on and balance our financial opinions and way of life. I hope we aim at knowing more of God’s Word and truly living by it. I hope that we seek to truly worship God at church. I hope that we enjoy building our house and our home environment in the Lord. And I am also hoping that you will feed and water the dogs in the morning and take out the trash without me asking! :) love you.

#### **Testimony 4**

[My husband] was definitely eager to step up and take on the challenge of this men's program. I know there were times when I may have given him a hard time about leaving us for the night, but I know how much he looked forward to meeting with the guys each month and having that accountability. I had been hoping for a long time that he would step it up as the Godly leader of our home, and this is exactly the encouragement that he needed. It has been a great example for me (and the kids) to see him sitting in the recliner every day reading the Bible. Those are the kinds of things that are going to stick out in [our children's] minds as they remember their Daddy’s influence in their life. He also began initiating prayer time with [our child], if he isn’t there to pray with [our child] at bedtime, [our child] is quick to remind me that Daddy wants us to pray with them before bed. He also began initiating prayer time with me before bed also. Unfortunately, I am usually too tired to be as engaged in that as he wants me to be. He has always been a very, calm and laid back guy, not easily angered when I get in a nasty mood. But, he has definitely been more patient with me and quick to forgive. When he is in the wrong, he has also been quick to apologize. His example of a Godly husband and daddy and the steps he has taken towards that has been much more inspiring and shown me that he loves God and his family very much, or he wouldn’t be doing it.

#### **Testimony 5**

[My husband] had always been a good husband and a loving father. He has always been a hard worker and had the desire to lead his family well. What I have seen from him as he has been a part of the group is the ability to see where he needs to lead better. He has always had desired to lead. I feel like this group has helped him really target the areas that he needed to change to be a better leader. It gave him focus, direction, accountability, and support to be a better leader in his home.

He has also changed in the way he leads. I see him setting an example for me to follow. The way he handles situation and the words he chooses to use. I will be the first to admit that I struggle with responding to situations correctly. I am working on it, but watching him set the example and coming along side of me has really helped me to think about my response instead of just responding. What we say has an impact and we have to answer to God for our words. I have really seen him take ownership of his words. If he says something hurtful to me in an argument it’s not just an “I’m sorry” but it’s an ownership for what exactly was said and how he was wrong to say that and he asks for

my forgiveness. This has challenged me as well to take ownership of my words too and to forgive him.

I have also noticed him trying to let go or get over an argument faster and not hold on to the anger or hurt he is feeling. Once an argument is resolved, it is over in my mind and we move on. Being a guy, [my husband] usually needs to process what happened. His processing can carry into the following day at times. When he holds onto our argument, the forgiveness or apology that I offered feels rejected. This causes the tension between us to rise again and most often leads to another argument. I have seen him try to process and move on. He still needs to process, but he is trying to let it go at the same time.

I have also noticed how he is really trying to be more loving. He loves me I know that and never doubted his love. I feel like he has been working has at 1 Corinthians 13. He leaves me notes around the house before he goes to work that tells me what I mean to him or that I am a wonderful mom. He brings me home small cartons of raspberries every now and again because he knows they are my favorite. He has patience with me when I can't find anything to wear. He puts me above himself and would rather go without than see [our child] or I go without. He holds me when I need to cry for no good reason and doesn't tell me I need to toughen up. He offers endless encouragement even when I can't seem to get it through my heard that it will be ok. I know these may seem simple, but it is the purposeful thought, self control, and patience that he puts into it that makes it mean so much.

I feel like the men's group has been a blessing to our marriage and family, and has helped us both grow in our walk with Christ.

## **Testimony 6**

Let me begin by just expressing my appreciation to you for taking the initiative to start this program. I know it truly has been a blessing to [my husband], as well as a blessing to me, even though I must admit there were times that selfishly I just wanted him to be able to come home after work and be with the kids and me. My selfish nature was always quickly pushed aside as I would welcome home my often tired but re-energized husband after one of your group meetings.

[My husband] and I often refer to the group meetings as “group,” intimating that it's some sort of group therapy. Although we joke about it, the meetings do provide a certain support network for the men of our church. [My husband] is a rather private person, and up until this group was formed, did not have a circle of male friends, much less Christian ones, that he could talk to, confide in, or share struggles (and laughs) with. Over the course of this year I have seen him develop relationships with people that he would not necessarily have done so with had this group not formed. He is not one to seek out others. Part of that is a function of his personality, and part of it is due to the demands of his job. He has always said that there is no one in the world he'd rather spend time with than me. And while I think that is sweet and romantic, I know that I can't fulfill all of his needs. He needs men in his life that he can talk to... and maybe even shoot things with. I can't fully comprehend the pressures and personal struggles that he faces on a daily basis, and I know he doesn't always want to share those things with me, for a variety of reasons. I know that he appreciates the honesty and transparency of the men in this group. He has come to realize that he's not the only man who feels inadequate in different areas of his life, and that everyone has his own personal issues, even though he may appear to have it all together on the outside.

[My husband] has always been an amazing husband and father. We are fortunate that we have never had serious issues in our marriage. I know many people don't necessarily believe this, but we don't fight...never have. That doesn't mean we have never had to work out issues, but we have never resorted to yelling and other destructive behaviors. For that I am eternally grateful, because I saw enough of that while I was growing up. Matt is the most patient, loving man I know, and I cannot tell you how appreciative I am for his ability to just listen, although sometimes I do wish he would talk more. I suppose he may not talk as much as I'd like because he is very careful with his words, which is something I really admire. I know I am more likely to speak before really thinking things through because I am more emotional, but [my husband] is much more deliberate in his speech. When he speaks, he speaks with wisdom. This is very evident in the way he handles discipline with our children, with [our child] in particular.

I could sing [my husband's] praises forever, but I need to get to the changes that I've seen in him over the course of the last year. I'm not going to say that I have seen drastic changes in him, but as you have pointed out, "God grows people like he grows trees – Lots of time and exposure to the SON!" As far as I'm concerned he doesn't need to make drastic changes to be a better husband and father. I just hope we can raise our boys to treat their wives like [my husband] treats me.

One of the biggest changes I have noticed was spiritual in nature. He wants to grow. We have never been devoted to praying regularly as a couple or to doing devotions together. We're just private people. But, I have seen growth in that area. [My husband] has been faithful to read to me before bed every single night since September, even on a couple of occasions when he was away at a conference and I was out of state visiting my step-mother. Time was still set aside for our Bible reading, but it was simply done over the phone. I have probably never told him this, but I really enjoyed those phone calls and his commitment to our goal. In addition to that we have done more praying together, although this is an area we still need to work on. And then there came the time this year when [my husband] received a nomination to consider becoming a deacon. I must admit that I was a bit concerned about this. I could not imagine him taking on another commitment, but I never interfered with his decision-making process. That was between [my husband] and God. I just needed to be ready to support whatever decision he made. When he made the decision to accept, he told me that he needed to be challenged to do more spiritually, and becoming a deacon would give him that opportunity. I am still concerned about him being stretched too thin, but I know he will be used of God in great ways, and God will provide the grace and endurance that we all need to accomplish His work. I am so proud of the man he is and the man he is trying to become!

We have not arrived as individuals, a couple, or as a family, but it is our desire to work toward honoring God in our daily lives. Groups like this certainly help to encourage our church's men to continue to keep working toward that goal. It's easy to give up when you think you're all alone in your struggles. The men's group reminds the men that they're not alone, and it helps them to pick one another up and bear one another's burdens. Thank you again, Pastor Jeff, for your devotion to this ministry! I really hope that it continues in some shape or form.

### **Testimony 7**

[My husband] is so excited to be a part of the men's program. It has given [my husband] the opportunity to talk and pray with Christian men and to grow and walk with god.

[My husband] has grown spiritually, which is transparent and is noticed by non-believers in false traditions. [My husband] has also been given the right tools to become a leader in our home and work as well.

[My husband] has used the wealth of information from the group and the books and has applied it to becoming a better leader in our home. There is solid ground in our lives now which is based on biblical truth.

[My husband] has become teachable, growable, humble, and disciplined. He has become patient with me and our children, he is able to talk through confrontations giving us reason to trust him with the best decision.

I thank [my husband] for wanting and willing to be part of the men's group and for opening himself up to become a better disciple and a better leader. I am so blessed that [my husband] is a part of the group.

### **Testimony 8**

I've had so many thoughts run through my head since you've asked us to write about the changes we've seen in our husbands, that it's hard to put them down on paper. This group was started at a perfect time. It specifically met a prayer request of mine for [my husband]. Last spring around this time, it seemed as though [my husband] was in a spiritual rut. I could see his need for a spiritual charge and this group proved to be what he needed. I still remember the first night he came home from a meeting. He was excited to start this new endeavor. I saw him dig into the reading and taking it seriously. He even shared with me what he was reading and his opinions. It was nice to have a conversation in the evenings that were spiritually driven! I felt closer with him and respected him as a leader of our home. I liked that he was taking initiative with the class and continued to be dedicated to all the reading throughout the year.

I also recognized the group as a "safe place" for [my husband] to share his concerns, stresses, and prayer requests with other Christian men. I think the meetings every month made [my husband] see he shares the same trials as other fathers and husbands and the importance in praying for and supporting one another.

I have to admit I will never fully understand the stresses [my husband] feels as being the single financial provider of our family; the stress of working with family; being a father/ role model for two little boys who adore him.

APPENDIX 8  
PROJECT CALENDAR

◀ July	August 2015						September ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
						1	
2	3 Invitations and SLI mailed to participants	4	5	6	7	8	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
16 Participants RSVP by this date	17 Follow- up/reminde r letter mailed	18	19	20	21	22	
23 WEEK 1 Lesson Prep	24	25	26	27	28	29	
30 WEEK 2 Lesson Prep	31	<b>Notes:</b>					

◀ August	September 2015						October ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
		1	2 Meet with men's group leader	3	4 1 <sup>st</sup> men's small group meeting. 6-9:30 PM	5	
6 WEEK 3 Lesson 1: Genesis 1 Directive	7	8	9	10	11	12	
13 WEEK 4 Lesson 2: Deut 6 Directive	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20 WEEK 5 Lesson 3: Josh 24 Directive	21	22	23	24	25	26	
27 WEEK 6 Lesson 4: 1 Cor 16 Directive	28	29	30 Meet with men's group leader	Notes:			

◀ September	October 2015					November ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 2 <sup>nd</sup> men's small group meeting 6-9:30 PM	3
4 WEEK 7 Lesson 5: Eph 5 Directive	5	6	7	8	9	10
11 WEEK 8 Lesson 6: Eph 6 Directive	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 WEEK 9 Lesson 7: Ps 128 Directive	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 WEEK 10 Lesson 8: Leading the Heart	26	27	28	29	30	31

◀ October	November 2015						December ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
<b>1</b> WEEK 11 Lesson 9: Spiritual Warfare in the home part 1	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Meet with men's group leader	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> men's small group meeting 6-9:30 PM	<b>7</b>	
<b>8</b> WEEK 12 Lesson 10: Spiritual Warfare in the home part 2	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	
<b>15</b> WEEK 13 Lesson 11: Battle Buddies part 1	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	
<b>22</b> WEEK 14 Lesson 12: Battle Buddies part 2	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	
<b>29</b> WEEK 15 Lesson 13: Conflict Resolution in the Home  Participants complete post-SLI	<b>30</b>	<b>Notes:</b>					

◀ November	December 2015					January ▶
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Meet with men's group leader	3	4 4 <sup>th</sup> men's small group meeting 6-9:30 PM	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	Notes:	

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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING THE MARRIED MEN OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH, BATAVIA, NEW YORK, TO BE SPIRITUAL LEADERS IN THEIR HOMES

Jeffrey Ryan Bartz, D.Min.  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Stuart W. Scott

This project sought to equip married men at Grace Baptist Church in Batavia, New York, to lead their homes spiritually. Chapter 1 introduces the project by detailing the purpose, goals, rationale, definitions, limitations/delimitations, and research methodology for the project. This chapter also includes the ministry context, history, and community demographic for Grace Baptist Church, Batavia, New York. Chapter 2 presents the underlying theology in support of male headship and the biblical directives for men as heads of their homes. Chapter 3 addresses the practical considerations of and approaches to male spiritual leadership in the home. Chapter 4 explains how the project was implemented in the local church context including training provided to leaders, research instruments for measuring success, and a description of the activities undertaken during the fifteen-week project period. Chapter 5 contains an overall evaluation and analysis of the project along with theological and personal reflections.

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