

However, every righteous man who is a head of household still fulfils a prophetic responsibility as he speaks to his family on behalf of God. Most of us are familiar with a "family altar," in which Scripture is read and taught as a spiritual refreshment for the family.

This teaching responsibility of God's truth is to be done diligently (Deut. 6:7-9), at home, away from home, and on every auspicious occasion. A father is helped in this responsibility as he insists that his family is a regular and faithful part of a separated, local New Testament church which teaches the Bible and honors Christ. However, the church does not supplant the father's prophetic responsibility.

This teaching is to be done particularly (Deut. 6:20-25), teaching his family what God means by His commands, and applying them to their lives: "for our good" (for a quality of life), and to "preserve us alive" (for a length of life). An alert father can take advantage of a child's natural curiosity. The child of Godly parents will quickly note his family is "different" from most of this world, and the father can explain why (Deut. 6:20-21). If a father does not answer this innate curiosity, the world and Satan will convince the child his family is bizarre and out of touch.

This prophetic responsibility includes training (Prov. 22:16). The word "train" may include the concept of dedication as well as education. Questions and answers (catechizing the child) will give him very early what he can assimilate, providing a thirst for God's truth. Such truth is learned "here a little, there a little," "line upon line, precept upon precept."

Training takes place whether we plan it or not through design or default. If every Friday night is wife-beating night, one should not be surprised to see a son in this home growing up to abuse his own wife. If a father has a "religion of convenience" (attending church or obeying God only when it is convenient for him), he should not be surprised if his son becomes carnal, worldly and similarly led by his lower nature.

God's man takes his prophetic responsibility seriously and nurtures his children (Eph. 6:4) through the rod and reproof. "Admonition" is teaching, confronting and exhorting with words, whereas "nurture" is the discipline of chastening (corporal correction). Obviously, as the child is young, chastening will predominate. As the child grows and matures, and learns self-control by means of Godly chastening, then most of the training will be through admonition.

Training a child can be compared to caring for a garden. A child's heart is full of "weeds" (self-will, rebellion, self-centeredness, etc.). These "weeds" must be pulled, controlled and restrained before fruitfulness can be achieved. It will help every parent in his training to realize his child will grow up responding to God largely as he has responded to the parent (apart from supernatural intervention of the grace of God).

Sadly, many fathers have abdicated their prophetic responsibility, and at worst, have let their children grow like weeds, or at best, have turned their responsibility over to others: day school, youth workers and church. Although every child can choose to become a God-fearing, obedient believer despite having a

carnal, worldly father (Ezek. 18:14-17), most will be a carbon copy of their father, with even less desire to serve God than manifested by their parent.

God's Priest God's man is also a priest. A priest was appointed by God to intercede with God on behalf of men (Heb. 6:20). Every husband and father is appointed to deal with God on behalf of his family.

A man is the God-ordained head of his family as Christ is the head of the church. God operates His world on the basis of a chain of command. Note the power of blessing from the patriarch Isaac to his sons, Jacob and Esau. They rightly sought Isaac's blessing because he functioned as the priest of the family.

A father's prayers apparently sanctify and cleanse (Job 1:5). Job continually sought God in sacrifice and prayer on behalf of his family, being keenly aware of his priestly responsibility, and of his children's desperate need for his prayers.

A wise father will prepare his family for worship. Jacob had to do this in Genesis 35:1-5 because his family was not attuned to their spiritual needs. He took the leadership and required their sanctified participation.

A father's prayers seem to be of great importance for his family. In Matthew 17:15, a lunatic son was earnestly prayed for by others, but was only delivered when the father came to Christ on his behalf. Of about a half dozen requests for children in the New Testament, five were by men. This begs the question of each of us as heads of households; how are we praying for our family? A faithful priest

intercedes for those under his care/control; having concern, care and compassion for them. I personally found it helpful when all my children were small to lay my hand on their heads at bed time, and pray for the specific needs of each child.

God's King God's kind of husband/father is also a king (completing the trilogy of responsibilities). Old Testament Israel was theocratic, and yet God raised up kings (Saul, and then Davidic kings) to lovingly and wisely rule for God.

Every institution, group or organization has a head. Just as Christ is the head of the church, a man is to be the head of his home (1 Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:23-24). This does not imply an inferiority of wives, but rather is God's ordained order. No man deserves headship because of impeccability, innate intelligence or superior wisdom; rather it is simply God's order. A wife may well be more highly educated, more gifted and more articulate than her husband, but he is still to be the head of their home ("He shall rule over thee" Gen. 3:16).

For a body to have more than one head would be a freakish anomaly in nature. Similarly, for a marriage and home to have more than one head, or the wrong head, would be blatantly contrary to God's design. Because God has ordained imperfect and self-centered men to be "king" in their home, men can be assured of enabling grace to overcome their fallen nature and to be a God-pleasing, servant-ruler. Were God to call men to headship without giving them grace to succeed, He would be a capricious tyrant.

A servant-ruler lovingly meets the needs of those under his care, whereas a man who perverts his God-given headship responsibilities will neglect and abuse his family. It is helpful for us as men to remember our Lord fulfilled the role of a suffering servant though He was God's King. He did not treat us as would a Marine Corps Drill Sergeant. He gave of Himself for those under His care, He did not take them for granted or exploit them for His own selfish interests.

A real "man" is not the modern image of a virile, athletic Nimrod, with a muscular, sculpted body. A statuesque physique, and "machismo" have nothing to do with being God's king. God's servant/ruler has purposed in his heart to be God's kind of person, and has thrust himself purposefully on the altar of humility and servanthood so as to lead his home, protect its members, meet their needs and provide moral, Godly leadership. This can be done by a sickly man who only weighs 100 pounds, but who is filled with and led by the Holy Spirit.

Dear Brother, you are not here just to be a squatter on God's property, or to live for self. As every other husband/father, you are called to the threefold office of being God's prophet, priest and king. As such, my first priority cannot be my career, favorite activity, hobby or friends, but rather my relationship with my God and the family over which He has placed me.

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PROPHET, PRIEST AND KING

In several ways, a believing man is to the Christian home as Christ is to the church. For example, he is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). This passage further indicates a man is to give his life if necessary for his wife, just as Christ died for the church. Certainly, if he is to be a sensitive, caring husband, he must learn to die to himself in order to fully meet the needs of those under his care. A man is to see to it his wife is spiritually cleansed and set apart (Eph. 5:26-28). Surely this indicates a man is to be the protector of his family against evil influences, and assure them of regular Godly teaching and edification. The church is a Biblical "mystery," symbolized by a Christian marriage. A believing husband and wife have a relationship illustrating Christ's relationship with His bride, the church.

God's Prophet In antiquity, Moses spoke to Israel about a prophet like himself that would arise, to whom they should listen (Deut. 18:15). A prophet is a human being instructed, illuminated and inspired of God, who spoke the truth of God to men. God continued to use His prophets before, during and after the exile, and even to a limited extent, in the New Testament era before the compilation of the new Testament written Scriptures. The apostles and prophets formed the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20), leaving the present New Testament functioning offices of evangelists and pastor/teachers (Eph. 4:11).