

Mark A McGee

Mothers, Daughters, Fathers, Sons

By

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Mothers and Daughters

Mothers and daughters have a special relationship unlike any other relationship on earth. Daughters look to their mothers to learn how to be women and mothers. Mothers look to their daughters to share with them the joy of being a woman of God - and they also get to remember what it was like to be a daughter themselves.

To understand what it means to be a woman, we must see why and how God made her.

Genesis 1:27 teaches that God "created" man in His own image - "in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." The word "created" is the Hebrew word *bara*. It means "initiating something new." God did a new thing when He Created humans. Male and female was not new because God had already Created animals, but the human being was a new thing in the universe. This "new thing" would be Created in the "image" of God.

Genesis 2 tells us more about the purpose God had when He created man and the woman. When God Created the man, He "formed" him out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living being. Make a note of that fact - the man's connection to the earth. The word "formed" is the Hebrew *yasar*. The idea is of fashioning something - giving something its form. When God Created the

woman, He took a rib from man's side and "made" a woman. The rib would have had flesh, bone and blood attached to it - with the life God had already breathed into the man. Make a note of that fact - the woman's connection to the man. The Hebrew word for "made" is *banah* and translates as "built." God "formed/fashioned" the man and "built" the woman.

Adam immediately knew the purpose of God's Creation of the woman - "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of man." Again, notice the physical connection woman has with man. Woman received her life from the man and would give life to new human beings.

We learn from the first chapter of Genesis that it was God's plan the man and woman would rule and reign together in God's "likeness" and each would have a special role in having dominion "over all the earth" and everything in it. They would do four basic things together:

1. Be fruitful (*parah* - "bear fruit, bear young")
2. Multiply (*rabah* - "to become much or many, to increase")
3. Fill the earth (*male* - "be abundant and overflowing, to fill as anything does a vacant space with its own bulk or abundance")
4. Subdue it (*radah* - "to bring into subjection")

Be fruitful - a baby girl has about seven million eggs in her

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ovaries when she's about 20-weeks old in her mother's womb and is born with about a million eggs. By the time she is a teenager, she will still have hundreds of thousands of eggs that she will carry with her into adulthood. Teenage boys and adult men produce millions of sperm every day and will continue to do that throughout their lives. Why did God make men and women so fruitful? Remember God's original design - He Created man and woman as immortals. They would never die and never grow old. They would be able to have children forever. An immortal couple may have been able to produce millions of children. That's fruitful!

Multiply - each immortal couple could be parents to hundreds of thousands or even millions of children and each of their children could marry and be a parent to hundreds of thousands or millions of children who could also marry and have hundreds of thousands or millions of children. That's multiplication on a huge scale! The people population would quickly grow into the millions, billions and tens and hundreds of billions within several generations of the first man and woman.

Fill the earth - a population of billions and tens of billions and hundreds of billions of human beings would soon move across the face of the earth and fill it.

Subdue it - a population of billions of humans across the face of the earth would bring everything into subjection. The word "subjection" carries the idea of mastering it. God Created

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humans to master the earth - know it, understand it, rule it.

God first Creates space - then fills it. He Created man and woman to fill the earth with children, who would marry and have children, who would marry and have children, who would marry and have children, etc. It wouldn't be long before they would "fill" and "rule" the earth. They would do it according to God's process - formation followed by building.

The formation of a child begins when the father's seed attaches to the woman's seed and gives it "form". People often say to children - "you look so much like your father." That's because children are "formed" by their fathers. Mother's are thinking - "well, I'm the one who carried him/her for nine months!" That's right! God "built" the woman so she could "build" the child. The building of children begins in the mother's womb and continues through birth, growth through receiving mother's milk, then mother's guidance and counsel, until the child eventually becomes mature and can form or build children of their own. Through that amazing process of formation and building, the human race would multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.

Everything God does is for the purpose of "revealing" Himself to His Creation. Look at the heavens and the earth - God reveals Himself. Look at the birds in the air, the fish in the sea, and the animals on land - God reveals Himself. Look at man and woman - God reveals Himself. We would not have a full

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revelation of God without male and female. Both are necessary to knowing God. Man and woman came together as husband and wife and became "one flesh" - ehad baser - the completion of God's Revelation and Purpose.

But something interfered with God's plan for the human race - deception and disobedience entered the picture. How God dealt with that is important for us to understand, because it impacts our relationship in the family and in the Church.

Remember the man's connection to the ground? God Created him from the dust of the earth. Here's how men are impacted - "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:17-19) God gave man the responsibility of tending and guarding the garden. Because of his failure, working the land would become painful and difficult.

Remember the woman's connection to the man? God Created her from the man. Here's how women are impacted - "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." (Genesis 3:16) The Hebrew for "sorrow" means "trouble" and the word

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"conception" means "pregnancy. To "bring forth children" means to "bring up children." The woman would raise her children in "sorrow, pain, toil." The picture God painted for the woman was a difficult one. The very thing she was "built" to do was going to bring her great pain and sorrow. The Hebrew words carry the idea of "grief." Mothers often feel a grief with their children that men cannot understand.

God's Creative purpose for the human race has not changed, but how men and women carry out their edict to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it has changed. Pain, sorrow, grief and death entered into the human experience.

Another thing that changed is the relationship a woman would have with her husband. "Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." The Hebrew word translated "desire" (tuqsah) means "a longing and affection drawn out toward a superior." The word "rule" (masal) means "to have dominion over, govern, control, in charge." That was the new reality for the woman. God temporarily removed co-rulership with the man from the woman, but He will give it back to her when she is immortal again at the resurrection. In this life, God has given women a "desire" for their husband. God has given men a protective "love" for their wife. When a man loves his wife as Christ Loves the Church and gave Himself for it, the woman receives the "desire" of her heart. When a woman submits to her husband as the Church is to love Christ, the man receives the "desire" of his heart. God meets the needs of

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the woman and the man through their relationship with God
and each other.

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Mothers and Daughters Today

Given the background we have into the Creation of man and woman from Genesis - what does it mean for mothers and daughters today? God gives us insight through the Apostle Paul.

First, the role of a girl is to obey her mother. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'" (Ephesians 6:1-3) "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." (Colossians 3:20) Children are under the subjection of both parents. Mothers deserve obedience just as fathers do. This obedience is to be in "all things." Children become what God has planned for them as they obey and learn from their parents.

King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 1 that children would be successful as they heard the "instruction" of their fathers and did not forsake the "law" of their mothers. The Hebrew word used here for "instruction" is *musar* and means "discipline, correction." The Hebrew word used here for "law" is *torah* and means "teachings, regulations." It's the same word used for the Five Books of Moses - the Pentateuch. Fathers discipline and correct children, while mothers teach and regulate. When children obey both parents they will be well-rounded in their personality and knowledge.

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Second, the role of a young woman with her husband.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."

Colossians 3:18

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." Ephesians 5:22-24

The reason God wants Christian wives to submit (hupotassesthe) themselves to their own husbands is because of the special protection God promises a woman who does that. Deception and disobedience changed men and women physically and spiritually and it places them in a dangerous position with the enemy. Marriages and families are destroyed every day because of deception and disobedience. God tells husbands and wives how they can be successful in their marriage, with their children and with their community. God knows how sin changed us and what we need to do to fight it and win.

Next, the important role a young woman has in "building" the family.

"Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully." 1 Timothy 5:14

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Notice the steps Paul sets forth for younger widows:

1. marry - gameo
2. bear children - teknogoneo - birthing and rearing of children
3. manage the house - oikodespoteo - "rule" the household
4. give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully - aphorime - give no "starting point" for Satan to revile - loidoria - the family unit

Paul wrote the Corinthians that he had no special commandment from the Lord about virgins, but he gave fathers of virgins advice based on the judgment God had given him. He told them that if their virgin daughter wanted to spend her life caring about the things of the Lord and not be distracted from her service by a husband and children, that was a good thing. However, if a virgin did want to marry that was also a good thing, but she would care about the things of the world - how she might please her husband. Paul told fathers who gave their virgin daughters in marriage that they did well, but fathers who did not give their virgin daughters in marriage did better. You can read more about it in 1 Corinthians 7.

Next, the important role older women have in helping "build" the Church through their influence with younger women and their children. While no age is mentioned for the term "older women", it's believed that the word *presbutidas* means women past the age of raising children - most likely women in their

60s, 70s and older. Remember, God "built" women to "build." That Creative purpose doesn't end when a woman no longer has children of her own living with her. Older women have so much to give to younger women and families of the Church.

"... the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

Titus 2:3-5

The older women are to "admonish" - *sophronizosin* - "teach, train, counsel" younger women -

1. to love their husbands
2. to love their children
3. to be discreet
4. to be chaste
5. to be homemakers
6. to be good
7. to be obedient to their own husbands

Why? "that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

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The Church of the first 1,900 years practiced relationships more along the line of what we see described in the Bible. The Church of the last 100+ years has been greatly affected by social and cultural changes. However, God's Purpose for women has not changed. What can the women of your church do to fulfill the great purpose God has for them? Make a list and see what God shows you - then do it. We will all be stronger because of your love and service.

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Fathers and Sons

In our study about [Mothers and Daughters](#), we learned that God Created man in His Image for the purpose of having dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over the cattle in the field, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God Created man as male and female, blessed them and told them to be fruitful, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over every living thing that moves on the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). Even though the first man and woman sinned against God, their mandate never changed.

The greatest example of a father is God the Father and the greatest example of a son is God the Son. Isn't that an amazing thing? God Created humans in His Image and Likeness and introduced us to the eternal relationship the Father has with the Son through human fathers and sons. God the Father has great joy in His Son. Do you remember what God the Father said to Jesus Christ when He came up out of the waters of baptism? "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11) God the Father is well pleased (eudokesa - "delight, good pleasure") with God the Son. God the Father has Dominion over all things and shares it with His Son Who pleases Him. That is a relationship the Son has always had with His Father. It is the highest example we have for a father and son relationship.

"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." John 17:4-5

God calls on fathers to have dominion in their family relationships. Fathers have that dominion (rule) through the process of mastering (subduing) the positions God gives them through knowledge, understanding and skill. God does not ask men to "bully" their families through intimidation. They are to master them through love, knowledge, wisdom, holiness, and spiritual power. A father is the man who loves his family with all his heart, protects them with all his strength, and guides them with all his mind and soul.

Being a father to sons is very special. God blessed us with two sons to raise and it was truly one of the greatest privileges in our lives. They are grown and married and building families of their own now and their continued friendship means the world to us.

This study is specifically about fathers and sons, so let me address some important things about being a father. Christian men are imperfect human beings. That means they will be imperfect fathers. However, the purpose of being a father has not changed just because of imperfection. God Created men in His Image, His Likeness, and Formed men to "form" things from the earth (Genesis 2:7-8). An important aspect of a man's

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work on earth is to "form" children. Women "build" children because that's what God built her to do (Genesis 2:22) and men do the "forming."

King Solomon explained it well in Proverbs 1 ---

"My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; For they will be a graceful ornament on your head, And chains about your neck."

Proverbs 1:8-9

As we saw in our study about Mothers and Daughters, the Hebrew word for "instruction" (musar) means "discipline, correction." The Hebrew word for "law" (torah) means "teachings, regulations." Fathers discipline and correct their children, while mothers teach and regulate. Solomon wrote that the father's discipline and correction and the mother's teachings and regulations would be a "graceful ornament" on the heads of their children and "chains" about their necks. Ornaments on the head and chains around the necks of children are seen by others and are a sign of love, protection, order and purpose.

A father's role in the household is connected to what our Heavenly Father does for us. The Bible teaches clearly and often that human father's are to discipline their children even as God disciplines us.

"You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his

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son, so the LORD your God chastens you. 'Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.'" Deuteronomy 8:5-6

"Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole." Job 5:17-18

"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights." Proverbs 3:11-12

"Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction." Proverbs 9:18

"A fool despises his father's instruction, But he who receives correction is prudent." Proverbs 15:5

"He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly." Proverbs 13:24

"For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." 1 Corinthians 11:31-32

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of

the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:5-11

Fathers discipline and correct their children. That is a powerful demonstration of their love for their children. A father who does not discipline and correct his children is not demonstrating love for his children. The best advice I can give fathers is to follow the example of our Heavenly Father. God Loves His children with a perfect love, therefore, everything He does with His children is an example of perfect - agape - love - including discipline and correction.

Fathers' Role in the Family

God "formed" men from the earth to "form" things from the earth. Men are formers, leaders, providers, and protectors in the home. Our wives look to us to accomplish those things in the lives of our children. The result of doing that? "A wise son makes a glad father." (Proverbs 10:1) The result of not doing that? "A foolish son is a grief to his father." (Proverbs 17:25) "A foolish son is the ruin of his father." (Proverbs 19:13) How does a son become wise? "A wise son heeds his father's instruction." (Proverbs 13:1) The Hebrew word here translated "instruction" is the same word from Proverbs 1:8 - *musar* - meaning "discipline" and "correction."

The Apostle Paul wrote often about the importance of the father's role in the family. In Ephesians, before telling men about their role as father, Paul told them to love their children's mother - "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." (Ephesians 5:25) I heard someone say many years ago that the best thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother. How true! Men loving their wives is one of the highest human examples of how God loves His people. What's the purpose of that kind of love?

"... that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her

to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. "
Ephesians 5:26-28

Notice three things Christ's Love accomplishes for the Church: sanctify, cleanse, present. The Greek words - hagiase, katharisas, paristemi - mean "set apart for holy service," "free from impurity, spotless, without blemish," "to set beside." How does this happen? "... with the washing of water by the word." "Washing" is *loutron* and speaks to the effect the Word of God has on the activities and behavior of a believer. It is through that process the Lord presents His Church as glorious, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." Jesus wants men to do the same thing for their wife - "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." Men loving their wives is part of fathers training their sons to become men of God.

Important note: The work of disciplining and correcting children has the potential of becoming unbalanced. Look at what Paul wrote fathers about this in his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians.

“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the

Lord.” Ephesians 6:4

“Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Colossians 3:21

The word "provoke" in Ephesians 6 is *parorgizete* and means "arouse to wrath anger, exasperation." The word in Colossians 3 is *erethizete* and means "stir up" in a negative sense. How does a father do that? How does a father arouse or stir up a child to become so angry that they become intensely irritated, infuriated and annoyed?

Fathers - what is in your heart when you discipline and correct your children? Are you angry, irritated, infuriated, frustrated, annoyed? Or are you filled with love for your child and want only the best for them - knowing that the best thing you can do for your child at that moment is to discipline and correct them? Children will respond to their fathers in the same way their fathers discipline and correct them. Children are sensitive to emotions behind actions. They can see in your eyes and body language and hear in your words (or lack of them) and the tone of your voice what emotions are driving you to discipline them.

Discipline and correction are when men can teach their children so much about God's love. God teaches us in many different ways - including discipline and correction. Does God love us less when He disciplines us? when He corrects us? Of course not. God's Love is always perfectly balanced. That balance is an important lesson for human fathers as well.

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Children need discipline and correction to learn how to deal effectively with the many challenges of life. Fathers discipline best from a position of love and compassion - just like our Heavenly Father.

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Fathers' Role in the Church

“From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church ... Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Acts 20:17, 28-30

Paul was greatly concerned about what would happen to the church after his departure. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem and didn't know what would happen to him there. What Paul did know knew was the Holy Spirit had told him that chains and tribulations were waiting for him. Paul also believed he would not see those church leaders again. "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24)

Paul told the Ephesian elders they needed to "take heed" to themselves. The Greek is *prosechete* and means "to turn one's attention to a thing by being on one's guard against it, to devote thought and effort to, be attentive in caring for." The

idea is of being aware and on guard and Paul told the elders to start with themselves. The biggest challenge church leaders can face is their own motives and actions. They need to devote a lot of time and attention to what's happening in their spiritual lives because that's where problems in churches often begin.

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock." Elders in a church also have the responsibility to guard the flock of God. That means those who belong to God and are placed in their care - "... to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28) Do you see the gravity of the situation? God purchased the Church with His own Blood. The Holy Spirit makes elders overseers of the Church God purchased with His own Blood. The ministry of elder-overseeing is to shepherd the Church of God which He purchased with His own Blood. God the Son died on the Cross and bought the Church, the flock of God, with His own Blood. The Spirit of God places the people who God bought with His own Blood into the care of elder overseers.

Notice the progression of thought here:

1. Take heed to yourselves
2. Take heed to all the flock

3. Among which the Holy Spirit made you overseers
4. To shepherd the church of God
5. Which He purchased with His own blood

Why was Paul so concerned about what was going to happen to the flock of God? "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." (Acts 20:29) People from outside the Church (wolves) were going to attack God's flock, the flock He bought with His own Blood, not sparing the flock. These people were vicious and would tear the flock to pieces, unless the elders took heed to themselves and the flock.

If that wasn't bad enough, Paul went on to tell the elders - "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:30) Can you imagine that? Some of the elders who were standing with Paul would rise up and speak perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves. That's amazing! How did Paul know that? The Holy Spirit showed it to him. That's why Paul wanted to meet with the elders. He wanted to warn them about dangers to the Church from outside and inside the flock.

I read these words for the first time during my first year as a Christian. I understood about the ravaging wolves because I had been one. What I didn't understand was that leaders from

inside the Church would hurt the flock of God. Unfortunately, I learned about that during my second year as a Christian and continued to see that happen again and again. It is one of the saddest things I've experienced as a Christian. We have a saying in martial arts - "You can be attacked at anytime by anyone from anywhere." If I had applied that self-defense fact to my life as a Christian, I would have been better prepared to protect myself, my family and the flock of God. Listen to what Paul says here: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." If you are a father, if you are a leader in your church, take heed to yourself and all the flock of God. Make sure your heart is right with God and men, then guard the flock of God carefully.

As you can see from what Paul told the Ephesian elders, being a Church leader is an serious responsibility. Men need to carefully consider that responsibility before becoming leaders. Look at the qualifications for Church leadership:

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will

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he take care of the church of God?) 1 Timothy 3:2-5

“Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.” 1 Timothy 3:12

Notice in each example (bishop and deacon) that the men were to be the husband of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. The initial test for leading, providing and protecting the flock of God is in the home. If a man is a good husband and father, then they have fulfilled one of the most important qualifications for Church leadership. How do we measure up to God's measurement? Remember - the flock is God's. He purchased it with His own Blood. That makes it personal to Him.

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Fathers' Role in the World

One of the best examples of what a father does in the world is found in the same section in Ephesians where the Apostle Paul tells husbands to love their wives in the same way Christ loves the Church and died for her, and fathers not to provoke their children to wrath. Before Paul wrote the Ephesian men about being good husbands and good fathers, he wrote them about how to be good examples of Christ's followers in the world.

Walk in Love

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." Ephesians 5:1-2

God asks His children to "imitate" Him. The Greek word is *mimetai*. The meaning is to follow someone in a way that imitates (mimics) the actions of another. The Greeks and Romans were great fans of "mime" theater, so Paul's readers knew what he meant when he used the word.

God has given me many wonderful pictures of what it means to follow Him. One of the most powerful is through our children. We lived in Michigan when our sons were little, so playing outside in the snow was a great game for us. I remember a morning when we woke up to several inches of fresh snow from

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overnight. We dressed up in our boots, snow pants and heavy coats and went outside to play. I walked from the back door to the back yard for several yards, then looked behind me to see how the boys were making it through the deep snow. Both of them were stretching out their legs so they could place their boots in the same place I had walked. I had set the path for them and they followed - they imitated me. I remember our younger son falling over in the snow as he tried to step where I and his older brother had stepped. I picked him up and he continued to follow the path we had set in the snow.

That's a human picture of a Divine calling we have from our Lord Jesus. He took the first steps and established the path for us to follow. He watches out for us and picks us up and sets our feet back on the path when we stumble or fall.

The first step is to "walk in love." The word walk is *peripateite* and means "to order one's behavior in the sphere of, to conduct one's behavior." It's the idea of how a person leads their life - how they live. Paul tells Christians to order their behavior in the sphere of agape - unconditional love. God is Love and He wants us to imitate Him by living a life of loving people with His Love. How did God Love us? "... as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us." God demonstrates the truth and purity of His Love through giving of Himself. He's God, so He could just order His angels to give us things as a demonstration of His Love for us. However, God's Love goes to the heart of agape - He gives of Himself. God "in the flesh" is our greatest

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example. Jesus lived out His Heart and Mind for all to see and imitate. It was Jesus Who said the greatest commandment is to love God. The second is to love others as ourself.

That's how God wants Christian men to live their lives - loving others - not just in the things we do for others, but in every aspect of our daily lives. To "walk in love" means everything about our lives is filled with the aroma of God's Love - "... an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." We are able to do that as we imitate God as dear children.

Walk in Light

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” Ephesians 5:8-11

It's good to be reminded from time to time that we were once "darkness." That helps keep us humble. It should keep us from thinking too highly of ourselves. No one is beneath us. We are "sinners saved by grace." It's also good to remember what we are - "light in the Lord." Notice Paul didn't say that we are "enlightened." He said we are "light in the Lord." Many religions teach their followers that they can become gods through the process of following the path to enlightenment.

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Some teach it can take a lifetime. Some teach it can take many lifetimes. The truth is that no one has anything good enough inside that would allow them to become enlightened through their own efforts. Earlier in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul said they had all been "dead in trespasses and sins" before God saved them. Someone asked what the word "dead" means in the Greek. Simply put - dead means dead. The word is nekrous - dead. It doesn't mean sort-of-dead ... almost dead ... close to death ... might be dead. It means "dead" - as in having no life in it. An unsaved person is in spiritual darkness and has no ability to save themselves from the wrath of God.

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." Ephesians 2:1-3

Notice how futile our lives were before God saved us. We were dead and dominated. That's the contextual meaning of the words "according to" (kata ton). We were dominated by the "course" (aion - the cycle or present round of things) of this world, the prince of the power of the air (Satan), and the lusts of our flesh. I'd say that's a pretty powerful threesome. In other words, an unsaved person doesn't have a chance. They are "by

nature children of wrath." Whose wrath? God's wrath. That's a scary place to be. So, if unsaved people are spiritually dead and dominated, how does someone get from "unsaved" to "saved?"

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Ephesians 2:4-9

We are saved because of God's "great love" for us! Even when we were dead in trespasses, He made us alive together with Christ. Now that we are alive, God wants us to order our behavior in the sphere of the "light" of our salvation. What does that mean? We imitate Christ Who is the "Light" of the world (John 1:9; 8:12). We are to be "shining" examples of Christ's Mind and Heart. That means we will shine spiritual light everywhere we go. You are spiritual light in your home, in your neighborhood, at your job, in your classroom, in stores, on the street, at church - everywhere you go, you are light in the Lord, so "walk as children of light."

Spiritual light produces spiritual fruit - "for the fruit of the

Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth." Walking in light means "finding out what is acceptable to the Lord." We order our behavior in the sphere of what is acceptable to God. What is acceptable to God? He tells us clearly in His Word what is acceptable to Him. We will find things in the Bible that are acceptable to the Lord - and we will find things in the Bible that are unacceptable to the Lord. What do we do when we find something unacceptable? "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." The word "fellowship" (sunkeinoneo) means "to partner with, partake with." God does not want us to partner with the "unfruitful works of darkness." That's not so bad. We just don't do bad things. Right? It's more than - "but rather expose them." God wants Christian men to "expose" (elenchete) them. That means "reprove, admonish, to test, to put to proof, to convict." The word is 2nd person, plural, present tense, imperative mood, active voice. That means it's something God wants all Christians to be actively involved in doing at the present time. He wants us to "expose" darkness through our lives. That's what Jesus did on earth and it's what God wants us to do on earth.

The very nature of our being spiritual lights in the world means that we will expose evil in the world. It reminds me of a time when I walked into the kitchen during the night and turned on a light. Dozens of cockroaches that were on the floor and counters took off like a shot and disappeared in holes and

cracks in the walls. It's how we discovered that there was a large nest of cockroaches under our house. We called a company that came to the house and destroyed the nest and exterminated the roaches. The first step in ridding our home of that nest was "exposing" the problem. When Christian men order their behavior in the sphere of spiritual light, it will cause a quick reaction from people who are involved in the unfruitful works of darkness. Sometimes those people will scatter, like the cockroaches. Sometimes they will invite Christians to participate in sinning with them. Other times they will attack in a desperate attempt to snuff out the light that has exposed them. That's what the religious leaders of Israel did to Jesus. They thought that by killing Jesus they could snuff out His light that was exposing their unfruitful works of darkness. What they did was make it worse for themselves (or better depending on your point of view) because Jesus rose from the dead and shined His Light throughout Israel and around the world through the hearts and minds of Christians. Imitating Christ by shining our light will be worse for some unsaved people and better for others.

Walk in Wisdom

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”
Ephesians 5:15-16

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Paul calls on Christian men to order their behavior "circumspectly." The Greek word is akribos and means "accurately, exactly, diligently, carefully." Christian men need to conduct their lives in a way that is careful and exact. That means we live with purpose. Our lives are not aimless - they are aimed carefully at the target of pleasing the Lord. The Christian life should be lived with precision. My father taught me how to shoot pistols and rifles when I was a child. I remember the many lessons of aiming the barrel of the gun toward the target, looking through the site to be sure everything was exactly where it should be for the perfect shot. I felt great joy when we would walk toward the target and I'd see a hole in the middle of the bullseye. I knew then that the lessons and hard work had paid off. I had been careful in my preparation and exact in my execution and the end result was precision. That's what God wants from us - to live precisely for His purpose.

Paul connects the idea of walking circumspectly with wisdom - "not as fools but as wise." To live foolishly is to live inaccurately, carelessly, without precision. That's not the life God has in mind for Christians. He wants us to be wise in everything we do. The word "wise" is sophoi. It means to be skilled in forming the best plans and using the best means for their execution. Walking circumspectly with wisdom means to be skilled at living a purposeful life that is well-planned and executed with precision. If you want to hit the target in your

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spiritual life - (1) plan, (2) prepare, (3) train, (4) practice, and (5) execute with precision.

Ordering our behavior circumspectly in the sphere of wisdom means we "redeem the time." The word "redeem" is *exagorazomenoi* and means "to buy." Paul used the word in Ephesians 5:16 and Colossians 4:5 in the middle voice which means "to buy up for oneself." What is it that Paul told the Ephesians and Colossians to purchase for themselves? "Time." How can we buy time? It flies by so fast and there's no way to hold on to it. Does Paul mean we should spend our time, our sequential moments, more wisely? While that's good advice, it's not what the word means. The word Paul used for "time" is *kairon*. If Paul meant that Christians should spend their seconds, minutes, and hours more wisely, he would have used the word *chronos*. Instead, Paul used *kairon*, which means "opportune season." Paul addressed the need for Christians to take advantage of every opportune season that came into their lives. *Kairon* will happen during *chronos*, but instead of marking a specific length of time *kairon* concerns the "characteristics" of the opportunities that occur during time. The Greeks understood the word *kairon* to mean "the supreme moment" - that moment when something very special happens. That's what God wants for Christians to buy up for themselves - those supreme and special opportunities He gives us in our service to Him.

Why is this so important? "... because the days are evil."

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Interesting statement - "the days are evil." *hemera* *ponera*. The period of opportunity we have for service to God is hurtful. The three primary Greek words for "evil" are *kakos*, *phaulos* and *poneros*. *Kakos* means that which is evil in character at its foundation. *Phaulos* means that which is common, bad in the sense of being worthless or contemptible. *Poneros* means that which is bad and causes harm, pain and trouble. The days in which we live are evil. They cause everyone of us harm, pain and trouble. That's why we have to buy up for ourselves those opportune seasons where we can make a difference in our pain-filled world. There will be many other times when we won't be able to buy up opportune seasons because of the reality of the battle we fight here on earth. It might be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual, but pain and trouble are reality to Christians. As we ask God for wisdom to see the opportunities He gives us in service - those supreme moments - the Lord will open our spiritual eyes and ears and make them known to us. "Redeem the time!"

Men - husbands, fathers, sons - hear what Paul is telling us. If we are going to make a difference on earth as Christians, we need to do it God's way. Being men the world's way doesn't cut it. If we are going to be Christian men, we must be extraordinary. We must live life purposely, strategically and precisely. We must conduct our lives in the continual sphere of "love," "light," and "wisdom." That's not easy, but Jesus never said it would be easy to follow Him. He just said - "follow me."

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As we follow our Lord, as we imitate our precious Savior, as we walk in the steps He first walked for us, we will become what is pleasing and acceptable in His Sight.

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