



Godly Manhood in the Home – As Priest

Priest in the home

When the Heidelberg Catechism asks why Jesus is called the Christ, or Anointed One, the second part of its answer is, *“He has been ordained by God the Father and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit to be ... our only high priest who has redeemed us by the one sacrifice of his body, and who continually pleads our cause with the Father.”* Christ’s priestly work was His loving self-sacrifice for our sins and His compassionate intercession for us (Heb. 5:1-2; 7:23-27).

The Bible says that we who trust in Christ are a royal priesthood, authorized and anointed to perform priestly service in God’s spiritual temple (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). We can never repeat the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ for sin because Jesus has finished the work to make His elect people perfect (Heb. 10:12, 14). Nor do we stand as mediators between God and man, for there is one Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5-6). Thus, your children do not need to go to God through you but through Christ, the only way (John 14:6). Yet, because of our union with Christ, we actively share in His priesthood in other ways. The Bible calls the redeemed priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), who offer sacrifices of praise, good works (Heb. 13:15-16), and *“supplications, prayers, intercessions ... for all men”* (1 Tim. 2:1). Let us look at two ways in which a man should operate as a priest in his home.

1. Sacrifice yourself for your wife

Paul says in Ephesians 5:25-26, *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”* William Gouge wrote in 1622 that all the duties of a husband are comprised under this one word: *love*.¹ When we love with a Christ-like love, we serve as spiritual priests who offer a pleasing sacrifice to the Lord. We know this is true because Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:2, *“Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.”*

What does it mean to love your wife like a priest? It means loving your wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). The church is a particular group of people, whom God chose before time began and called to salvation. Though the Lord loves all people and commands them to turn back to Him (Acts 17:25, 30), He has a particular and exclusive love for His elect (Rom. 1:7; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:4). So men must love their wives with a particular and exclusive love in which no other woman may share. Reserve that love as a seal on your heart. With this love, you are not just avoiding adultery; you are intentionally pouring out your affections upon your wife in rich and regular ways. Say to her, *“You have captivated my heart”* (Song 4:9). Set her *“as a seal upon your heart”* (Song 8:6). You may not realize how important it is for your wife to know that you have forsaken all others to love her alone until death separates you, but it is. Neither can you estimate the security and happiness your children receive as they see you love their mother with an exclusive, binding love.

Love your wife, too, with a self-giving love. Scripture says *“Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.”* Jesus voluntarily died as the surety, substitute, and representative of His elect people. He stood under the curse of God for our sins. In giving Himself, Christ gave His most precious treasure, for He was and is of infinite value. Though He was crucified on the cross as a man, the One who died was also Immanuel. And He died for the unworthy, ungrateful enemies of God.

So, husband, love your wife with self-giving love. Sacrifice for her. Provide for her and cherish her just as you love your own body. Give her your thoughts, your time, your talk, your tenderness, and your touch – but make sure you touch her heart before you touch her body. Stop measuring out your love in small spoonfuls according to what she has done for you lately. Start pouring out your love by the bucket according to the infinite riches of Christ's love for you.

Also, love your wife with a sanctifying love. Christ gave Himself for His bride *“that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”* His sacrifice aimed at purifying our lives from sin so that we would be holy for Him. He applies His sacrifice to us in the living water of the Holy Spirit and the living truth of the Word. Paul viewed his gospel ministry as a priestly work of presenting the nations holy to the Lord, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16). In the same way, love your wives with the priestly goal of making them holy to the Lord.

The most important gift you can give your wife is not money, a house, a car, jewelry, or even yourself. The best gift you can give her is to bring her to God so that she can glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. So speak the Word of God to her. Pray for her soul, both in your private prayer times and with her. Do not make her feel like she has to badger you into being a spiritual leader. Put your heart into leading your family to Christ. Invest your time into her spiritual growth. Sacrifice yourself so that she will have time to read the Word and participate in Bible study or women's conferences.

Brothers, God calls you to a priestly ministry with your wives. While you cannot be her Savior, you can be a flesh-and-blood image of the Savior. God loves our believing wives so much. It is astonishing that He would give poor, weak, foolish, and corrupt men like us such an influence over them. But in Christ our Priest, we have everything we need to serve our wives in a priestly manner.

2. Intercede for your children

A significant part of Christ's work as our Great High Priest is His intercession for us at God's right hand. It is an important part of the teaching of the book of Hebrews (Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16; 6:20; 7:24-8:2; 9:12, 24; 10:21; 12:2). Christ's intercession is effective to save us to the uttermost. Our prayers cannot compare to His, but Christian fathers can and do share in Christ's priestly work by praying for their children.

We see this priestly work in the way Job ministered before the Lord for his family. We read in Job 1:1, 4-5:

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil ... And his sons went and feasted in their houses, everyone his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered 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.

Like Job, intercede for your children out of reverence and godly fear. Job showed his reverence for God by interceding for his children. If you do not pray for your children, how can you say that you fear the Lord? It should not take some tragedy or moral disaster to make you pray for your family. The more I study this passage, the more I am convinced that it does not say that the children of Job were doing anything ungodly. Apparently, they were gathering at each other's homes, each taking a turn in hosting fellowship together, but apparently with little or no concern for their own souls. Their father, knowing the tendency of our hearts to sin in secret thoughts and desires, continued to pray for them. Similarly, we should pray for our children, knowing that we must bring even the secret sins of their hearts to the Holy One. Let us not rest in the mere outward conformity of our children to godliness. Let us pray in the fear of the Lord, knowing that our hearts, and theirs, are deeply corrupt.

Intercede for your children with urgency. We are told that Job offered burnt offerings for his children *“early in the morning.”* Spurgeon says, *“He wanted to hurry to the cross every morning with his children.”* He did not offer those sacrifices before bedtime, saying, *“I'd better say a quick*

prayer for my kids.” No, early in the morning Job committed his children to the Lord. We must do likewise for ourselves and our children. These early morning sacrifices indicate Job’s earnestness, constancy, and priorities. Praying was the first and most important thing he did every day. How grateful Job must have been in his later years that he had prayed for his children so faithfully before their lives ended in tragedy. We do not know how much time we or any one of our sons or daughters will remain on this earth. Pray for them.

Intercede for your children with perseverance. The Scripture says, “Thus did Job *continually*.” Are you faithful in the priestly work of intercession? I am not asking if you pray enough for your children; no one prays enough. But do you pray *daily* for your children, one by one, that each may know his sin, each may be kept from sin, each may fly to the Savior, and each may live a life of holiness? Have you given up on a particular child? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Keep on praying; while there’s life, there is hope.

Intercede for your children by faith in Christ. Even before the Law was given to Israel, Job understood there could be no remission of sin without the shedding of blood. He had to kill a bullock for each child. This involved a great investment of time, energy, and money, but Job did so willingly. He killed an animal, laid it on the altar, and offered it to the Lord. In doing so, he was declaring his faith in the Holy Sacrifice to come. Today we do not have to kill animals; we can go directly to Jesus who has shed His blood for us once and for all. Inspired by faith, we turn continually to the covenant-keeping God, committing our children to His blood. We serve our families as priests by looking to the Great High Priest, whose blood and righteousness can save the most hard-hearted child and drive out the most stubborn sin of a believer.

What an amazing privilege Christ has granted us, to be priests in Him and unto Him! Let us not neglect this opportunity. Make your home a holy temple in which you offer daily sacrifices of love for your wife. Lift prayers for your children like sweet-smelling incense to the throne of grace. Generally speaking, the more you exercise your priestly ministry as a husband and father, the more you will discover the presence of the living God in your family.

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¹ William Gouge, *Domestical Duties* (Edinburgh, Ind.: Puritan Reprints, 2006), 251.