



# Godly Manhood in the Home – As King

## King in the Home

The Heidelberg Catechism explains Christ's anointing as King, saying,

*"He is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be ... our eternal King, who governs us by His word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in (the enjoyment of) that salvation, He has purchased for us."*

Like David, the most favored king of Israel, Jesus serves as King of His people by ruling over us with justice and destroying our enemies with His might (2 Sam. 8:13-15).

The Son of God is the Most High King, supreme in His authority and sovereign in His power. Christ alone can bind our conscience with sacred obligation and change our hearts. Christ alone can judge, vindicate, and condemn people for eternity. Though dictators, tyrants, and other oppressors pretend god-like majesty, they cannot usurp the Lord's throne. But God graciously extends the sure mercies of His covenant with David (Isa. 55:3) to all believers, granting us the promise to reign with Him as kings (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5). Indeed, it was God's purpose in creation that man, His very image, should subdue and have dominion over the earth and sea (Gen. 1:26-28).

Therefore fathers have the right and responsibility to be images of the King in their homes. Without denigrating the essential equality of their children as fellow human beings, they must exercise authority as one servant supervises another in the Master's household. First Timothy 3:4 tells us that one qualification of serving as an elder is to *"rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity."* Paul adds in verse 5,

*"For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"*

God wants us to follow this kingly concept as parents in the home.

We are to be teaching prophets as well as interceding and sacrificing priests. You are not to be buddies with your children. You can be friends, but you are *more* than that; in the Lord, you are their authority figure. We are to be kings in the home, whose rule is *just, wise, and loving*.

How does the head of a household exercise this loving authority? Here are two ways:

### **1. Defend your children**

The king is the prime warrior of a kingdom. He leads his people into battle. So it was with Saul and David (1 Sam. 10:1; 2 Sam. 5:1-3; cf. 1 Sam. 18:13), and is with Jesus Christ, the Divine Warrior (Rev. 19:11-16).

Revelation 17:14 says, *"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."*

The Bible says that every Christian is engaged in spiritual war against the devil and his forces (Eph. 6:10-20).

We have physical enemies who must be met with physical force as God has authorized (Rom. 13:1-7). At times, a father must defend his family from physical danger. But I speak here of a father's responsibility to defend his family spiritually. We fight spiritual war with divine weapons, not

weapons of the flesh (2 Cor. 10:4-5); fathers must fight this battle with the kingly authority entrusted to them to defend their precious ones.

For example, you should defend your children against the ungodly abuse of electronic media. Cell phones can receive and send pornography. Cults can recruit children through Internet chat rooms. We need a system to control the use of modern media in our homes. If we do not monitor and limit the use of these devices, our children may become passive observers, sitting for hours in front of the television, texting, e-mailing, or playing video games. Communications technology can be helpful, but it also creates an illusion of intimacy without fostering real relationships or an active life of service. Our goal as godly parents is not to raise couch potatoes. Your children may not appreciate the limitations you impose upon their use of such devices, but they will appreciate your taking time to provide family-oriented alternatives, such as reading to them, playing games and sports together, or involving them in your own work or recreational pursuits.

Also, defend your children against unwise romantic relationships. Romantic love can be stronger than death, and young people often lack the wisdom to discern the end results of immediate choices. In the United States dating is viewed as an activity for personal pleasure. The very idea of parental supervision may seem archaic and burdensome; but in Proverbs, we see the wise father repeatedly warning his young son against immoral women (Prov. 2:16-19; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27). The law of Moses recognized the father's authority over his daughter's commitments while living at home (Num. 33:3-5; Exod. 22:16-17). Human sexuality is both precious and dangerous. It should never be reduced to just casual entertainment. Sexuality is a glue that bonds a man and woman together for a lifetime, and thus all families and society.

Fathers should be involved in regulating the relationships of their children with members of the opposite sex. You need not be an over-protective tyrant toward your children. I am not advocating a ban on all dating. But reasonable rules and godly counsel in the context of a loving relationship with your children will go a long way to defend them against our sexually perverse culture. A young woman will feel protected knowing that a young man must speak to her father before dating her. A young man will feel more secure knowing that his parents will not leave him alone in their own home with a young woman in the evening. Do we put dry straw next to fire and not expect it to burn? Develop good relationships with your children before they reach adolescence, and extend those relationships to their friends, so they will value your counsel and respect your authority, even when their emotions go against your decisions.

Defend your children against unjust authorities. Are you willing to go to bat for your child if his school teacher or coach requires him to do something that violates his conscience? King Lemuel's mother told him,

*"Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy."*

(Prov. 31:8-9)

If that applies to kings and their subjects, how much more should fathers speak up for their children? I am not offering an excuse for public temper tantrums or political manipulation. But a father should stand up for his children against powerful and intimidating figures with fearless, respectful integrity. He must also teach them to stand up for themselves against such injustice.

Be a gentle warrior for your family. This will help them know that you have taken a clear stand on certain questions. They can then stand up to peer pressure by leaning on you. Do not wimp out and try to be a passive, popular dad. That will force your children to stand alone against a wicked generation. Your children will love and respect you far more if you use your kingly authority to defend them from evil, but even if they do not, your exercising of kingly authority still brings glory to Christ.

## **2. Discipline your children**

Jesus says in Revelation 3:19, *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten (or discipline): be zealous therefore, and repent."* Christ is the perfect image of God the Father, of whom Hebrews 12:6 says,

*"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."*

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the Bible often calls fathers to discipline their children, even corporally (Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15; 29:17; Eph. 6:4). Spanking has become a complex subject in our age of anti-authoritarianism, children's rights, and legitimate concerns about abuse. While I cannot speak to every case, let me offer you some principles for discipline that reflect the kingship of Christ.

**a. Discipline your children in love**

Before dealing with your child, search your heart. Are you disciplining your child in genuine love, mercy, and tenderness? Never discipline while your heart is full of wrath. Biblical discipline is always an act of love. Take a small child into your lap; sit down next to an older one. Speak kindly in your admonitions. Your child will recognize kindness and will respond accordingly. Do not provoke your children to anger.

**b. Discipline your children only after instruction and reproof**

Do not discipline a childish misunderstanding, only willful disobedience to a clear and specific command. Be careful here in discerning one from the other. For example, "Clean up your room," is far less clear to a child than, "Put all the toys that are on the floor back into the toy box." Make sure your child understands your expectations. Even then, you should ordinarily try a verbal rebuke before spanking a child.

**c. When needed, discipline your young children with appropriate use of corporal punishment**

In the past, the liberal use of rods and canes was certainly abuse, so we must guard against that, but contrary to some opinions or even the laws of some countries, spanking is not physical abuse. The best Father in the universe says to us,

*"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."*

(Prov. 13:14)

If you never spank your young children, you are acting more out of self-love than in their best interests. A firm spank on a child's rear end will not injure him, but will teach him what mere words cannot: sin hurts. It is far better to learn that lesson with a spank than with a lifetime of disobedience culminating in eternal death.

**d. Discipline your children in honor**

As you discipline your child, treat him as a human being created in the image of God. Discipline is best done in private unless a public sin requires a public rebuke. Never humiliate a child in front of others or treat him like trash. Discipline is a form of honor in which you treat children as responsible, thinking people.

**e. Discipline your children with consistency, judgment, and self-control**

Never act in anger or on impulse. Never exceed the bounds of what is necessary and safe. Never threaten a consequence unless you are committed to imposing it. Justice demands consistency. If you only discipline children when they push you to your emotional limits, then you are training them not in righteousness but in revenge.

This is perhaps the most difficult requirement in discipline, since we all have times of fatigue or emotional weakness. Consistent discipline will help your children see past you to the unchanging law of God.

**f. Discipline your children for repentance**

Always remember that the goal of discipline, as our Lord said, is that those we love should repent and be zealous for God. In other words, discipline aims at restoration of relationships, first between us and God, and second between us and other people. This keeps discipline within the bounds of love, for it is not for the sake of retributive justice to give the punishment deserved, but for the sake of restorative mercy to win back those going astray. A spanking should be like the tap of the shepherd's staff in the side of a sheep headed for the edge of a cliff.

### **g. Discipline your children in prayerful humility**

Do not discipline in an attempt to control your children. You will soon discover you cannot. Children have their own wills, and we are not God. Discipline is a form of human guidance. Therefore we must join our instructions, rebukes, appeals, and spankings to sincere petitions to the Lord that He will take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh to our children. He alone is the King of hearts.

## **Conclusion**

All fathers feel (and should feel) guilt about their failures and inadequacy in leading their families. So let me offer a few words of encouragement to you who are anointed to bear the threefold office of Christ in your home.

You may feel like a father who was once discouraged because things were not going well with his children. He did not know what to do. A friend saw what was happening and said, *“Remember that the essence of parenting is to make disciples, and the One with all authority in heaven and on earth said, ‘I am with you.’”* So let me remind you, men, that if you become discouraged in trying to lead your family in discipleship, the Lord Christ says to you, *“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”*

We cannot exercise the offices of Christ apart from Christ. Apart from Him you can do nothing, but if you abide in Him you will bear much fruit. Look to Him. Rely upon His Holy Spirit, who anoints you out of His fullness. When guilt and shame threaten you, take your sins as a husband and father to your Great High Priest. Wash your conscience in His precious blood. Cry out to the Lamb who was slain so that you can love your wife and children as He does. When you wonder if your prayers go further than the ceiling, remember that He who prays for you is seated on the right hand of God. Even as you exercise kingly authority to defend and discipline your children, be much in prayer to the King of kings, that He would conquer Satan and make your children willing to serve Him. Your weakness can become the platform where His strength is displayed so that your family will learn by watching you pray, *“Thy grace is sufficient for us.”*

Faith in our *“chief Prophet, only High Priest, and eternal King”* will not make you passive but confidently active. Therefore, in His name, use every opportunity to lead your family. Teach them. Love them. Sacrifice for them. Evangelize them. Pray for them. Rule them. Protect them. Persevere in faithfulness as a husband and father.

Perhaps you have failed to lead your children in the way of godliness. Perhaps you have been passive. Perhaps you have been abusive. Perhaps you see in yourself more of the image of the devil than the image of our Prophet, Priest, and King. You have fallen short of providing leadership in your home. It is never too late to start evangelizing your children or speaking to them about spiritual things. It is never too late to confess your own sin to them, even after they have moved out of the home. It is never too late for you to find grace and mercy from the Great Prophet, Priest, and King. Perhaps God will grant you the opportunity to help your children by instructing your grandchildren in the ways of God. Use every opportunity you are given to influence the grandchildren God has given to you. Let me close with the prayer of a seventeenth-century Puritan:

*Let those that are united to me in tender ties be precious in Thy sight, and devoted to Thy glory. Sanctify and prosper my domestic devotion, my domestic instruction, my domestic discipline, my domestic example, that my house may be a nursery for heaven and a church as the garden of the Lord, enriched as trees of righteousness of Thy planting for Thy glory. Let not those in my family who are amiable, moral, and attractive fall short of heaven at last, but grant that the promising appearances of tender consciences, of soft hearts, of the alarms and delights of Thy Word may not be blotted out, but may bring forth judgment unto victory in all those whom I love.*

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