

Fathers: It's YOUR Home School



One of the notable features of the home education movement is that it is pretty much a women's movement—at least down in the trenches.

In the day to day battle of planning and teaching, scheduling and organizing, disciplining and encouraging it is the mother who bears the brunt of the work, at least in the vast majority of homeschooling homes.

It is true, we fathers often adopt the title of “Principal” of our home school, recognizing that we are in the position of leadership in the family. Yet too often this remains simply a title we wear as our wives actually do all the work.

Most of us would not even question that this is, as a very practical matter, how it must be. After all, we fathers are busy earning a living to support the family, and this usually takes us away from the home for most of the day. So if homeschooling is going to be an option at all, it is going to have to be the responsibility of our wives, right?

Wrong!

You Are Responsible

You see the painful truth is that you are totally responsible for your home school. Yes, “totally.” No matter what your involvement today with the process of education in your home, the fact is that everything that happens there is your responsibility. If your wife has chosen the curriculum for the children—that is your decision. If she is failing adequately to teach one of the kids his math—that is your failure. If your son has an attitude problem with his mid-day chores—you are responsible.

Let's imagine the Lord visits your home tonight to check up on any of these or a hundred other matters pertaining to your home education program. He walks right past your wife and children in the kitchen in order to find you in the family room, and he looks you right in the eye and asks for an accounting of these things.

When you begin to explain that you are rather busy with the necessary tasks of earning a living—and maybe even leading in the church—and that you have delegated the home school to your wife, you find the Master's gaze does not follow your finger which points hopefully toward your wife. He keeps looking at you as if you are really responsible for everything. And that's exactly the way it is.

Now, this is not my idea. Believe me, I am as inclined by nature as the next man to avoid responsibility. No, this principle is clearly taught in the Word of God and it rises up to shake us out of our complacency. So let's look there to see what the Lord has to say to fathers.

The place to start is at the starting point, the book of Genesis, and in particular its account of man's creation and fall into sin. Here we see the foundational principles which define the role of the man in his home. We can learn a lot from our first father, for better and for worse.

God Created The Man As The Leader

Chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis reveal that God very intentionally established the man as the leader in his relationship with his wife (and, of course, by implication, his children). This is demonstrated in several ways.

First, *the man was created first.* God the Creator fashioned him from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and thus made him a living being (2:7). The woman was not formed until later (v. 22). So what? So God was in this way signifying who was to have the lead position in the relationship. This order of creation is the foundation of Paul's instruction that women should not teach or exercise authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11-13).

Second, *the woman's very being was derived from the man.* Rather than creating her from the ground, God shaped Eve from the rib or side of Adam (Gen. 2:22). That this derivative existence demonstrates the authority of the man is made explicit in the New Testament. In establishing the basis for the assertion that "the head of the woman is man" (1 Cor. 11:3), the Holy Spirit through Paul offers this: "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man" (v. 8).

Third, *the woman was created for the man.* The Lord seems to have gone to some lengths to be sure Adam understood this. Only after parading the animals before him and letting him discover his need for her did God create Eve (Gen. 2:19,20). She was then created to be a companion-helper (v. 20) to assist him in fulfilling the mandate God had given him to multiply descendants and take dominion over the earth (1:28; 2:15). Again, Paul appeals to Genesis in support of the headship of the man and the woman's submission: "neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11:9).

Fourth, *the man named the woman.* Just as Adam had exercised his authority over the animal kingdom in naming them (Gen. 2:19; cf. 1:28), so he demonstrated his authority over his wife in naming her "Eve" (3:20). In the Bible, having the prerogative of naming someone always indicates a position of authority over the one named.

Fifth, *the man was the guardian and teacher of God's Word.* Before Eve was even created, Adam was given God's commandment concerning what they could and could not eat (Gen. 2:16,17). There is no evidence that God repeated the commandment to Eve, and yet she knew all about it (3:2). Apparently Adam had taught her.

Sixth, *the man was held responsible by God for their fall into sin* even though his wife had taken the initiative in that sin. She was approached by the

serpent, enticed by his lies, and deceived into sinning. Only then did Adam take and eat the forbidden fruit (3:1-6). Her's was clearly the initiative. Yet when the Lord came to demand an accounting for the offense he went straight to the one he held responsible: "But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'" (3:9)

Not only does Genesis show unmistakably that God designed man for a role of leadership, it also shows how quickly that role was neglected.

The Man Abandoned His Leadership

The first sign that Adam was not doing his job of guarding and directing his wife is his absence during her temptation. Actually, the language of the text seems to suggest that Adam was indeed there, he was just passive and uninvolved. After Eve had eaten the fruit we read, "She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it" (3:6). It appears that though he was right "with her" (where else would you be if God had just given you this fabulous creature to be your companion?) he did not interfere with the Tempter. Further, he simply submitted to his wife's leadership even though it meant disobeying the Lord.

Then as if to confirm the fact that Adam had discarded the role of leader and protector, he quickly tried to pass the buck to Eve when the Lord confronted him for the disobedience of them both. "The man said, 'The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it'" (3:12). Adam even seems to blame the Lord himself for putting the woman there—anything to avoid responsibility!

The Legacy Of Distorted Roles

Unfortunately for all of us, the distorted patterns of Genesis 3 have become the norm for our sinful world, and even for our Christian homes if we are not careful. The woman has a tendency to step out from under her husbands authority, to act independently of him and even to try to lead him. And the man tends to abdicate his position of authority as he retreats into passivity, all the while denying his responsibility. In addition, he sometimes substitutes harshness for true leadership, thus compounding the distortion of his role.

This scenario seems to be foreseen in the curse pronounced on the woman in Genesis 3:16: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." She will desire to control him, but he is stronger and so will simply dominate her by his strength. Not exactly the relationship God had in mind!

Becoming A Leader Again

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and that certainly includes the distortion of the man-woman relationship in the home. His grace is sufficient to free us from our sinful patterns and lead us into the freedom and joy that comes with obedience to his revealed will.

Specifically, the Lord wants to help you and me to become the leaders of our wives and children. The headship of the husband is still God's plan, and Jesus is our perfect model for how to implement that calling (Eph. 5:23,25ff.). We can and must follow his example.

Above all else, we must simply accept the stark fact of our responsibility. Authority always carries with it responsibility. It is inescapable. Authority can be delegated, but responsibility cannot. We can and must enlist our wives to help us raise our children, but we remain totally responsible for the process.

Consider a ship's Captain and his crew. The Captain delegates authority to those under him in the complex process of running his ship and delivering it safely to its destination. But the Captain remains totally responsible at all times. If he is in his quarters sleeping when a petty officer or seaman makes a mistake that damages the ship, the negligent underling may be disciplined for his error, but the Captain is still accountable to his superiors and may lose his command. He delegates authority, but he remains responsible.

So it is with a father. He is totally accountable for everything that happens in his home. He is answerable to God for everything his wife and children do, or don't do. They bear their own personal responsibility for their actions, but the overall burden is always his. When on the day of judgment the Lord inquires about the conduct of the family and the training of the children, it will be the father who renders an account.

However, then, a father may view the process of homeschooling in his family, the fact is that it is his home school. He may sit on the sidelines and leave it all up to his wife, but that does not mean that he is not the leader; it only means that he is a poor leader. Because a leader he is, for better or for worse.

So we might as well exercise our leadership since we are going to be held accountable anyway! Since the decision about curriculum, for example, is our decision whether we make it actively or passively, we might as well be active in the process.

Most of us have inherited a good bit of our original father's penchant for wanting to avoid responsibility. However, we will be no more successful that he was.

Realizing that we cannot escape responsibility may not be the highest motive for learning to practice leadership, but it will do for starters! Once we have begun, we must then keep our eyes on our new Leader, the Lord Jesus, and learn from him what it means to embrace headship.
