

Bible Baptist Theological Seminary

Spring Lecture Series

“For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

I Peter 3:17

Dr. M. Ryan Strouse

Suffering for Evil Doing in the Family Unit

Suffering for Evil Doing

Suffering for evil simply indicates that the suffering was brought on by the individual's own sin. Many times, we are blind to our sin, until we suffer the consequence and have fellow Christians courageously challenge us with truth in the *agape* love of Christ (II Cor.7:10; Job 42:5). Even worse is the highhanded sin of being a hearer but not a doer of the Word (Numb.15:3-31; Jms.1:22-25; Prov.1:23-24; cf. Zech.7:9-14). For the believer, this comes with the LORD's loving, but crushing rebuke (Heb.12:6; Prov.1:22-28). Nevertheless, "*for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Gal.6:7-8; cf. Rom.14:12, Mt.12:36. I Pt.4:5, II Cor.5:10). Sadly, many born again believers sow to the flesh because of adherence to man-made standards and poor sanctification efforts, which are rooted in unchecked hearts, strongholds of the mind that are not contested, rampant self-reliance, insidious self-righteousness, and practical unbelief.

The result of sin is snares and scars that perpetuate further madness and death if not encountered by redemptive use of Scripture (Prov.22:5; Eccl.7:26; Jms.1:13-15; Eccl.9:3; II Tim.3:16). The LORD warned that blatant disregard for His Word would lead to "*madness*" (Deut.28:28; Eccl.9:3), "*trembling heart...sorrow of mind*" (Deut.28:65), "*fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life*" (Deut.28:66), "*thy life shall hang in doubt before thee*" (Deut.28:66), "*fear of man*" (Prov.29:25), "*inherit folly*" (Prov.14:18), "*double minded*" (Jms.1:8), and given up "*unto their own hearts' lust*" (Ps.81:10; Deut.29:19; Jer.7:24). Fear, sadness, frustration, and conflict will brew into a storm of madness without a redemptive intervention from Truth.

American Fundamentalism has and continues to shackle godly servants to man-made expectations in the realm of church and family that *can* hamper a biblical view of church growth and a Gospel-centered approach to pastoral families. In dismay, unrealistic expectations are placed on sinners saved *by grace*. The cumbersome view of the fundamentalist church is hard to shake aside from God's grace; consequently, the trickledown effect impacts the family unit. Pressure to appear, comply, and perform steal can steal away from the transparency the Gospel produces in a church and family of redeemed sinners.

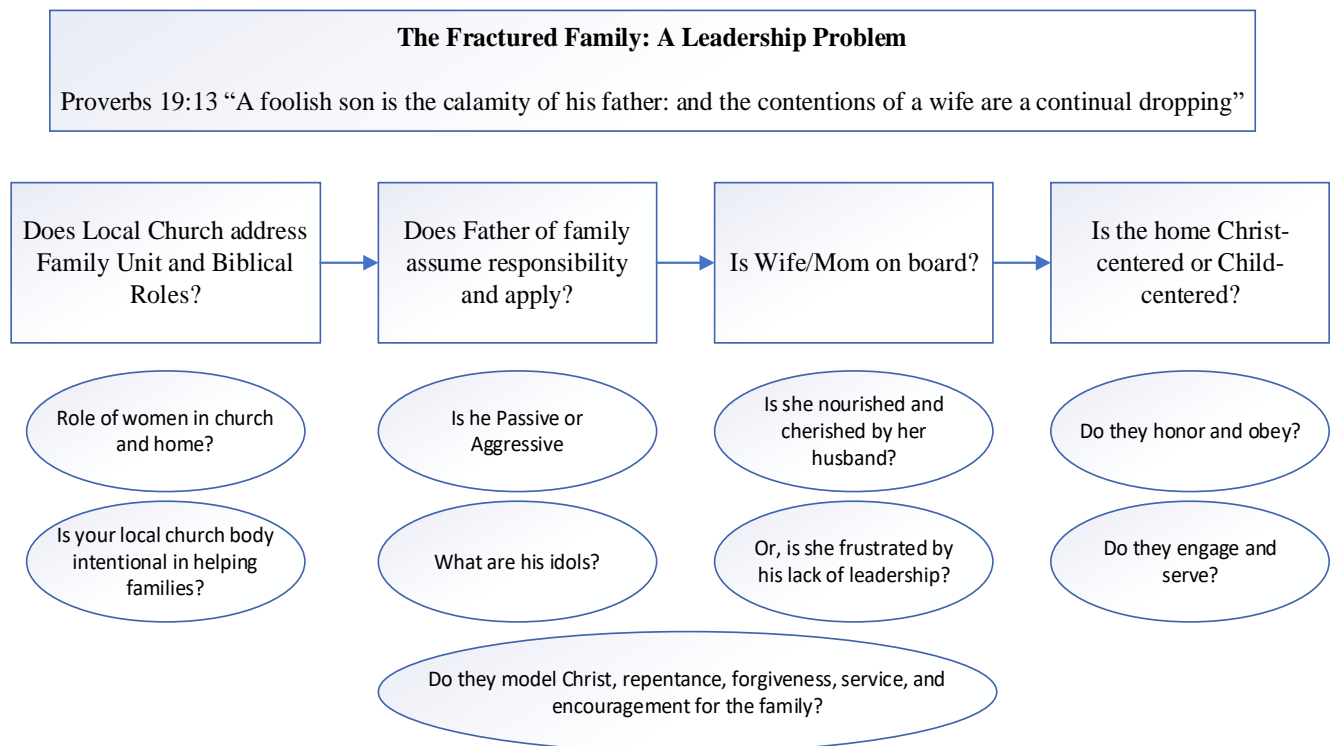
Suffering from failed false expectations that Fundamentalism gives.

- How many of your families have suffered because you were pit between man's expectations for your family and the visceral realities of your family challenges? (Prov.29:25)
- Does your church have family role expectations and assumptions without intrusive, pertinent training and discipleship? Biblical family units do not automatically appear. Instead, they are grown.
- The false allusion¹ that a pastor's wife and children (any church member) do not/should not struggle with the Adamic-cursed flesh, even after children leave home. If not, shame, guilt and disqualification can follow.
- All Church members must always speak, look, and behave godly in attendance of services. In essence, don't let anyone know your marriage is struggling, your children are rebelling, and you have no outlet for transparent discipleship.

¹What about our testimony (μαρτύριον, *martyrion* – witness)? Sometimes, "testimony" is used as a cover to be perfect in the eyes of man, not the Lord (II Cor.1:12). Scripture emphasizes the need for a godly testimony that is anchored in the transparency of the Gospel (i.e. sinners transformed by the Gospel and grown by His grace II Pt.3:18). For those that laid accusations at Paul, they didn't know the half of it as he transparently revealed his daily battle with the flesh and need to walk in the Spirit (Rom.7:14-8:1). We are not to rejoice in sin, but we should be transparent about the fierce, daily battle that we engage with the armor of God (Eph.6:10-20).

The Problem

The family is the core biblical unit the LORD has set forth for mankind to ensure safety, provision, and nurturing among the roles for another; its ultimate goal is to grow and model the fear of the LORD (Gen.2:23-25; Pr.1:7, 9:10).² Christ-like men, women, and children are salt and light in this dark world (Mt.5:13-14). Consequently, the breakdown of the family unit results in madness that permeates into society (Prov.3:33; cf.Is.3, Mic.7:5-6, Mal.4:6, Lk.1:16-17). “*Suffering for evil doing*” expresses itself in the family unit in the form of complaints against a spouse or child, all the while, the biblical roles of husband, father, wife, mother, and child are out of sync with Scripture. Sadly, secular constructs of toxic masculinity,³ feminism, and ADHD are infiltrating churches and propounding their consequences of tamed men, female leadership, divorce, and children who are told they never have to listen because of their “disease” of ADHD. In sin, the blessing and security of the biblical roles is missed, which exacerbates the individual forms of madness – anxiety, depression, bipolar, and schizophrenia. Verily, the timeless truth of Proverbs 3:33 prevails, “*The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: But he blesseth the habitation of the just.*”⁴ This author seeks to lay out some nuances to this problem, and exhort pastors to perfect the saints with the practical solutions to implement in their homes (Eph.4:12).



²The Hebrew word behind “*leave*” is אָזַב (*azab*) that means “to leave, forsake.” In the biblical context, this relates to healthy boundaries as an autonomous family unit, not outright abandonment of parents and relatives. Proverbs 17:6 and II Timothy 1:5 reveal the value and spiritual benefits of godly grandparenting. The Hebrew word behind “*cleave*” is דָּבַק (*dabaq*), which means “to cleave, join together tightly” and gives the sense of adhering like glue. Cleaving is the commencement of the one-flesh unity in Christ as an autonomous unit bound together in the covenant of marriage (Mal.2:14-16; Mt.19:6).

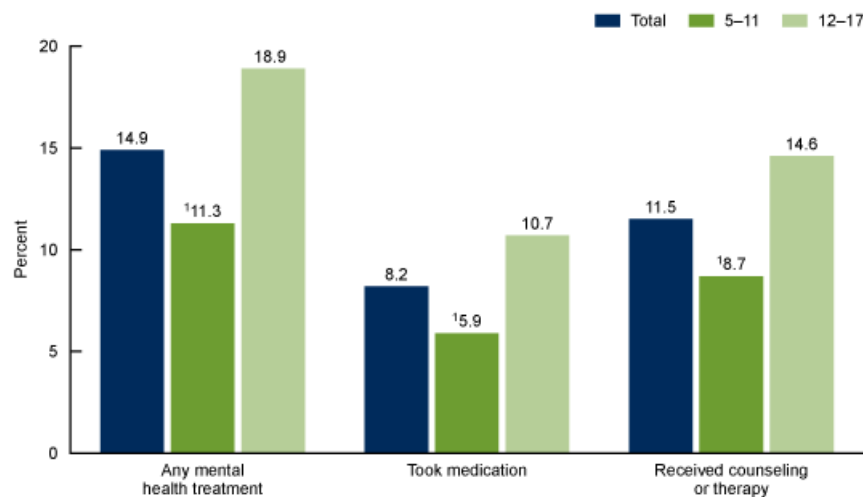
³The pendulum of male authority has swung from the extreme of physical abuse to that of passive men. Neither extreme is biblical, and both extremes are sin. This author seeks to focus on exponential growth of passive men.

⁴*Proverbs* is a core chapter in God’s overall handbook for building a godly home focused on the individual roles. The Hebrew word behind “*house, home*” is בַּיִת (*bayith*), which is found thirty-seven times in the book. “*Father*” (אָב, *ab*) is found twenty-six times (1:8, 3:12, 4:1, 30:17). “*Husband*” (בָּר, *ba al*) is found fourteen times (12:4, 31:11, 31:28). “*Wife*” (אִשָּׁה, *ishshah*) is found twenty-five times (5:18, 18:22, 19:13-14). “*Mother*” (אִמָּה, *em*) is found fourteen times (1:8, 4:3, 6:20). “*Children and son*” (בֶּן, *ben*) is found sixty times (3:1, 4:1, 5:7).

Should we be surprised at the state of our nation when the foundational unit, families, are in disarray?⁵ The marriage rate is down.⁶ The divorce rate remains high,⁷ but is trending down because of a decrease in number of marriages. The suicide rate continues to climb.⁸ The birth rate is down. The STI (sexually transmitted infections) rate is the highest since recording begun in 1900.⁹ DSM-V psychiatric labels are given out *ad nauseum*. ODD (oppositional defiant disorder), ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), anxiety, depression, bipolar, schizophrenia, and suicidal ideations abound in the absence of biological markers and valid brain disease.

The below table is one strata that reveals the failure of the family unit. As a whole, parents have surrendered to the world's way instead of God's plan for families (i.e. the Word of God). The discarding of children has left them to the hands of the counselor and teacher, who can describe their behaviors and only offer medication and other forms of behavioral modification. The selfish goal of the world's way is simply to sedate and quiet the folly of a child's heart or institute them so their behavior is not seen or spread. That does not work. *It is good* for folly to be exposed so intervention (instruction, rod of correction) can be hastened; this way, they can look at the fruit of their wicked heart in contrast to the blessings of a Wonderful Savior.

Psychiatric Intervention for Children 5-17 in America in 2023



Obviously, the lost suffer madness in darkness and need the light of Christ through His Word to regenerate those that turn in faith (Jn.1:5; Rom.10:17). However, Christians in Baptist churches are “*suffering for evil doing*”

⁵The parent and child both have responsibility in *Proverbs* regarding spiritual training in the Word. It is key to note, the father is the predominant instructor of spiritual instruction to help the child practically discern the pitfalls of the wicked in contrast to the blessing of the righteous. For instance, the father warned against ungodly women and fornication (Pr.5-7) while the mother instructed and modeled a virtuous woman (Pr.31). Untrained boys become simple men with no subtility to discern the verbal and physical manipulation of an ungodly women (Pr.1:4, 5:2-3, 6:24, 7:5).

⁶Men and women are having their desires met outside of the marriage union. Feminism and lesbianism provide false security for women, whereas men find control and pleasure in the fantasy realm of pornography and virtual reality.

⁷Nominal (in name only) Christians have the highest rates of divorce and domestic violence above secular couples and committed evangelical couples because of the “rose-colored glasses” effect of being with someone who identifies as “religious.” Whereas churchgoing evangelicals represent the lowest divorce and domestic violence rate. FYI...major Christian Colleges are a great place to meet nominal Christians. Wilcox, Bradford, “The Latest Social Science is Wrong. Religion is Good for Families and Kids,” *Washington Post*, December 15, 2015.

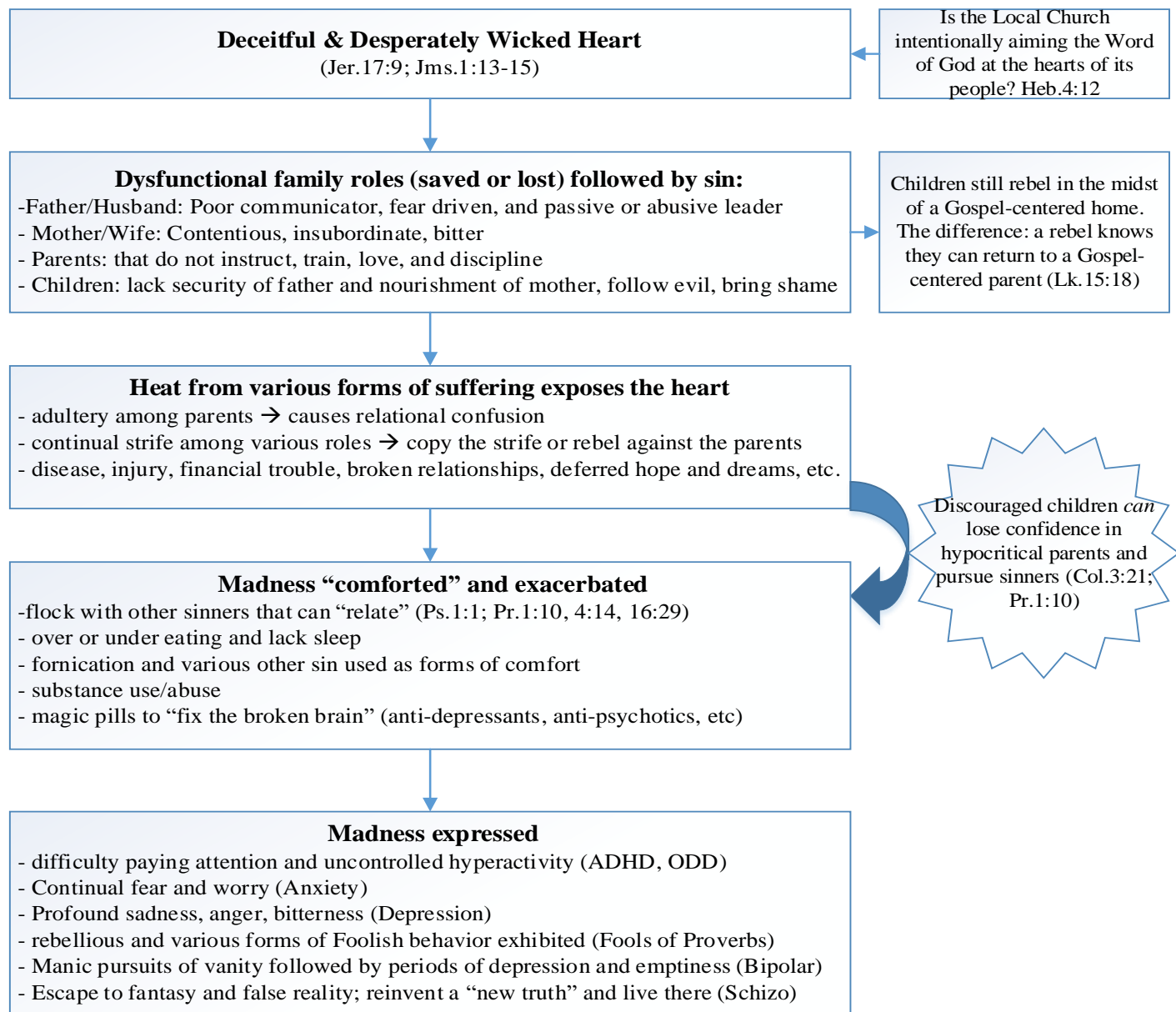
⁸The CDC reports that 79% of suicides in 2022 (most recent verified data) were men. 95 percent were white men (37, 459 deaths). See <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/suicide-data-statistics.html>.

⁹The CDC.gov/NCHS (National Center for Health Statistics) provides up-to-date, transparent, and plain language explanations of all national health statistical rates and trends in marriage, divorce, birth, STI, and suicide. The symptoms of societal breakdown are very plain to see; nevertheless, the root issue of sin and the Gospel-cure are continuously rejected.

related to their overt negligence of sanctification because they have drifted from the foot of the cross as chief of sinners (Lk.18:13; II Pt.1:9-10; I Tim.1:15). Poor sanctification leads to wayward roles in the family unit, which exacerbates madness; consequently, the “*curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked*” (Prov.3:33).

Madness starts in the heart, but is exacerbated in the Family Unit

This author posits that a substantial portion of “*suffering for evil doing*” stems from the fractured family unit among Christians homes, which is the primary shaping influence of how a family applies what they learn in their local church. Ecclesiastes 9:3 is clear that “*madness is in their heart*” of all people; however, it can either be confronted and mortified in the Christian home or exacerbated. Christian men are overly passive or overly aggressive and do not love/lead as Christ (Eph.5:23-33). Christian women insubordinately diminish their husbands and attempt to lead homes (Eph.5:22, 24). Children are driven to anger and discouraged because of Dad and Mom’s lack of leadership and hypocrisy without repentance (Col.3:21). Christian parents excuse their lack of training, instruction, and discipline all the while labeling their child with modern terms of ADHD and ODD in the absence of pathological biomarkers. The folly in the heart of untrained children accelerates to early forms of madness (Pr.22:15).



The Feminizing of Local Churches

I Peter 4:17 states, “*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*” If local churches do not uphold the biblical hierarchy of Christ, Pastor, husband, wife, and children then what hope is there for family units? The ideal man, woman, and child is to imitate Christ and obey His command “*follow me*” (Lk.9:23; I Cor.11:1). Men are to be Christ-like leaders that fear God and not man, all the while giving the truth in kindness and meekness (Pr.9:10, 29:25; Gal.6:1). The pastor’s view and practice of male headship in the home will dictate his doctrinal practice of female roles in the assembly. The qualification of pastor maps out the connection of a healthy home to a healthy church: “*husband of one wife*” “*ruleth well his own house*” and “*for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God*” (I Tim.3:2-5). Regarding female roles in the church, home practice will become church practice (I Cor.14:34-35). Bottom line: Churches need masculine men, despite spiritual giftedness, that step into their role and operate in the fruit of the Spirit with the mind of Christ.¹⁰

Toxic femininity (a.k.a. fear of woman)¹¹ from the #metoo movement (Pr.29:25) has permeated into churches and Christian homes amid the cultural shift of the dark world (Gen.3:6; Gen.16:2-3; I Kgs.19:2). Male church leadership should have the strength and *kindness* to address female division in the assembly.¹² Paul used his authority to confront the female-led division in the Philippian church between Euodias and Syntyche; furthermore, he called upon the men (*true yokefellow*) to “*help*” or intervene in the division to bring unity in the assembly (Phil.4:2-3).

While the attack on men and the family unit has ebbed and flowed throughout human history, the current cultural perspective of “toxic masculinity” in America is shaping local churches and family units.¹³ Why are men “picked on” by society? Because men are the leaders and carry responsibility; failure in their duties will always open them to criticism. However, criticism against cohorts of men has systematically transferred to all forms of masculinity or male leadership. Nevertheless, men are disengaging from their roles and taking a back seat because of fear of not coming across as toxic authoritarians. An unsaved comedian, Jim Gaffigan, likened dads to a back-up quarterback: “*Dads are like the back-up quarterback in the NFL. They are on the team, but they are not the star. On the rare occasion that they are brought into the game, people are nervous. They are good for a play or two, but when is the star coming back?*”

A popular article entitled “Why Can’t We Hate Men” was circulated in 2018 by the *Washington Post* and summarily describes secular opinions.¹⁴ Men are viewed as toxic villains that must be held in check by women.

¹⁰Toxic masculinity is a cultural term for a selfish, brutish, and self-deceived man. Cain exhibited the anger, lack of self-control, lying, and blame shifting that men should not follow. He operated in sight instead of faith. His failure drove him to jealous murder. When confronted by God, he lied, “*I know not*” (Gen.4:9). He followed his lie by denying responsibility, “*Am I my brother’s keeper?*” Christ-like men live with integrity, ownership, and faith.

¹¹Christian abuse counseling is one arena that contributes to the issue of “toxic femininity” by seeking to emasculate the power and authority of men, so they do not hit or threaten women. Physical abuse is a real problem; however, the solution is not to make all men passive, but to biblically train them to step into a Christ-like role of headship, provision, and protection.

¹²One study indicates that “abuse” falls into two categories: “situational” two-way arguments (80% of domestic disputes = evil for evil – Rom.12:17-20) or “characterological” where there is a chronic perpetrator over a victim with no means to get help, negotiate, communicate, or leave the environment (20% of domestic disputes). Situational disputes are run-of-the-mill arguments that are over-labeled as “abuse” to slander the other. Characterological is “true abuse” where the victim has no protection or ability to escape.

¹³The CDC indicates that fifty percent of all murdered women are killed by male intimate partners, typically, ex-husbands or soon-to-be ex-husbands (Pr.6:34-35). <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/homicide.htm>.

¹⁴Walters, Suzanna, “Why can’t we hate men?” *Washington Post*, June 8, 2018.

For instance, a researcher named Jim Macnamara wrote about how media has shaped male identity in his book *Media and Male Identity*. He analyzed over 2,000 media portrayals of men in various platforms; the findings revealed greater than 75 percent of the media portrayed men as “*villains, aggressors, perverts, and philanderers*.”¹⁵ Sadly, scandals of sexual assault, abuse, manipulation, and greed among churches and pastors are used to make sweeping generalizations against Christian men as wretched creatures that cannot be entrusted to lead churches and the home (Eccl.7:20; Rom.3:23; cf. I Tim.3:1). A biblical mindset will help Christians not equate bad male behavior to all masculinity, nor bad female behavior to all femininity.

Across evangelical churches in America, men still hold the vast majority of pastoral and leadership positions; however, women dominate in the realm of attendance, engagement, and involvement. In particular, 61 percent of church attendance is female and 39 percent male.¹⁶ Consequently, male leaders present the feminine aspects of Christ behavior. A study by David Murrow presented two columns of behaviors where respondents were to click on the behaviors of Christ and His disciples; unbeknownst to the respondents was that the two columns were separated by classically denoted masculine and feminine behaviors. The results of his study revealed 95 percent of the respondents identified Christ with feminine behaviors of “*relationship, nurture, sharing, and harmony*” in contrast to masculine traits of “*competence and achievement*.”¹⁷

Biblicist churches must not be swayed by cultural shifts that demonize men and boys, but instill biblical principles of the male role in view of Christ-like behavior, which ranges from righteous anger to weeping over spiritual darkness (Jn.2:15; Lk.19:41-44). The cascade effect is perilous to the family unit. Men must be encouraged to step into their role of spiritual leadership in the home as models of integrity and self-control. Otherwise, passive men give way to female leadership at home and church. Without intervention by churches, another generation of boys will be raised by women and be witness to passive men (I Cor.16:13).

Doctrinal Impacts in the Absence of Christ-like Men

Sound doctrine will always be under attack by the false teaching of men and women. However, in 2024 passive Christian men who do not rule well their homes compromise to their wives and children who are beholden to false doctrine sprouting up in the assembly. Consequently, many churches are dominated by children and women, while the husband resigns to the role of peacemaking chauffeur. If the pastor is weak and fears man, the false doctrine prevails in that assembly. Pastors are to fear God and lead in that manner; Christian men best support their pastor by leading in the fear of God at home.

Under inspiration, the Apostle John placed the ownership of Gospel and sound doctrinal purity on the “*Angel*” or *male* pastor of each individual assembly (Rev.1:20, 2:1). In particular, the pastor of the church in Thyatira was sympathetic for too long to “*that woman Jezebel*.” While the pastor had much to be praised in his assembly (2:19), the Lord Jesus Christ had this issue “*against thee*” (2:20). It must be noted, compromise and apostasy are typically insidious among many good efforts for the Lord. The Jezebel woman assumed a non-biblical role for the assembly at that time as prophetess, which she used to teach and seduce the true saints of God false doctrine and idolatry. The pastor was to rebuke and give the woman space to repent and reconcile; meanwhile, the rest of the assembly was to “*hold fast till I come*” (2:25). Pastor and Christian man, are you

¹⁵Pearcey, Nancy. “*The Toxic War on Masculinity: How Christianity Reconciles the Sexes*.” Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2023, p.21.

¹⁶Murrow, David. “*Why Men Hate Going to Church*” Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2005.

¹⁷Ibid, p.6-8.

suffering the subtleties of false doctrine too long in your church or home? Christ said, “*I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*” (Rev.2:5).

Looking to Help Men

Malachi 4:6 revealed the conversion of fathers could spread to the household, and Paul instructed Timothy to train “*faithful men*” who could teach “*others also*.”¹⁸ Scriptures places the primary role of evangelism and instruction in the Word on men in the family unit; nevertheless, broken homes abound that allows mothers and grandmothers to step in (II Tim.1:5). The Lord has used children’s programs and women’s ministries through the local church; however, these programs have become primary ministries instead of secondary aspects. Men have appropriately interpreted modern churches to be for kids and women because that’s the primary focus; hence, the hesitantly come to the holiday services to watch a kids or women’s program.

Local churches have openly catered to discarded children and overwhelmed women with much spiritual fruit; banners for Vacation Bible School or Ladies fellowships abound. But why not for men? It seems, local churches have fallen prey to the secular construct that men are immoral and have no desire for spiritual help. The reality is that men have been marginalized from feminized or youth-based churches. Instead, what about a church banner that says, “Men, want to earn back respect from your wife and kids?” or “Men, need help with the shame of being a failed leader?” Biblicists churches must seek out men intentionally as a place that has the Gospel answer for the overwhelming shame and isolation that befits American men (highest suicide group) in 2024. The born-again husband and father that learns how to lead as Christ is the ***optimal evangelist*** of the family unit.

Opting Out of the Power Struggle

Obedience to the LORD’s plan for church and family in faith from a heart of gratitude brings the blessing of His divine structure and plan (Pr.1:8, 33; cf. Pr.14:12). Conversely, “*the way of the transgressor is hard*” (Prov.13:15). Solomon continuously warns against the self-reliant efforts to adopt the world’s philosophy of marital roles, child-rearing, and decision-making (Pr.12:15, 14:12, 16:2, 16:25; cf. Pr.3:5-6). The world’s philosophy in these matters cater to the carnal hearts of man (Jms.1:13-15), lead to role reversal (Is.3:1-5, 12), and bring destruction (Pr.16:25).¹⁹ In judgment for neglecting the counsel of the LORD (i.e. *Proverbs*), the LORD allowed the removal and diminishment of “*mighty man, and the man of war...the honourable man...and the counsellor*” from Israel (Is.3:1-5). In return, He allowed “*children are their oppressors, and women rule over them*” (Is.3:12). If churches do not promote Christ-like masculinity, then men will not be urged to step into their role. Consequently, a vacuum is created that allows women to lead and children to dictate.

Nevertheless, Christians can opt out of the power struggle approach to marriage and family, and choose to submit to Biblical roles. The reciprocal effects of submission to a male pastor will follow (Heb.13:7, 17). Husbands can learn to set direction (Jn.4:34), communicate (Eph.4:29), and serve their families as Christ (Jn.13). Wives can encourage their husbands to communicate, take the lead, and support their efforts for direction.

Taming Men to Not Communicate

One of the primary obstacles to leading a home in accordance with the Word is the poor communication between husband and family. Marriage researcher, John Gottman, created the “love lab” where he observed over

¹⁸The Greek word behind “*others*” is ἑτέροις (*heterous*), which is a plural masculine adjective.

¹⁹A husband’s attitude toward his wife is an snap-shot of his relationship with God. I Peter 3:7 “*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*”

3,000 couples who stayed in an observation apartment set up as a bed and breakfast for 72 hours. Behaviors, blood pressure, heart rate, and stress hormones are all tested. His mathematical equation that included behavioral and communication aspects could predict divorce within 93.6 percent accuracy in as little as fifteen minutes!²⁰ Furthermore, his research resoundingly echoed what Scripture declares, the health of the marriage depends primarily on the husband.²¹ Scripture places the onus on the husband to love and lead, and the father to communicate, instruct, and set direction in a way that builds up (Pr.12:18, 15:4, 18:21, Jms.3:6; cf. Pr.18:14).

The problem of passive and tame men is not new, but continues straight from the Garden of Eden. The LORD made His expectations for Adam abundantly clear through direct instruction (Gen.2:16-17). Adam did well to instruct Eve of the LORD's directive (Gen.3:3); however, Adam did not intervene when His wife considered the new and secret knowledge from Satan. Consequently, she led the unit and "*gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat*" (Gen.3:6). Biblical leadership applied in that situation could have been easy as Adam saying "No!" Despite Eve's active involvement in transmitting deception to Adam, the responsibility of the fall will forever be on Adam – the man, husband, and God-ordained leader of the home (Rom.5:12; Eph.5:22-23).

Why did Adam remain silent and complicit in obvious sin? First and foremost, his own wicked heart that was ruled by fear and not faith (Gen.3:10, Pr.29:25; Rom.5:12). In fear, he held his tongue and did not communicate direction.²² In fear, he compromised what God clearly taught him. In fear, he allowed deception to continue and to deceive. The problem continued to Abraham (Gen.16:1-10) on to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-5) to the Ephesian church (Eph.5:23-33) to the church at Colosse (Col.3:18-21), and it continues today.

The problem of tame, passive, poor-communicating men is primarily on the individual man. Sure, the shaping influence of an anti-male climate does not help, but men must step into their God-ordained role to behave like Christ by communicating their purpose and intent (Jn.4:34). However, Pastors and churches must also intentionally teach men to "*put off*" the carnal understanding of male authority and headship, and to "*put on*" the mind of Christ regarding biblical husbandry (Eph.4:22-24).

Men are to fear God and seek to glorify Him as they lead and serve their families. This means they lead with the will of God prayerfully in view (Jms.4:15); practically, they have two-way dialogue with their spouse, pray, seek pastoral counsel, and provide their wife with clear direction on next steps.²³ The rubber meets the road when there is disagreement, which brings a decision point for **continued communication** or a silent, cold war.²⁴

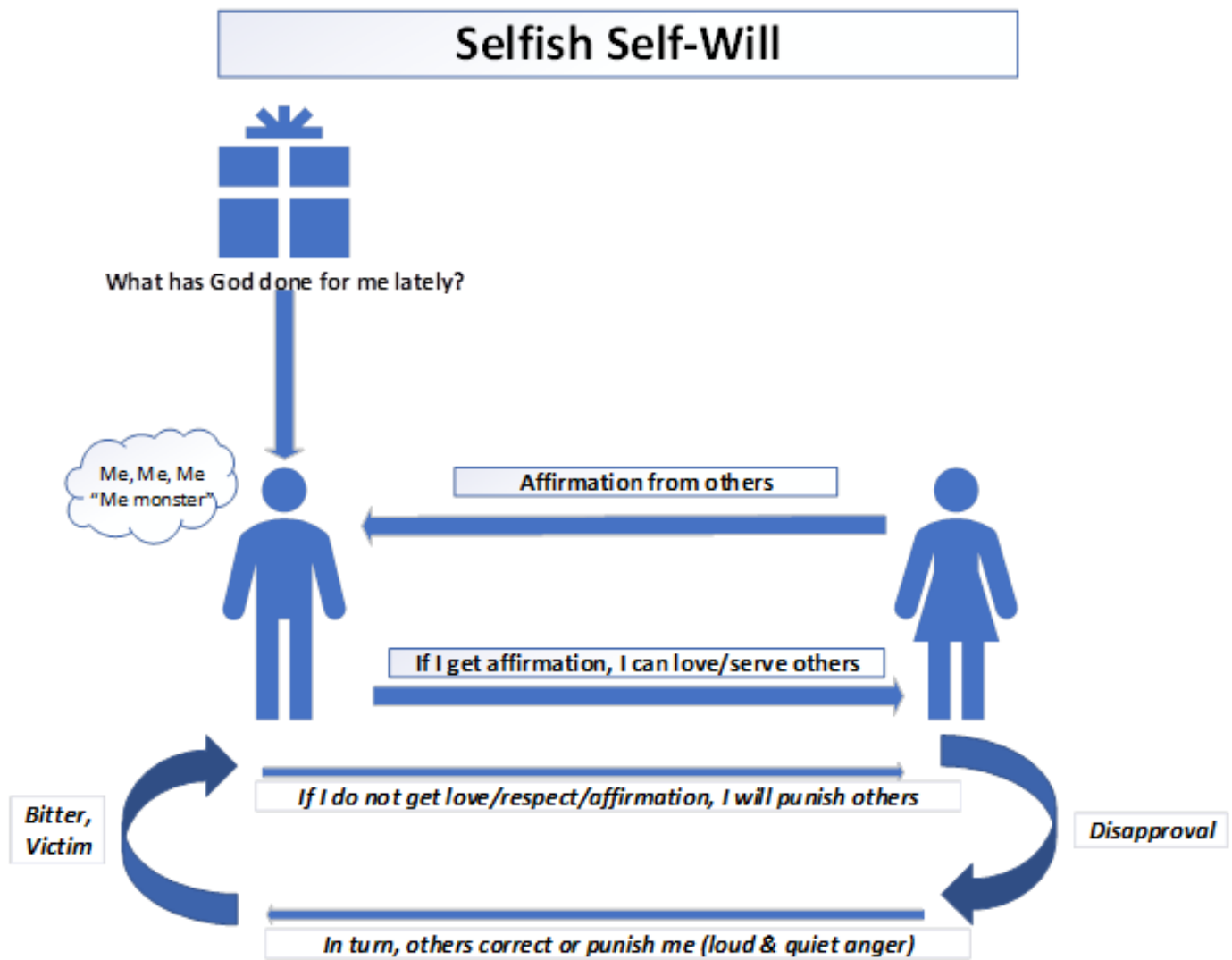
²⁰Gottman, J. and Silver, N, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work* (New York: Harmony Books, 1999, 2015), p.116-117.

²¹Ibid. Communication of respect versus bitterness and contempt is a key pillar. Another aspect is resisting insight from a wife, which is different than insubordination. As a help meet, wives have tremendous insight on their husbands and gaps in his decision-making. The goal for the husband is to seek insight and then discern the insight in line with Scripture, goals, and priorities; finally, he must communicate back to the wife on his decision regarding the insight.

²²Adam and Even enjoyed perfectly transparent fellowship and communication with God for a brief period in the garden. There was no fear, guilt, or shame in their physical nakedness or spiritual nakedness of their hearts. Nothing to hide. Unconfessed sin, hidden sin, and fear of man are the greatest inhibitors to transparent and courageous communication of Truth in all relationships (Gen.3:9-10). Conversely, a redemptive relationship, where both individuals see themselves as "chief of sinners" abiding in the grace of Christ, allows for transparent and courageous communication. Pastors, do you have a gospel-centered context in your church? Are members able to discuss their sin challenges with you and seek counsel?

²³The absence of communication, especially on the hard topics, is one of the quickest ways to brew insecurity, fear, and a desire to lead in a wife.

²⁴Biblical marriage advice pushes spouses toward each other (divorce is anti-redemption – Rom.5:8); however, devilish advice that encourages one spouse to leave another is often given by parents, siblings, and dear friends.

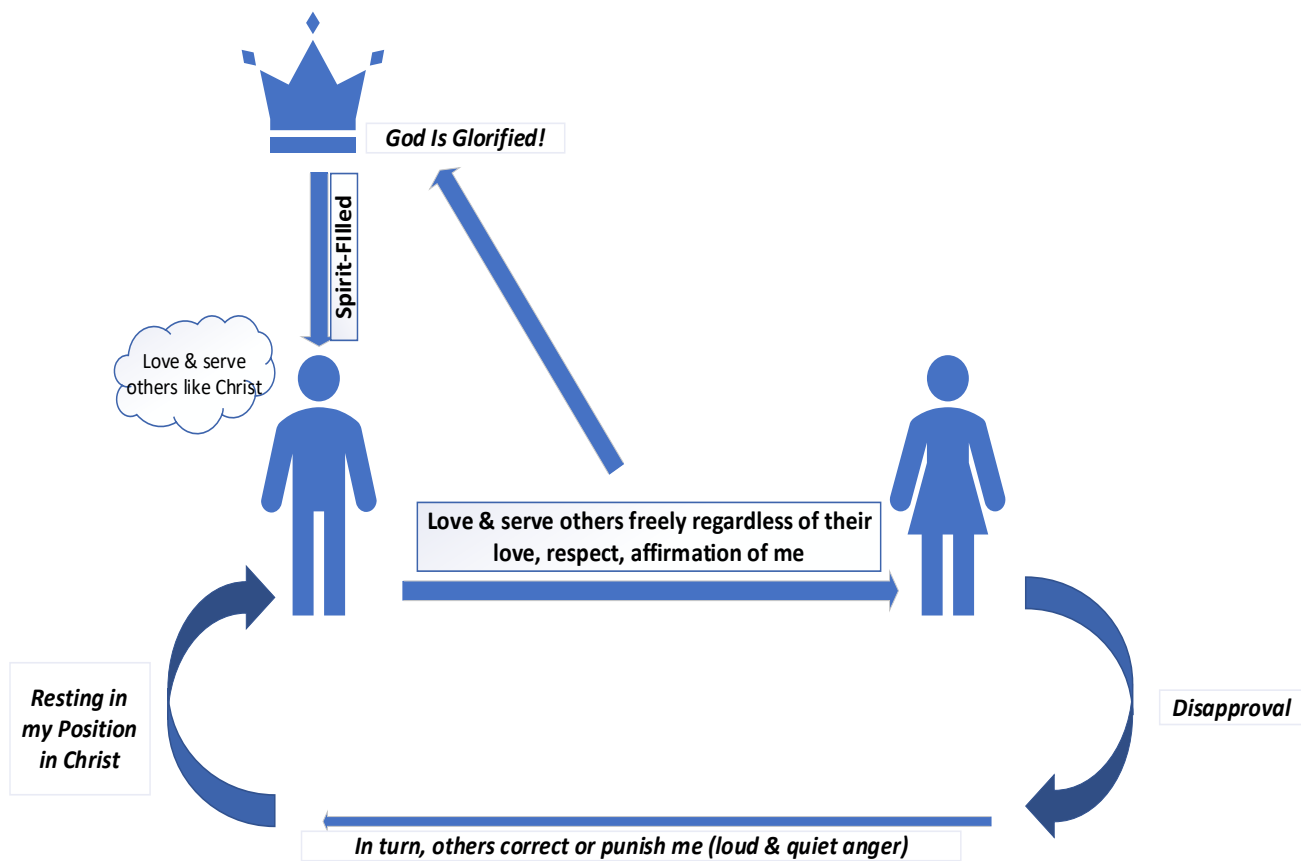


The top part of the above model is foundational to various relationship philosophies of love cups, love languages, and the contractual exchange of goods (money, security, sex, children, etc.). In essence, I will love you, if you love me. It is not inherently evil, and maintains some biblical pearls. However, it does not account for sin, failure, disease, injury, and living in a fallen world. Marriage is a covenant – for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. Christ is the standard for how we love others... “while we were yet sinners...” (Rom.5:8).

There is a place for biblical reciprocity in a marriage relationship, but reciprocity must always submit to the covenant of marriage. ***Sadly, most marriages die on the hill of reciprocity*** in a contractual marriage instead of shifting to a covenantal focus. How can a Christian continue to love their spouse when they are unlovable or unable/unwilling to keep up their side of the contract?

The contractual exchange theory of marriage insidiously introduces the fear of man into the relationship. Consequently, men are tamed to not lead or communicate when they operate out of sight and fear; they hold their tongue on an issue strictly based on the possibility of receiving disapproval and punishment from their wife. The spouse’s disapproval is greater than God’s approval. Their focus is on their own personal comfort instead of stepping into their biblical role for the glory of God (Phil.2:2-10).

Love like Christ



Scripturally, the husband is to abide in Christ's approval (Rom.8:1) and perform his ordained role to lead with God's glory in mind despite his wife's disapproval²⁵ after prayerful counsel and *meek* communication. Faith is key. Obedience is a must. Churches and Pastors must instill the duty to biblical masculinity and leadership. However, churches and pastors that take a strong stand on biblical roles are overlooked or avoided by female driven families.

A Template for Biblical Communication

Many men fall into the service-only ditch of "leadership" under the mis-applied principle of *Servant Leadership*; consequently, they only fulfill a task list and never provide leadership for the family. Christ-like leadership embodies *Servant Leadership*²⁶ (Jn.13-17; Phil.2:3-10), but it also includes clear direction, communication, teaching, instruction, and reproof (II Tim.3:16). Said another way, men are not only to serve their

²⁵While there is value in the popular book *The 5 Love Languages*; the underlying principle is based on reciprocity. One spouse can optimally love *only* if they are loved in accordance with their particular love language. This is not the pattern that Christ loved us in, which we are to model... "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom.5:8; Eph.5:23-33) and "so I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver" (Hos.3:2).

²⁶The last supper in John 13-17 illustrates Christ's perfect form of *Servant Leadership*: He served by washing feet, He loved unlovable Judas, and He set direction, instructed, and encouraged in great detail. Men are to serve *and* lead with clear, proactive communication like Christ.

wives and families, but to lead, instruct, and rebuke according to the Word of God. However, those proactive forms of leadership are contested by a lack of trust from layers of communicative sin that builds up in the relationship. Subsequently, wives and children oblige out of fear, which provokes children to wrath and wives to bitterness (Col.3:18-21).

In contrast, most Christians are open to the correction and chastening from God and His word because we trust Him, know of His wonderful love for us, and forgiveness of our sins (Heb.12:6; Rom.8:32; Jn.15:13). James 1:5 indicates that God “*upbraideth not*” in giving sinful, wandering believers’ wisdom; in essence, God does not hold back wisdom because of a grudge against sinners. Whereas, Christians have the tendency to upbraid or hold back out of grudge because of past communicative sin in the marriage; layers of shame build upon this grudge over time.

Husbands need to establish trust through a gospel-centered context within their home by modeling repentance and forgiveness of sins. Wives and children will know that the head of the household is trustworthy when they are not overt hypocrites, have a sincere “chief of sinners” attitude, and model repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. The gospel-centered context of trust is the cultural environment that biblical leaders must establish to lead a family in the Word of God.

Christ-like Husbandry

Adamic Husbandry	Christ-like Husbandry
Passive, weak, & silent	Clear direction and purpose communicated (Jn.4;34)
Angry and mean	Models Repentance & Forgiveness (I Jn.1:9; Mt.18)
Distant or absent	Humble, Meek, Serving (Phil.2:1-10)
Workaholic, too busy	Bible Study and Teaching of family
Idolatrous, sight-based	Prayerful and full of faith

Empowering Women

A biblical husband that steps into his role by the grace of God can provide a conducive environment for a wife to step into her role as a virtuous woman (Pr.31:10-31). *Proverbs* includes a wonderful Hebrew acrostic in Proverbs 31:10-31 that describes the virtuous woman, whereas there are only a handful of verses on the contentious wife (Pr.19:13, 21:9). The whole of the book provides the biblical setting – if husbands lead the family in the fear of the LORD in a wide spectrum of domestic roles (God-dependence, labor, finance, child-rearing, etc.), then this paves the way for the wife to virtuously help in the training of the children and keeping of the home.

The various roles of the wife must always be anchored to the one-flesh union with her husband (Gen.2:24). She is not sub-human, of inferior intellect, property, a maid, or a mere administrative assistant. The one-flesh

union is the most intimate and interlocking union that exists in Creation; hence, the Lord Jesus Christ refers to born again believers as His “*bride*” and fills His Word with marriage metaphors (Rev.19:7-9). Hence, the relationships of father and son, mother and daughter, and brother or sister become secondary to the one-flesh marriage union.

Some of the biblical roles for wives include: “*help meet*” (עֵזֶר, *ezer* and נֶגֶד, *neged* = Gen.2:18),²⁷ “*keeper of the home*” (οἰκουργός, *oikourgōs* – guard or watcher of the home – Tt.2:4-5), “*guide the house*” (οἰκοδεσποτέω, *oikodespoteo* – to lord over the household affairs – I Tim.5:14), “*to love their husbands, to love their children*,”²⁸ “*obedient to their own husbands*” (Tt.2:5), “*weaker vessel*”²⁹ (ἀσθενής, *asthenes* – weaker, feeble; σκεῦος, *skeuos* – vessel or jar – I Pt.3:7).

However, many of the biblical roles are being shirked by the self-centered society of today. Women have assumed the role of strong, assertive, and moral leader of the home in contrast to the passive, dim-witted, and morally perverse husband. Specific to America, this shift began around the industrial revolution when the economy called for men to leave their home and city for factory work. The economic boom of factory work produced several unintended consequences: the explosion of earning power, greed, and isolated male camaraderie that saw an increase in brothels and bars surrounding the factories. Men were no longer integrated with their families, nor were teaching their trade to their children. The cultural shift for men was to solely earn money and self-indulgently demand reprieve from husbandly or fatherly duties upon return from work. Women would plead for their husbands to come home after work instead of going to the bar to drunkenly spend their wages. Consequently, this shift led to the normalization of the immoral, greedy, and dim-witted man, while women began to normalize family leadership, moral backbone, and full training of sons and daughters.

Thus, begun the generations of men raised by women. Boys were shaped by mothers and aunts instead of their fathers. The father became distant, belittled, and aloof. Meanwhile, boys mimicked their fathers and rebelled against their mother’s instruction. Boys were shaped to see women as the moral rule-keepers that stood in the way of the folly of their fathers. In time, these boys became men that learned to passively tuck their tails in submission to their wives all the while plotting their getaway folly (i.e. drinking, 4-hour round of golf, man cave). The cycle continues as their wives raise their boys, who mimic what their fathers’ model.

Discarding Children

The recipe for societal disaster = disengaged fathers, working mothers, and children shipped off for 40-50 hours per week and shaped by the varying contexts of public or private education and athletic coaches. One of the normalized snares on the family unit is the dual-income economy, which draws women away from home to the workforce to supplement the “*American dream*” lifestyle while children are sent to daycare and school.³⁰ The biblical standard has always been for parents to be the core instructors of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (Deut.6:7-9; Prov.1:8-9). However, children now see their parents for a few hours in the evening and possibly at the weekend, which is further supplemented by electronic devices. Many parents recognize the rat-race is not

²⁷The Hebrew word behind “*help meet*” is *ezer* that means “to help, succour” and *neged* that means “in front of, corresponding, or counterpart.” As help meet, the wife is a helpful and interlocking counterpart.

²⁸Self-less love is at the center of guiding a busy home and full life with little ones.

²⁹The physical nature and frame of a woman is weaker than that of a man; women are described to be delicate like lilies (SOS 2:3, 7:2). However, the physical pain, sleep deprivation, and emotional strain of child-bearing, birth, and nursing an infant attest to the strength and fortitude of a wife. Subsequently, men are to honor their wives (I Pt.3:7).

³⁰As with all converts, each family unit has its own context and unique set of challenges. Churches need to help families navigate out of the snares of their past life in patience and meekness. The decision for a wife to stop working and care for her own children requires engagement in the spiritual decision by the husband and financial planning.

healthy for their children, but it seems too late. Thoughtful instruction and encouragement in Scripture can go a long way with exasperated parents that see the negative impacts on their child.

The Imperative for Listening

From Genesis (Gen.3:8, 17) to Revelation (Rev.1:3, 2:7, 3:6 22:17), mankind is called to hear, listen, and obey the Word of God. The Hebrew word *shama* (שָׁמַע) is 1,157 times in the Masoretic Text, and it means “to hear, to obey.” The Greek word ἀκούω (*akouo*)³¹ is found 437 times in the Received Text, and it means to hear with the intent of obeying. Similarly, the Greek word behind “obey” is ὑπακούω (*hypoakouo*), which means “to hear under” and gives the sense of hearing under as a subordinate with the intent of obeying.³²

The result of disengaged fathers, working mothers, and discarded children has been the creation of a disorder that excuses children (and adults, too) from their oppositional rebellion and from learning how to listen! Out of control children at home are sent to school with no hope of being reined in by an overwhelmed teacher. Schools and psychiatrists have worked with the APA (American Psychological Association) to develop the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder. The core tenets of the disorder are inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, which contrast the behaviors of listening/obeying, self-control, and delayed gratification set forth in *Proverbs*.

In particular, Proverbs 4:20-27 reveals the father’s role in training the child’s receptive organs (ears, eyes, heart, and behaviors). The father makes the child listen and control his various body parts for the future goal of health and established ways in righteousness (delayed gratification). A father must first *make* his child listen with the goal that the child would *desire* to listen (Pr.3:1). As well, the window of this training closes quickly; Proverbs 19:18 states, “*Chasten thy son while there is hope, And let not thy soul spare for his crying.*”

- Train the receptive organs to penetrate the heart that drives behavior
 - o Ears (Pr.4:20, Dt.6:7)
 - “attend” קָשַׁב, *qashab* – to listen attentively.
 - “incline” נָטָה, *natah* – to stretch or bend down to listen.
 - o Eyes (Pr.4:21, Dt.6:8-9)
 - “let not depart” אַל לֵזֶז – *al luz* – don’t let them escape your sight, continual focus
- Penetrate the heart (Pr.3:1, 4:21, 23; Dt.6:5-6)
 - o “keep” שָׁמַר, *shamar* – to guard, watch over, memorize and meditate
 - o “with all diligence” מְאֹד מְשַׁמֵּר, *mi kal mishmor* – to guard intensively so truth does not escape!
 - See II Pt.1:5 “giving all diligence”
- Motivate with future reward (delayed gratification) = life, health, way of wisdom (Pr.4:22)
 - o “life” חַי, *chay* – to be alive, growing, active
 - o “health” מְרַפֵּא, *imarpe* – health, cure, remedy for a cursed world
- The content of the heart motivates action behavior = Fear of the LORD (Job 28:28; Pr.3:1; Jms.1:13-15)
 - o Mouth
 - “put away forward mouth”

³¹The intensive form is ἀκροατής (*akroates*), which is found in James 1:22, 23, and 25 as “hearer.”

³²This word is found twenty-one times in the TR and is translated as “obey” (Mt.8:27, Rom.6:12), “obedient” (Acts 6:7), and “hearken” (Acts 12:13).

- Lips
 - “*perverse lips put far from thee*”
- Eyes
 - “*eyes look right on*” – focused on the path of righteousness, not idols of world.
- Feet”
 - “*ponder the path*”
 - “*let all thy ways be established*”
 - “*remove thy foot from evil*

Excusing the Need to Listen

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder³³ is a catch all label to describe the effects of normal hyperactivity and attention challenges in a child; specifically, classification is based on two broad categories: inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity. Secular psychology and education “experts” created a list of eighteen undesirable behaviors in children; a child that exhibits some or all of the behaviors for a period of time is provided the label. The key issue is that there are no biological markers, and the diagnostic criteria is subjectively left to a parent or teacher to determine that the behavior is undesirable in the construct of the American educational system. Some conservative secularists have postulated that this diagnosis is anti-male in that it pre-dominantly seeks to subdue the overactive male biology. Ultimately, the reality of inattention is in all children, and the need for training children to pay attention is found in Proverbs 4:20-27; in this passage, Solomon reveals the need to train the ears, eyes, heart, mouth, and feet to listen to Wisdom.

Former Harvard Psychologist, Dr. Jerome Kagan, notes:

*“ADHD is an invention. Every child who’s not doing well in school is sent to see a pediatrician, and the pediatricians says: ‘Its ADHD; here’s Ritalin. In fact, 90 percent of these 5.4 million kids don’t have an abnormal dopamine metabolism. The problem is, if a drug is available to doctors, they’ll make the corresponding diagnosis.’”*³⁴

Each child is created with different giftedness, energy levels, physical attributes, and personalities; however, the subjectivity of “*Normal*” has caused angst over personalities that differ from the parent or schools’ perspective of normal. Consequently, some parents fall into the trap of wanting a “normal” child by secular standards and proceed with medicating the child with hopes of conformity. In a fallen world where each child carries the curse of sin this label could technically be applied to every child that is “*Left to himself*” (Prov.29:15). The point – all children require boundaries, instruction, and training in a customized and loving approach that a parent is best suited to provide.

Biblically, every single child needs to be taught the ways of wisdom, understanding, justice, judgment, equity, subtilty, knowledge, and discretion from the Word of God (Prov.1:1-6). Solomon emphasized the basics of training children as follows: children are to fear the LORD, listen to parents, and avoid sinful influences

³³This is not to be confused with lifelong attention and learning disabilities related to brain damage, sensory impairments (deaf, dumb), and autism that present actual pathological biomarkers.

³⁴Kagan, Jerome. “What about tutoring instead of pills?” *Spiegel Online* (August 2, 2012): <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/child-psychologist-jerome-kagan-on-overprescribing-drugs-to-children-a-847500.html>: accessed October 26, 2022.

(Prov.1:7-10). The secular construct provides a diagnostic label that does appropriately define sinful behavior of an untrained child; however, it does not address the child's sin nature and need for biblical wisdom and training.

The DSM describes ADHD as a constellation of eighteen abnormal behaviors under the two categories of inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity. The secular construct struggles to differentiate diagnostic labels of ADHD from so called normal behavior of a sin-cursed child. The Word of God reveals that normal behavior of an unregenerated individual that rejects biblical wisdom is folly, shame, and destruction, whereas normal behavior of a Christian stems from a regenerated heart that walks in the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit. Proverbs 20:11 reveals that a child's behavior will reveal training or a lack thereof, *"Even a child is known by his doings, Whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."*

Ultimately, the ADHD label describes the behavior of an untrained child. Proverbs 29:15 and 17 reveal the contrasting effects of training a child or neglecting their soul, *"The rod and reproof give wisdom: But a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; Yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul."* The loving parent that seeks to train their child must understand the biblical principle of spiritual gifts that are existent pre-salvation and energized upon salvation. Naturally, a parent may seek to force their giftedness and perspective onto their child; however, unless that child has the same gift of the parent, friction and confusion can occur. Recognition of the child's gift and subsequent perspective can guide the parent in their customized approach to training and discipline. The deployment of Wisdom and exercising of the rod should not be negated, but accompanied with a precision approach based the perceived gift of the child.

Tools for the Pastor and Parent

- Identify shaping influences (parenting style, siblings?)
- Consider diet, sleep schedule, physical activity, screen time, 1:1 time with parents.
- Discern external behavioral manifestations (out of control, inattentive, preoccupied, does not listen).
- Discern the war within the heart (desires attention and love from parents with boundaries).
- Discern the core heart issue in the cascade of unbelief (folly in the heart, fear of abandonment)
- Walk them back to a biblical view of themselves and to a point of faith in Scripture.

Guaranteed Rebellion

Proverbs 22:15 states, *"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; But the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."* If the foolishness is never driven out with intentional training, then the end result is guaranteed. Opposition, rebellion, greater folly, destruction, and death. Proverbs 1:31 states, *"therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."* If the parent neglects to train or the child refuses to hear, either way the end result of rebellion leads to more suffering in the form of self-destruction. The foolish child is a calamity to the father and heaviness to the mother (Pr.10:1; 19:13). Simply, any path of self-reliance apart from God's Word will bring destruction and death (Pr.14:12).

The APA provides the diagnostic criteria for ODD (oppositional defiance disorder) as negative, defiant, or hostile behaviors for a period of at least six months. ODD is described as a heritable trait that is passed from parent to child; however, a genetic link has not yet been found to deterministically provide a pathological root. The APA does see a key shaping influence of ODD is *"insecure attachment"* where the child rebels to gain attention from parents that are disengaged from the child's life because of work, divorce, and general lack of desire (i.e. discarded children). Believe it or not, one of the key non-medication treatments is called *"attachment-*

based family therapy” that seeks to restore trust and communication between parents and kids. Once again, the Word of God provides clear instruction for the Christ-like family unit; it starts with fathers that will submit, obey, and lead.

The Insidious Nature of Acceptable Idolatry and Addiction³⁵ in Christian Homes

Psalm 115:8 “*They that make them are like unto them; So is every one that trusteth in them.*”

Do you have a religious home or a complete-in-Christ home? Are we teaching our kids to be moral, conservative, and religious only? Or, to deeply depend on Christ more than anything else for all areas of life? Sadly, religious homes can fall prey to modeling forms of idolatry for comfort, deliverance, and provision. Idolatry leads the worshiper to mockingly resemble the spiritual dearth and physical emptiness of that very idol.

We resemble what we worship. Do we bear the image of Christ or the image of our idol?

- The dad who resembles the sports team or hobby with every article of clothing and opportunity to talk.
- The mom who religiously copies and resembles every trend from social media.
- The child who resembles the latest influencer in dress, talk, and behavior.
- The individual who resembles the great details of an athlete’s statistics.
- The family that talks, plans, and flaunts material things worships money.
- The teenager that stares in the mirror frequently and communicates in self-absorption worships themselves.

Take Home Considerations:

- Pastor, do you biblically instruct and model the masculine role of husband and father for your assembly? Do you intrusively seek to help develop husbands/fathers in Christ-like leadership?
- Husband and father, what areas are you struggling with in the leadership of your family (communication problems, fear of man (or wife))?
- Husbands, do you see yourself as chief of sinners in your family? Or, is everything your wife and childrens fault (I Tim.1:15, Mt.7:1-10, Job 31:15, Rom.5:8)?
- Wife and mother, will you opt out of the power struggle and rest in a position to support and compliment your husbands leadership?
- Parents, what are you modeling for your kids?

³⁵Biblical addiction counselor, Mark Shaw, notes that refusing the wisdom of *Proverbs* in the family unit is a sure way to produce a child with a variety of addictions (technology, food, drugs, alcohol, pornography). He indicates rejection of biblical wisdom and replacement with mass secular parenting creates the following mentalities of addictive behavior: entitlement (“I deserve”), consumer (“I get”), victim (“Its everyone else’s fault”), perishing (“nothing ever goes my way”), and rebellious (“My way or the highway”). Reference: Shaw, M. *How NOT to Raise and Addict: Biblical Prevention Strategies*. Bemidji, MN. Focus Publishing, 2009.