

HOMEWARD MEN: A series of talks about how to be the man you were destined to be.

[Note: The scripts for this video series are still in process of development. This is a foretaster]

Introduction:

Hey Guys. I'm talking to the men here.

'Homeward Men' is a series of short video sessions discussing the various roles the average man has to take on in life, and how to cope with those roles and to do them better. Perhaps you might get together with a few other men, watch each video, and then discuss the issues and advice, and share your own experience and insights, pray for one another, and hold each other accountable. You won't regret it.

Initially, I expected my audience would mainly be homeschooling Dads; but the principles of how to be the man God made you to be, apply to all men everywhere. Much of what we talk about will be how to be a good husband and father; but if you are single, you can still apply these principles to help you better relate to those around you. The sections on being a good partner to your wife, can help you understand and relate to the women in your life, and to treat them with the love and respect they deserve. You can apply these principles in your everyday relationships with your sisters and mother in your family, to your female work colleagues. And the section on fatherhood can help you be a wise mentor and friend to the younger people in your life.

Hi. My name is Bruce McNeice, a former school principal, homeschool dad and education consultant. I've been married to Karen, the love of my life, for 42 years, and we've got 20 grandchildren. During 30 years of ministry, I've had the pleasure of meeting with over 3000 families, consulting about home-based education and parenting issues.

As I've watched parents working hard to pursue their vision of the good-life, I've noticed the relationships that have produced good fruit, and also those that have come apart at the seams. There have been some relationships where I could see early signs that they were not healthy. Often, I've said nothing, not wanting to stick my nose in where it is none of my business, only to regret it because years later, inevitably, they've ended in divorce, or their kids have gone off the rails.

If only I had said something, warned them before it was too late. If only I had been a good friend and mentor. The Bible says in Proverbs... *"As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend."*

So, after 42 years of marriage and watching the lives of many friends, family and clients; I believe these insights will transform your life and save you from much

disappointment and frustration down the track. Now, if you are watching these videos in a men's group, then after each section, pause the video to think about the concepts, retell what you have just heard, then share your own experiences and discuss the issues. Also pray for one another during the week while practicing how to be the man you were destined to be. So, let's jump into it.....

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Guys. Have you ever found yourself caught up in what is called the 'marriage crazy cycle'? It happens to married couples, boyfriend and girlfriend, or any male-female interaction. The 'crazy-cycle' happens when, even though a couple really love and respect each other, they fall into a pattern of reacting to each other and arguing in a destructive way.

The way it often goes is – without meaning to, the man has been in some way insensitive to his woman. She has been just a little hurt by a comment or action or something he neglected to do. At first, she tries to forget about it, and let it go. On the surface, everything seems to be ok; but the feeling of her not being loved creeps up and then after some little trigger, she makes a comment that has just the slightest twist or barb of resentment, or the slightest hint of a nag. Or maybe, she gives you the silent treatment and won't tell you what is upsetting her, because she thinks that if you really cared, then you would already know what's up.

This catches you by surprise. Totally clueless, you think... *"Where did that come from? I'm doing everything I can to love her; but I just can't seem to make her happy."*

In this typical scenario, the man then feels disrespected and not appreciated. He reacts to defend himself, and before you know it, they are both arguing, hypersensitive to the tone of the other person, saying things they will regret, and they have fallen into the 'crazy-cycle'.

Guys, have you ever thought... *"My wife (or girlfriend) is from a different planet – she doesn't understand me; and who can possibly understand a woman, and give her what she needs?"*

You are not alone. Even essentially good-hearted people who are madly in-love with each other, fall into the crazy-cycle primarily because men and women just think differently and have different needs.

So - I've found some wisdom that will help you jump off this crazy-cycle round-about, and enrich your relationship with your wife/girl-friend/sister. It could even save your marriage & family from destruction.

In the following sessions, I'm going to discuss the man's role in the family from seven perspectives. Some of them overlap, but they are the seven P's of being a husband and father. If you can practice and master these seven roles, I can pretty-

much guarantee you will have a happier marriage and family, and enjoy your other relationships more.

The seven Ps of being a man are...

Provider, Protector, Partner, Parent, Principal (a servant-leadership role), and then Priest & Prophet. I'll explain each one later, but these last two (Priest & Prophet) go together in one discussion – we could call it the Padre role. Some of these areas need more discussion than others; and being a good *Partner* to your wife or girlfriend is probably the hardest one to do, and so we will have a number of sessions on being a good Partner.

Australia has historically been known as “the land of the absent father”. A study at Monash University has found...

“Today’s Australian fathers are believed to be more “hands-on” and engaged with their children than the stereotypical absent breadwinner of generations past.

However, the research exploring [Australian fatherhood between 1919 and 2019](#) has found that while men’s family roles have changed, deep-rooted societal and cultural forces keep them from being the kind of fathers many of them would like to be.”
(Murphy & Thomson, 2021)

Historically, Australian men have often abdicated their responsibilities as husband and father, or focussed on just one aspect (one of the P’s such as Provider) to the detriment of other areas and ended up with a resentful wife and children. Many of us may not have had an excellent father role-model. So how can we know how to be a good husband and father. Even if you make a vow to be different to your father; it is easy to end up falling into the same mistakes – or you might react and throw out the good habits you’ve inherited, along with the bad.

I want to help you break that cycle, start afresh, and be the best husband and father you can be.

The first P we will explore is – how to be a good Partner. Although it is likely the reason you got married, this role is a difficult role for many men, but crucial for the happiness of everyone in your family including yourself. It is the most complicated topic so we break it up into four sessions.

To help us understand our women, this precious gift from God, that we are awed by and yet frustrated with as well – and also to understand ourselves and our own reactions, I have gleaned ideas from three different models of relating that come from a Judeo-Christian mindset.

- Dr Emerson Eggerich’s model of ‘Love and Respect’
- Dr Gary Chapman’s model of the ‘5 Love Languages’, and

- Dr William Glasser's 'Choice Theory' about how to identify depleted needs in yourself and others; then how to fill those needs in an appropriate way.

I pray you will find these discussions eye-opening and immensely helpful to jump off the crazy cycle round-about and have a rich satisfying relationship with the woman in your life.

For the remainder of this introductory session, let's just begin with some helpful tips on how to show the women in your life, that you truly love them.

I'm really excited about the topic of being a Partner, because if you get this one right, you will be so blessed in your relationship with your wife/girlfriend/sister; and also blessed in your relationship with God. The Apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 3:7, implores husbands to live considerately with their wife, giving honour to the woman... so that their prayers will not be hindered.

Being a Good Partner (Part a): The 50:50 or 100% Principle of Servant-Leadership

Ideas have consequences – for good or ill. One of the prevalent and most destructive ideas that I've seen in men is the simple concept that marriage and parenting is a 50:50 job. The thinking goes that *"As the man, I go to work to earn the money to provide for this family. Whereas a woman's job is caring for the home and family"*.

A wise mentor in my early marriage, Richard Thackeray, once said. *"Yes, you may have different roles at different times; but no, it's not 50:50. Marriage is 100% and 100%."*

Unfortunately, I've known men who think their only job is to earn the money; and the wife cooks the meals, cleans the house, and looks after the kids.

The 50:50 man thinks that because he's had a stressful day at work, he has a right to come home, put his feet up, have a beer, relax (undisturbed by the kids of course) while he reads the newspaper or looks at Facebook, or even spends time in prayer.

Meanwhile, his wife has been up before dawn, worked all day with the children, and still has to clean up and bathe the little ones before getting the meal on the table; and then wash up and get the children to bed.

And then he wonders why at 9:30 or 10 o'clock, she's too tired for any intimate time with him. And then on the weekend, the 50:50 man thinks *"I've been stressed out working all week. So, I just need to sleep-in and relax."* Meanwhile the wife is up early tending to the kids, cleaning the house, and fixing meals, then taking the kids to ballet and football, etc. Can you see how there is something really out-of-balance here. This man is stealing life from his wife.

Can you see how destructive this attitude is? Yes, we do need times of rest and recuperation, but not at the expense of your wife and family. So, how to make regular times for rest and recuperation, is something you need to strategically negotiate together with your wife. This will ensure that both of you get the rest you need.

Now, for you single guys, if you are still living with your parents and siblings, have a good think about whether you are really pulling your weight in contributing to the smooth flow of life in your household... or do you leave the bulk of the housework to your sisters and mother.

In the span of eight years, my wife and I had five children. I remember when we had five little ones, I was working for a hardware store, truck-driving, delivering timber, cement bags, fibro and steel mesh, etc. It was rush, rush, rush and everyone wanted their building materials delivered yesterday. So, by 5pm each day, I was exhausted and sometimes thought, *"I would love to come home and just relax. That's my retreat, my haven."*

But thankfully, I understood that my wife was also working hard with the children; and my most important work for the day was to minister to her, to refresh her, help her, love her, and to love my children.

So, to cope with this life I've been blessed with, I worked out a little routine of stopping the car one block from home, where I would have a 5 or 10 minutes rest at the most, to kind of defrag the brain. I would pray and give over all the frustrations of work to God. The Bible says to *"cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you."*

You don't need hours and hours of rest to do that. If you truly know Jesus, you can give it all over and let go of your cares and worries in an instant.

During this 5 or 10 minute pause, I would also pray for the Holy Spirit to fill me with strength and love and kindness, ready to serve and support my wife. It was important to have this short reset, because I knew the moment I would open the front door, that was busy hour. The children would run over to greet me, etc. I had to be ready to play with the children and train them to clean up the yard and house (not barking orders at them, but in a friendly happy tone, working with them). Then I would either help with the meal prep, or support Karen by taking the baby while she trains the older ones to prepare the meal; or maybe Karen just needed to sit down and have a cuppa and talk to an adult; and to tell me about her day. Then I would encourage her and pray with her. It's not all about me and my day; it's about doing life together and ministering to the needs of the other.

As my mentor told me years earlier – it's not 50:50. Married life (and indeed family life) requires a 100% being present, commitment, rolling up your sleeves and jumping in boots-and-all. It's real hard work at the time; but the benefits you reap are immense. And I am blessed to say my boys who are grown now with families of their

own, have that same work ethic and practical love for their wives. They exhibit a servant-leadership attitude that I learnt from my own father as well as my mentor, Richard Thackeray.

Men – we cannot afford to carry on the Australian pattern of “the land of the absent father”.

Therefore, the first way you can be a good Partner is to be a servant ministering to the needs of your wife. Here are some other ways you can show your love (and single guys- think about how you can apply the same principles to love the women in your life in an appropriate way...

- Treat your woman like your queen. Let her know she is the most important person in your life – more important than your work, more important than your own needs.
- Give her your full attention and be available to help her, and to listen to her.
- Always speak kindly and gently to her; never demanding or sarcastic.
- Tell her you love her every day (and not just when you want something)
- Notice when she tries to dress nicely, or she changes her hair, etc
- Do things together. If there are chores to do (housework, yard-work, gardening) try to do it together. Rather than each one doing different jobs at opposite ends of the house, try tackling one room together. You get a quicker win, and get to chat and have fun while doing it.
Also think about how to involve the children and constantly train them as well.
- Gardening is a particularly good activity to share and do together. Don Bourke (the famous gardener on TV) has said it's amazing how many marriages have been saved through gardening together. If you are growing apart with different interests, then gardening can be a unifying thing.
- Speaking of different interests – try to show an interest in your wife's hobby and then champion and facilitate her success – never mock her.

Ok – that's some tips on how to show your woman that you love her. In the next session, I want to talk about how to be a good Partner by using unconditional love to break free of the 'crazy cycle'. Oh- this topic of how couples get caught in the crazy cycle, and how to get out of it, will revolutionise your relationship. You do not want to miss it, so tune in to the next video about this aspect of being a good partner.

Then after discussing your role as your wife's Partner, we will discuss being a good Provider for your family. That's the role you are probably most wired for, but still might find it a source of angst. Then we will look at fatherhood, being a good Parent to your kids. Being a father may be very challenging, especially if you haven't had a good role model of fatherhood. In later sessions we will also discuss helpful insights to empower you in your role of Protector, the role of Padre (ie., being the Priest and

Prophet in the home); and finally your role as Principal of your homeschool, or how to be a good leader in your family, church or workplace.

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Let me pray for you...

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PARTNER (Part b) Being a Good Partner, Changing the Crazy-Cycle

Hi Guys. In our last session, we discussed the man's role as 'Partner', and we looked at how to be a 'servant-leader' with a 100% commitment rather than a 50:50 mindset. Today we will look at another aspect of being a good partner with your wife.

To help us understand our women, this precious gift from God, that we are awed by and yet frustrated with as well – and also to understand ourselves and our own reactions, I have gleaned ideas from three different models of relating that come from a Judeo-Christian mindset.

- Dr Emerson Eggerich's model of 'Love and Respect'
- Dr Gary Chapman's model of the '5 Love Languages', and
- Dr William Glasser's 'Choice Theory' about how to identify depleted needs in yourself and others; then how to fill those needs in an appropriate way.

I pray you will find these discussions eye-opening and immensely helpful to jump off the crazy cycle and have a rich satisfying relationship with the Love-of-your-life. The simplest model to start with and to get off the crazy cycle round-about is the concept of 'Love and Respect'.

Being a Good Partner: Changing the 'Crazy Cycle'.

Do you ever find you and your wife get caught up in a cycle of negative comments where one of you says something that the other reacts to, and back-and-forth it goes? You love your wife so much; but you keep finding yourself arguing with her and invariably you wish you could take back the negative reaction that really hurt her.

Dr Emerson Eggerichs has a series of books about love and respect in marriage. He explains it like this... *"Marriage craziness is when we keep doing the same thing – over and over – with the same negative results."* He talks about how when we are hurt and frustrated, *"we continue reacting in negative ways trying to motivate our spouse to be positive."*

"Every married couple goes through this... The topics change and the intensity varies, but the crazy cycle continues."

During 42 years of marriage, I've come to realise that most often, if my wife is upset, that even if it seems like she is attacking me, it's not actually about me. It's usually an indicator of some frustration or worry; so, it really helps if I do not react, but try to understand what she's going through. The key is to see past this craziness to the heart of your spouse.

Rather than react to her, try to calmly ask questions such as: "Darling, you seem concerned about something. What's on your mind?" Then make sure you don't jump in and try to fix it or defend yourself. Just keep asking clarifying questions, and then

suggest you pray together for some answers. This lets her know that you are listening, and that you really care about the things she is concerned about.

However, sometimes, she is actually reacting to something I've said or done, or not done. So often, couples who really love each other get into an arguing cycle because the woman is not feeling much love and appreciation from her husband, and the man is not feeling respect and admiration from his wife. Even when you both have the best of intentions, your words can be easily misinterpreted.

Ephesians 5:33 gives a key to this dilemma.

"Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Men, if your wife is ever saying something that seems to be nagging, or sarcastic, or in any way negative, you would be wise to assume that she does not actually intend to attack you. I hate to say it, but for a start, you may be just hearing her through a filter of insecurity. However, she is likely just frustrated or insecure about something, and often, her words are rooted in a feeling of being unloved or not protected.

And men, your negative reactions are most likely rooted in a feeling of not being respected. When a woman feels insecure about being loved, she fails to show the man the respect and honour he craves. Likewise, when a man feels a lack of respect, he fails to show the love that his wife needs.

However, if you both try to think more about filling the other person's needs, then it eventually ends up being reciprocated.

Author Susan Mathis says... *"Marriage is a lot like royalty".* She explains... *"God has put in the heart of every little girl to be a princess. She dresses up, talks about it, even dreams about it. As a woman, she wants to be first in the heart of her prince. She wants to be loved and treasured like a princess. Whereas, a little boy wants to be the hero, defending the fort and saving others from danger. As a man he wants to be the Prince, the hero that his princess admires and respects. He is designed by God to be a man of honour, one who is responsible to provide and care for his princess."*

When married folk feel unloved or disrespected, they often tend to predict and judge the other person's motives – yet it is usually a distorted picture.

Mathis explains ... *"Research shows that successful couples don't make condemning judgements about the other. They choose to trust their mate's intentions." "...Once a couple decides to see each other as basically good-willed people, it changes their perspective and the filter through which they view their relationship."*

"Good-willed doesn't mean we will do good all the time. It just means that the intentions are good."

[Susan Mathis (2011) LOVE & RESPECT: A ROYAL MARRIAGE, accessed at focusonthefamily.com on 24/04/2024.]

When I first began to understand how men and women are different and how one needs love and the other needs respect – sometimes I had a tendency to use this knowledge to try to change the other person. As I've learnt, that doesn't help either. Guys listen to this next statement carefully.... The only person you can control is yourself. You may at some point in the future, be able to calmly share with your wife how her words make you feel disrespected; but often this can backfire, and you end up back in the crazy-cycle.

I've found it's always best to leave it up to the Holy Spirit to enlighten your wife about her faults. It's not my job to change my wife. I've got enough of a task to change and improve my own character, and so I've decided to leave her reactions to God. My job is to love and appreciate her just the way she is. Even though I don't always do this perfectly, I understand that as a man, my responsibility is to make sure my wife feels secure, loved and highly valued.

Men, it's much more prudent for you to believe your wife has basically good intentions; but she may simply be frustrated by something or worried and insecure about something; or she may be unsure that you really love her and highly value her.

So guys – if you want to improve your marriage, then start there. Let her know she is loved and show it through every possible means. Another starting point is to take time to find out and understand if she is frustrated or insecure about anything. It may be something you can fix; or it may be that she just needs a listening ear.

The key to breaking the crazy cycle is to first of all, stop reacting by just trusting that she is basically good hearted, and then be determined that you will always act and speak to her with kindness, tenderness and love every day – irrespective of whether you feel your wife is respecting and appreciating you or not.

Did you get that? I'll say it again...

Be determined to act and speak with kindness, tenderness and love every day – irrespective of whether you feel your wife is respecting and appreciating you or not.

Just believe she has basically good intentions, and leave the rest to God. This principle of just trusting she is basically a good-hearted woman, no matter how she is coming across, is so vitally important. A large part of Jesus main message to us was about God's totally unconditional love for us; and that we need to have a totally unconditional love for one another.

Believe me when I say that a lot of the time, when we feel like a comment had a hurtful barb in it; the other person was actually just giving factual information with no negative tone in it at all. But because we've all got baggage – ie., some insecurity or deep hurt from the past, this becomes a trigger point for a reaction. Then all of a sudden, we are both caught up in the crazy-cycle again.

But – it can stop here. Obviously, it takes two to have an argument; so, someone has got to jump off the negative round-about, and start spinning it in a positive direction.

I remember in my teen years, at church youth group, there was a song that said...
"Love is something you do. Not always something you can feel, but it's real."

I've often heeded that message, and I've found that if I act lovingly in spite of how I feel; ...if I do and say loving things often enough, I eventually start to feel love for the person.

So remember guys – just as you need respect, your wife needs to know she is loved. I heard about a wife who complained to her husband... *"you never tell me you love me anymore"*; and he was dumbfounded and then tried to reassure her by saying...
"Don't you remember, on our wedding day I told you I love you. So, if I ever change my mind, I'll let you know."

Well obviously, just telling her once doesn't cut it. So, let's practice getting out of the crazy cycle by trusting your wife is basically good-hearted and has good intentions; plus let her know you love her every day.

This can work with your female work colleagues as well. Don't react. Trust they have basically good intentions. Ask clarifying questions. And tell them often how much you appreciate them.

Here's a quick reminder of some ideas from my introductory session on how to show your woman that you love her.

- Treat her like your queen. Let her know she is the most important person in your life – more important than your work, more important than your own needs.
 - Give her your full attention and be available to help her, and to listen to her.
 - Always speak kindly and gently to her; never demanding or sarcastic.
 - Tell her you love her every day (and not just when you want something)
 - Notice when she tries to dress nicely, or she changes her hair, etc
 - Do things together. If there are chores to do (housework, yard-work, gardening) try to do it together. Rather than each one doing different jobs at opposite ends of the house, try tackling one room together. You get a quicker win, and get to chat while doing it.
- Also think about how to involve the children and constantly train them as well.

- Gardening is a particularly good activity to share and do together. Don Bourke (the famous gardener) has said it's amazing how many marriages have been saved through gardening together. If you are growing apart with different interests, then gardening can be a unifying thing.
- Speaking of different interests – try to show an interest in your wife's hobby and then champion and facilitate her success – never mock her.

There are many ways to tell and to show your love. It's best to have a multi-sensory approach in case words are not enough, or if just doing things for her is not getting through. In our next session, we will discuss some ideas to tell and show her you love her using the five love languages. This will be a really exciting revelation for you because so many men think they are showing love to their wife, but she is still not feeling loved. This next topic will help you understand why, and what to do about it.

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Let me pray for you....

Being a Good Partner (Part c): The Five Love Languages.

Guys- Do you love your wife? Well of course you do. However, as much as you genuinely love your wife and try to show her that, you may find yourself trapped in the 'crazy cycle', of misunderstanding and disrespect.

In another video on 'Choice Theory', I will speak about how poor behaviour is often the result of a person having a depleted bank of needs, and they are trying to fill those needs in an inappropriate way.

Today, as we think about how to be a good husband, a good Partner for your wife, I would like to focus on one of these basic needs – the need for love & belonging. Managing the special relationship with your wife can be quite tricky. It's lovely when you can just be yourself and relax with someone special without having to constantly be thinking about how you are coming across. However, Dr William Glasser explains that no matter how much we love a spouse, friend, or child, each of us is a different person who is viewing the world through our own ideal picture, and we have needs that the other person may not be understanding.

This mismatch of how we are trying to show our love, compared to what the other person needs, is the source of many marital and family arguments. You may think you are expressing affection to your significant other regularly, but do you truly take the time to make sure you are communicating it the way your partner wants to receive it? In his books about "The Five Love Languages", Dr Gary Chapman explains that even love can sometimes get lost in translation when two partners speak different love languages. Not everyone communicates love in the same way, and likewise, people have different ways they prefer to receive love – this is our 'love language'.

For example, a husband whose love language is 'Acts of Service' could think he is showing his love and care for his wife and family by working hard, fixing things around the house, and keeping the yard and vehicle well maintained. But the wife whose primary love language is 'quality time', doesn't want him to be busy all the time. She just wants to have some quality time with him. If he is an 'acts of service' type of person, then he feels he is doing everything he can to love her, but is perplexed that she feels so unloved.

Or the wife may have a love language of physical touch, so she may be a huggy person, but the only time they hug is during sex.

For another couple, the man's love language might be 'Words of Affirmation', so he gives praise and likes to receive affirmation; but perhaps his wife thinks words are cheap (maybe because of some past hurt), and her love language is 'giving gifts'. She will be the sort of person who is always giving thoughtful gifts to people, and she feels love when receiving a special gift as a show of affection. However, if this couple isn't aware of each other's deep need, then when relating to her man, she never praises or gives him words of affirmation that he needs, and he rarely gives her a special gift that would make her feel like she is treasured.

Dr Gary Chapman proposed that there are five Love Languages, and these are... Words of Affirmation; Gift Giving; Acts of Service; Quality Time; and Physical Touch. We all may relate to most of these languages, but each of us has one that speaks to us the most. Discovering your and your partner's primary love language and speaking that language regularly can create a better understanding of each other's needs and bring you closer together.

The following is a list of ways to show your love through the five love languages...

- **Words of Affirmation:** tell her you love and appreciate her; send an affirming text, email, or card. Leave her a love-note where you know she will find it during the day.
- **Acts of Service:** Go out of your way to help alleviate her daily workload. Do chores together. Make her breakfast in bed, or let her sleep in while you do the house-chores. If she tells you something needs mending, then attend to it straight away instead of procrastinating.
- **Quality Time:** Create special moments together. Take walks together. Have a regular 'date night' as a priority. Plan a weekend getaway and leave your work-computer at home.
- **Physical Touch:** Hug, kiss, hold hands, show physical affection often. Flirt playfully with her, and make intimacy a thoughtful priority.
- **Gift Giving:** Give thoughtful gifts and gestures. Small things matter in a big way. Also, express gratitude when she gives you a gift.

Of course, if you are not sure about your partner's primary love language, then try all of the above.

I trust that as you practice showing your love in different ways, you will really connect with how your wife needs to be loved. The next session is also an eye-opener as we explore the different needs that you and your wife have, and how we can fulfill each others needs in appropriate ways.

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Let me pray for you.

Being a Good Partner (Part d): Filling her needs and yours

Hi Guys. So far, we have discussed the crazy cycle of arguing that can happen when a woman doesn't feel loved, appreciated, or that she is number one in your life; and when a man does not feel as though his woman respects and honours him and his efforts to care for her and the family.

We've also discussed the fallacy of the 50:50 roles, and how we need a 100% servant leadership attitude. We've discussed how to avoid a mismatch of how we show love and receive love through understanding our own and our partner's preferred love language.

However, a more hidden/subtle reason behind a person's behaviour has to do with the filling or depleting of their needs. Most often poor behaviour in children and adults is a sign that the person is getting depleted in one of their essential 'needs'. Every person has a range of needs that are like storage batteries or fuel tanks; and when one or more of these tanks are depleted and we get frustrated, we can tend to strive to get them filled up again, but this may be either in an appropriate healthy way, or we may try to fill that need in an unhealthy way. Dr William Glasser suggests the basic human needs include

'Love & Belonging',

'Fun',

'Freedom',

'Power to accomplish',

'a Sense of Purpose',

'Survival Needs' (food, water, rest, clothing & shelter, etc).

And there is also a 'spiritual need' (a common human need for the transcendent, for connection to Someone bigger than themselves and their tiny world, a need for connection with God).

Dr Glasser explains that our behaviours (things we do, say, think, feel) are our best attempt at filling our needs (even if it is an unhealthy inappropriate way of meeting one's needs). It is the same for children and adults so if your child is acting inappropriately, or your wife is constantly negative, then you could try to ascertain which of their needs have been depleted, and then help them to think about how their need-tank can be topped up in a life-giving way. Think about how long it has been since you have spent some quality time with them (the love & belonging need).

If your wife has been doing lots of housework or been busy with the kids, maybe you could suggest going for a walk together, or go for a drive in the country and have a picnic, or a meal out or some activity your wife enjoys (ie., filling the needs for fun & freedom). If there is a high mound of clothes washing to do or the house is in a mess – a sense of hopelessness may have crept in (that's being depleted in the power to accomplish). So maybe you can help her get on top of the workload. Is she exhausted, running on empty and needs to rest (the survival needs). If you or your spouse are depressed or grumpy, then think about when was the last time you encouraged or hugged each other, or how long has it been since you both did something fun together? It may be an indication that the person's emotional fuel tank is depleted and so you need a strategy to help fill their tank in an appropriate way.

Be aware that you also have a spiritual need, so you need to take time aside to shut out the noises of the world and connect with God through Bible reading & prayer.

Let's look at this list of needs again, and we will pause at each one, and take a moment to think about two things.

- i) If that particular need is depleted; what is an unhealthy way that a person might try to fill that need?... and then
- ii) What is a more appropriate and healthy strategy to fill up this particular need tank?

'Love & Belonging' -

- i) inappropriate.....
- ii) Healthy.....

'Fun' -

- i) inappropriate.....
- ii) Healthy.....

'Freedom' -

- i) inappropriate.....
- ii) Healthy.....

'Power to accomplish' -

- i) inappropriate.....
- ii) Healthy.....

'a Sense of Purpose' -

- i) inappropriate.....
- ii) Healthy.....

'Survival Needs' (food, water, rest, clothing & shelter, etc). -

- i) inappropriate.....
- ii) Healthy.....

The 'Spiritual need' (a common human need for the transcendent, for connection to Someone bigger than themselves and their tiny world, a need for connection with God). -

- i) inappropriate.....
- ii) Healthy.....

PROVIDER: In this session we will look at the role of a man as the Provider for your family. Being a provider is the area many men are most comfortable in; but if we are passive and not proactively working hard at this role, then our families will suffer. We also need to think about how to not just work hard, but to work smarter by making wise decisions and strategies to provide for our families.

Of course, in all of these topics, there is a balance we need to find. None of us has it all worked out, and you might need to be challenged to do more in one area, or be encouraged that you are on the right track in another area, and inspired to keep on moving toward being the best husband and father or friend that you can be. My aim is not to condemn, but to inspire and encourage you. So, let's dive into this fascinating aspect of being a man, that of being a 'provider'.

In the Bible, in the book of Timothy it says... *"If anyone does not provide for his relatives and especially his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."*

In the book of Proverbs it says... *"The lazy man is full of excuses. "I can't go to work" he says 'If I go outside, I might meet a lion in the street and be killed'.*

Are you afraid to put yourself out there and get a job, or are you stuck in a very low paying job, afraid to try to better your prospects?

In Proverbs 24: 30-34 it says... *"I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding. And there it was all overgrown with thorns; the surface was covered with nettles; the stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well. I looked on it and received instruction. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest. So shall your poverty come like a prowler, and your need like an armed man."*

The picture here is of the person who doesn't maintain things and doesn't build in reserve and margin in his life, so he ends up going from crisis to crisis, and is always being in need.

Whereas there is another picture in Proverbs 22:29... *"Do you see a man who is diligent in his work? He will stand before kings. He will not stand before obscure men of low status."*

I know, if you are homeschooling it can seem nearly impossible to live off only one wage, but I've known a number of men who have trusted God and worked diligently while supporting their wife's desire to give up work to educate their kids. At first, they had to sacrifice, reduce expenses, and sell a few things but then God comes through at the last minute and the husband gets a promotion with more pay, or his business finally starts to take off. Time and time again, I've seen how God honours our obedience to His call to trust Him in the midst of challenging circumstances.

Then, on the other hand, I've seen some families where the wife and children develop a home-based business or second source of income; and of course, some families incorporate the growing and preparing of food into their home-education routine, as

well as sewing clothes, and other ways of reducing expenses – all great learning activities for the children. Certainly, the Biblical example of the Proverbs 31 woman shows her to be a diligent home-based businesswoman. The key is to not be afraid to discuss your situation fully with your wife and work out strategies together. Try praying together for wisdom, and then brainstorming ideas for workable solutions to lessen expenses and improve your income.

For our own family, during the years that we were homeschooling and involved in home-based ministry, we relied on God as our Great Provider. While at the same time working hard, we constantly took our needs to Him in prayer, and asked for divine solutions. Somehow, He got us through decades of homeschooling on a very minimal wage.

Work – a privilege not a drudgery:

Do you procrastinate or begrudgingly do the things your wife needs to organise the home? I've heard a man talk about yardwork, saying... *"It's not really about getting the work done. It's about looking as though you are working, so it gets the wife off your back. You just need to do enough to keep her happy. You know the saying – happy wife, happy life."* Oh, but this kind of minimal attitude is so dishonest, and bound for trouble.

In Ephesians 6:6 and Colossians 3:22, the Apostle Paul warns about those who work only when they are being watched, and whose motive, therefore, is not fidelity to duty, but either to avoid punishment or to gain reward from their masters. This kind of attitude comes from seeing work as a burden where we try to do as little as we can get away with; but a redeemed Biblical viewpoint sees work as a blessing, an altruistic activity where we have the privilege of serving a higher cause. Work is no longer a drudgery, but is now a noble activity where we have the privilege of being co-workers with God in making the world a better place to live in - better for ourselves, for our family and for the wider community. With this renewed kind of attitude, work is no longer something we 'have to do'; but rather it is something we 'get to do'; something immensely satisfying, an opportunity to show our love and care for our family and for others.

Just as your career can be ennobled and satisfying; so too, the work you do at home to help your wife and family (or to help others when needed) is making you a more whole person. Have you been concerned that your children are lazy with no work-ethic? Well, this is something you have to model at home, not just in your 9 to 5 job; and you also need to model and teach this different paradigm of work being a noble activity.

Never give extra 'work' or 'chores' to your children as a punishment, which shows work to be a negative thing. Instead, use housework and yardwork or vehicle & house maintenance as an opportunity to spend time with your children teaching and training them to feel good about accomplishing good work; and having fun together at the same time.

Now, what if your wife asks you to repair something around the house; but you have limited practical ability? Well, because you care about your wife and family, prioritise it to pay someone to get the job done; or ask a practical friend to show you how to do it, and teach you some skills.

A Broader Definition of Being a Provider:

Now, you might think being a provider is just about practical things like earning money and maintaining house and vehicles; but have you ever thought that your wife may also need you to provide other things like some tenderness and kindness. Sometimes she needs your wisdom or advice...Or maybe she doesn't want your quick advice and pat answers; but she just needs your companionship, and you need to shut up and provide a listening ear (without trying to fix anything).

We need to make sure we are providing our presence, ourselves, and not just our money. You may feel stressed by what I'm saying, wondering how you can fit in all the different roles of manhood. I completely understand. A Monash University study comparing modern fathers with fathers of a century ago, stated that...

"Fathers interviewed in the late 1990s and early 2000s express a desire to be more involved [than in the previous generation], but are tied to paid work that limits the time and opportunity for parenting. Many speak of the stress of trying to meet expectations at work, as well as home, and some feel excluded from family life." (Murphy & Thomson, 2021)

Yes, it's not easy, being a husband and father, but there are some time-tested principles that can help you.

One key to a successful happy marriage is to always think - "What can I give; not what can I get."

I used to think "Ok. I'm busy now so I'll do it when I get around to it" – and then invariably I would forget what my wife had asked me to do. But I've learnt the great blessing of attending to the needs of my wife quickly, or at least proactively working towards doing it at the first available opportunity as a high priority – and, also doing it with a positive generous attitude, not begrudgingly, not half-heartedly. If you continually resent being pressured by the little requests she has – your marriage is in trouble – believe me – get over yourself and start being kind and generous, showing your love for her in a practical way by attending to her needs. If you show her love in this way, you will also win the respect and honour that you are looking for, and the affection you desire.

Rest & Recreation:

I mentioned earlier the need for balance. One way to cope with the demands of both career and home, is to prioritise a day of rest and recreation, where you leave work behind, and just be with your wife and family. In the Bible, it talks about taking a

Sabbath day of rest, once a week. In Jewish culture it was a time to rest and recuperate, honouring God, and being with your family. Family time was a big part of the Jewish Sabbath tradition.

It's interesting to ponder what might be involved in a time of recreation (a time that recreates your soul and body). Because you are not just single, but have a wife and family, on the one hand you need to rest and recuperate, but on the other hand you need to do things to minister to and refresh your wife and children. For some this may mean pottering in the garden together, or going on a drive through the countryside and having a picnic, or going to the beach for a swim. One person's work (think of a landscaper, a truck driver, or a swimming instructor) can be another man's recreational hobby (gardening, a country drive, or swimming at the beach) and these activities refresh him from his week-day work. The key is to discuss this with your wife and work out what would refresh you both and minister to your children at the same time.

In this session, we've briefly looked at the role of Provider. In the next session we explore fatherhood – the role of being an effective Parent.

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prayer

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Fatherhood: The Role of being a good 'Parent'

When we ponder the role of being a father, it can bring up different types of feelings and reactions, because not all of us have had a positive experience of a father. Some of you have grown up without a father because your parents separated when you were a child, or your father was never even a part of your family. Others of you feel guilty about mistakes or lost opportunities with your wife and children, or with your own parents. Some of you are just starting out on your journey of fatherhood, and you are just hanging on for the ride trying to figure out what it's all about and how to cope with all the extra demands on your time and energy.

Recently, I was asked the question... "How has the experience of being a father, affected your image of God as Father?" It's an interesting question to ponder, because our perspective of God the Father could be skewed by our own experience. What about you? Do you see God as a harsh dictator or a loving caring provider?

To answer the question I was asked about the connection between my experience of fatherhood and my image of God as Father...my image of God as Father has always been a positive one because I had a good father who was kind and loving, with firm consequences, but rarely got angry. However, my understanding of God as a father has grown during years of fatherhood & grand-fatherhood.

Having married quite young, I probably got married to fill my own need for love and belonging. Kind of being 'in love with love' and that whole feeling of being special to someone, who accepts you for who you are. But then once you enter married life, it's no longer about your own sense of love and belonging. So much of your own happiness is tied up with the happiness of your wife. And you are now accountable to someone else, so I began to be more concerned with caring and providing for the needs of my wife; more concerned with trying to understand her and to please her.

Then when the children came along, my focus had to shift again. There was less time to focus on each other, and it was more about how to care for these little ones; how to provide for them and feed and clothe them, and how to keep them healthy and protect them.

I remember on date-nights, we would go to a restaurant to reconnect with each other, to relax without having to think about work or the children; but inevitably, we would spend the whole night talking about the children, how they are developing, what they need next, how to keep them healthy, how to train them properly.

Of course, you do your best with what you know, but still make mistakes – sometimes you are too distracted just trying to make a living, trying to make ends meet, so you come home from work tired and don't give the children proper attention, you are

sometimes too passive or too involved like a helicopter-parent; sometimes too strict and intense but other times too lenient.

Yet as we would pray and call out to God for answers to parenting problems and we would read books and get advice from others, then gradually wisdom would come; and as we prayed for finances and situations would be solved, or prayed for healing and health solutions would come; we began to understand more of the depth of God's care and provision and healing power, His rock solid steadfast unwavering love. The experience of God accepting me with my mistakes and shortfalls as a father, then helped me to carefully teach and train my children with firm gentleness; never despising them for their failures and wilful misadventures; but persevering in training them towards better habits.

As I began to understand how God sees me through a faith vision – He doesn't look at my failures but he sees Christ being formed in me – then I too can have a faith vision for my children, not focussing on their failures but holding them accountable to a higher vision of who they are becoming.

Men: The Protectors of the Family

Men: The Padre (Priest & Prophet) of the Family

Men: The Principal Role – principal of your homeschool; or how to be a good leader at work, church & community.

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