

## A Father's Key Relationships (Ephesians 5:25-33)

How many of you have seen the commercials for pork? If you have, then you probably know their motto. The motto for the Pork Alliance or whatever it's called is this: "Pork, the other white meat." They are consigned to the fact that chicken is THE white meat. So, they're just trying to ride on the chicken's coattails. Hey, when you're eating that fried chicken, please try to remember us porkers. We're the other white meat.

With that in mind, let me say that today is "the other parent" holiday. We know that Mother's Day celebrates THE parent of choice. So, us men are just trying to ride on the skirt tails of the mothers. Hey, when you think about mothers, please try to remember us dads. We're the other parent. I read somewhere that the spending for Father's Day is about half what it is for Mother's Day. And I think the number one gift on Father's Day is a tie.

So, today is *not* the day we celebrate THE parent, but, being a Father, I like to think of it as a pretty important day. I think it's important to remember fathers and the role they have in our lives. And I'm not the only one. God has some pretty important things to say to fathers and about fathers as we heard earlier during the reading.

In our reading, Paul is addressing the members of the church at Ephesus. In the first half of the book, Paul teaches the great truths of Christianity. He teaches about our fallen nature. He teaches about how we were spiritually dead in our trespasses and sin. He teaches about how we are made spiritually alive through grace and faith in Jesus Christ. He teaches that we are God's workmanship, created to do great things.

In the second half of the book, he teaches how live out the great truths of Christianity. Since we belong to Jesus by grace through faith, it should affect every area

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of our lives. What has happened to us internally should make itself known externally. Our lives should be different because of what has happened to us. God's presence in our lives should positively affect our relationships with others. His presence should be a positive in our relationships within the church. His presence should be a positive in our relationships with those we work with and work for. And his presence should be a positive in our relationships within our family.

Since this is Father's Day, I'm addressing this sermon primarily to the fathers. But this message is to all of us who are part of a family. This morning, I want us to see **three** key relationships for men. These are the three most important relationships the Bible says a man can have. What are the three key relationships for men? Before I get to the key relationships, let's look quickly at relationships that are not key.

The most important relationships do not include your working buddies . The most important relationships do not include your hunting or fishing buddies. The most important relationships do not include your golfing or workout partners, This is not to say you can't have those friends. This is not to say you can't participate in these activities. We all need friends and we're not saying that these activities are wrong. What we're saying is that they are just not the most important relationships you have.

How do we determine what are our most important relationships? Who do you spend the most time with? What activities and people occupy your mind the most? When you find yourself by yourself, who would you most like to be with at the time? An honest answer to those questions will reveal what your most important relationships are.

What does the Bible point to as the three key relationships for men? The Bible covers our

relationships with all kinds of people. Our preacher, our church family, friends, strangers all these relationships are talked about in the Bible. But I think the Bible also covers a few relationships that are key to men of God.

So, let's count down the three key relationships for men. **Key relationship #3** for men is **their Children**. Ephesians 6:4 speaks to that relationship in both negative and positive terms. The negative terms include: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children." "Father's, do not provoke your children to anger." In the Roman empire, men had the final say on children. They would present the baby to the Father and they could keep it or get rid of it. Paul was telling them to change their whole attitude about their children. Don't provoke them, don't discourage them: encourage them. Don't always blame them: praise them. Be involved. Listen to them and encourage them, Be their advocate. Be someone they feel

comfortable going to with the deep things of their heart.

Now, for the Bible positive terms. "Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Nurture them. Nurture comes from the same word as nourish. Nourish them physically with food, shelter, and clothing. But also nourish them emotionally and spiritually. Fathers need to be there to lead their children in walking with God. Discipline them. Someone said that everything in an American home is controlled by switches except their children. Care enough to set boundaries. Love enough to enforce them. Teach them about the Lord. Be a Christian role model for them. They may not see many Christian men outside their home, but make sure they see one in the home.

God expects fathers to be involved in the lives of their children, There are some things that only a father can do for a family. Do you have a good relationship with

your children? A key relationship for men is their relationship with their children.

**Key relationship #2** for men is **their Wives**. **Verse 25** says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." How did Christ love the church? He gave his life, he sacrificed his life, for the church. God calls on us, men, to love our wives sacrificially. We are to be willing to give up things to build up our wives. God holds us personally responsible for the well-being of our wives.

**Verse 28** says, "Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." In **verse 31**, Paul describes what happens when we marry. The two become one flesh. Our wives are permanently attached to us. They become a part of us. So, we are to love them and treat them as if they are part of us. God expects fathers to be in a deep, loving, meaningful relationship with their wives.

**Key relationship #1** for men is a relationship that you should have that is even more important than one with your children. It is a relationship that you should have that is even more important than one with your wife. Without this most important relationship, your relationship with them will never be full and complete. So, **the number one relationship for men is a relationship with Jesus Christ.** We're to love our wives like Jesus Christ loves the church. We are to bring up our children in the training and instruction of the Lord. We can't love our wives like Jesus loves the church if we don't know Jesus. We can't bring up our children in the things of the Lord if we don't know them ourselves. Do you have the **#1 relationship** you need now, and for all eternity? Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

I pray that you, men, are able to answer those two questions with a positive response.

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Please bow your heads as I pray.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for revealing this wonderful mystery to me, that my relationship with the Lord Jesus is as special and intimate as that between a husband and his wife. May we all, who are his body and bride, live together in the unity of the Spirit, in a bond of peace, and to the honor of His holy name. He gave his life because of His love of the Church. May we all reflect that love to all those around us, especially our children and our wives. We ask this in the name of your Son and our Savior Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**