

SELECT PRINCIPLES ON BEING A BIBLICALLY FAITHFUL MAN AND HUSBAND

Bruce A. Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

- Love.** 1) Loving God increasingly w/ all my heart, soul, mind and strength; loving Christ and the cross; loving the gospel — these are the foundation for all else. Drawing from God all I need to be the man and husband God has called me to be is my strength and hope. 2) Loving my wife as Christ loves the Church — this is the umbrella principle for marriage; everything else flows from this responsibility and privilege (Eph 5:25ff).
- Leadership.** Biblical manhood involves cultivating, embracing, and exercising leadership initiative, especially spiritual leadership initiative. This is a principle that applies to young men and adult single men just as well as to married men. Cultivate, embrace, and exercise spiritual leadership initiative. In marriage, my love for my wife involves and requires that I exert leadership in our relationship. My headship of my wife means I'm responsible for her spiritual growth and well-being. And as a father, I'm responsible in ways that my wife is not for the spiritual development of our children (Eph 6:1-4). And again, to do this, I must be seeking God and growing personally. Only out of the storehouse of my own soul's growth in God can I assist my wife to grow spiritually.
- Example.** Lead by example as much as by admonition and instruction. Set the example in: consistent times in the Word and prayer; in sacrificial service for your wife, children, church family members, and community needs; in giving faithfully, generously, and regularly of your finances; in humble admission of wrong-doing along with confession, asking forgiveness, and repentance. Fight pride, fight defensiveness, fight carnality before others.
- Authority.** All three points above imply and invoke the concept of male-headship. Yes, God has given special authority to husbands and fathers. Learn, though, the correct expression of healthy, constructive, upbuilding, God-honoring, Christ-following authority. Resist and reject the sinful extremes of 1) harshness, bossiness, mean-spirited authoritarianism, and of 2) laziness, apathy, lethargy, negligence, and abdication of authority to the women in our lives. Learn to blend firmness with gentleness, truth with grace, a firm hand with a warm smile.
- Acceptance.** Each of us is unique as God has made us. We should accept others' differences w/o thinking ourselves to be either superior or inferior to others. In marriage, my wife is unique, and so in many ways, she is not like me. I need to accept who she is, prayerfully and sensitively seeking to assist her in changing what is sinful and needs to be changed, and accepting what is "just different."
- Listening.** One of my wife's biggest and most real needs is my attentive and respectful listening ear. She loves to share her experiences, thoughts, ideas, feelings, concerns, hurts, joys, etc. I can minister to my wife more than one might think by offering her caring, responsive, and respectful listening and interaction. Learn to listen sympathetically w/o rushing to "fix it" solutions. Connect first heart to heart, then later heart to head. Establish regular times of mutual sharing (yes, mutual), keep short accounts, and act on what you hear and learn.
- Understanding.** I need to live with my wife in an understanding way (1 Pet 3:7), to learn her needs, her sensitivities. I should seek to know the desires and felt needs of my wife and, when appropriate and possible, fulfill these. I need to discover her "language of love" and make every effort to love her in ways she feels loved.
- Work.** A man's main sense of identity, responsibility, and purpose is found in his work. Wives want to take pride in their husbands, and taking pride in their work is an important part of this. Women are not meant to bear the financial weight of a marriage or family, so husbands must work hard and responsibly. As important as work is to a man's identity and fulfillment, we must not allow work to overshadow our commitment to and time with our wives first, and also to our children. Work hard, work well, work to the honor of Christ, and then put work to rest.
- Sexuality.** My wife is my only legitimate sexual experience, and I am hers. So, learning to love sexually with increasing skill and pleasure is vitally important to the satisfaction and intimacy of our marriage. See human sexuality for what it is — the good gift of God to be experienced in marriage, as God has designed.
- Home.** She cares much about our home. The "honey-do" list is far more important to her than she is likely to let on. In love for her, I must pay attention to her requests and treat them as important. But more important even than this is cultivating the "culture" and "ethos" of our home. Develop an atmosphere of appreciation, respect, kindness, service, holiness, happiness, gratefulness, contentment, forgiveness — all as expressions of our love for God and one another.