

I'd Rather Be Remembered As a Great Husband Than a Great Preacher.

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Men live with ambition. Ambition does not have to be a bad thing. The unrelenting zeal for something and the undiminished pursuit of a good thing is a noble feature of manhood. But for men in ministry, a longing often arises in the heart to be *known* and *remembered* and *well-liked* as a preacher, writer, theologian, author, blogger, or whatever. The desire to excel is good. The passion to be the best that we can be in the ministry in which God has bestowed is a wonderful thing. But more than a legacy of being a good preacher, I would much rather leave a legacy to my wife and children and to others that may follow as a man who was a family man -- a great husband. Here are a few ways that I must love my wife biblically and fulfill the God-given responsibility to be a family man in the home. What follows are seven points that remind me of my primary calling to pastor my wife (and, thus by extension, my family) *before* I endeavor to pastor the local church.

1. I must LOVE MY WIFE SACRIFICIALLY.

To sacrifice demands selflessness. One cannot love like Jesus Christ and still live in ongoing pursuit of one's own desires, pleasures, comforts, and wants. Jesus Christ loved me and He gave Himself up for me, in my place, for my benefit. I must love my wife by denying self regularly, pursuing her with great fervency, and by seeking to please her and satisfy her. I do this as I deny self, love her, give of myself to her, and seek to emulate Christ by running after my bride and holding to her with great, unrelenting, unconditional love. Love is the selfless giving of myself to my bride, for her benefit and for her joyful well-being.

2. I must SERVE MY WIFE SELFLESSLY.

The greatest husband who ever lived did not come to be served but to serve. Jesus had every right to be served but He Himself came and constantly served people and, ultimately, He served His own by dying for His spotless Bride. To serve another requires lowliness of heart and lowliness of mind. It demands that one surrender all forms of pride and selfishness. Christ laid aside his outer garment, girded himself with a towel, and stooped and washed the dirty feet of His disciples. He, being Lord and Master, modeled what Christian service and divine love is by this very act. I must serve my wife and humbly, gladly, selflessly consider her above myself.

3. I must SATISFY MY WIFE PASSIONATELY.

By nature, all men live to please self and satisfy one's own desires. The pursuit of satisfaction is a good thing but so often the goal of that pursuit is something (or someone) other than Christ and His glory. Christ came and relentlessly followed the Word of God and did precisely and exactly what the Father had given Him to do. He passionately satisfied the Father's will and perfectly satisfies His Bride for whom He died. I must satisfy my wife with zeal, with passion, and with tenacity. I must not let up in my love for her. I must not waver in my commitment to her. Nor must I ever let my pursuit of satisfying her wane. I must love and satisfy *her* as my God-given gift.

4. I must SHEPHERD MY WIFE PREEMINENTLY.

Before I'm a pastor of a church, God has called me to pastor my 'little church'. That which qualifies me to serve as an overseer of God's flock in a local church is to adequately live with my wife in an understanding way and be wholly and singularly devoted to my wife as a *one woman man*. If I have a mediocre marriage, I am unfit and unqualified for shepherding ministry. The very first qualification the Apostle Paul gives to all men who desire to be overseers in the church is for them to be the husband of one wife. Let me strive for this, live this, excel at this, and pray for this all the more. I must shepherd and disciple my wife (which includes reading Scripture with her, praying with and for her, counseling her, helping her, comforting her, reproofing her, supporting and loving her, and making time for her) *far more than* any other sheep in the congregation.

5. I must LEAD MY WIFE COURAGEOUSLY.

As the Captain of my salvation, I follow Christ. As my guide through life, I trust in Him and follow where He leads. As my compass, He directs my paths and makes them straight. As Christ leads me, so I must lead my wife. Christ leads me as the Good Shepherd even through the valley of the shadow of death. So I must also lead my wife through the good times, the hard times, the distressing times, the worrisome times, and the painful times. I must lead with integrity, with courage, with love, with gentleness, with assurance, and with Christlike courage. I must lead her through the hard decisions that might in fact be unpopular to culture, foolish to extended family, and indeed it may be an untraveled path. Nevertheless, with God's presence, with the Spirit's enablement, and with Christlike courage, I can (and must!) lead my wife in the ways of God, the Word of God, as we journey together to glory.

6. I must PRIORITIZE MY WIFE UNASHAMEDLY.

No doubt should arise in the minds of the people in the local church that their pastor's primary passion and utmost priority is the shepherding care and nurture of his wife. People must not only *think* this but they must *know* this. My wife must take ultimate priority in my calendar, schedule, heart, mind, and life as I pastor the flock. I cannot be ashamed to care for her, to attend to her needs, to speak well of her to others in the flock, and to unashamedly prioritize her if she needs me, my time, my energy, and my presence. God has called me to care for her and to wash her in the Word and to sanctify her in the Word. To do this, I must never view her as just another sheep but I must view her as one of the sheep I must minister to so *as to be qualified* for pastoral ministry. May the flock know that a minister prizes and prioritizes his wife above all other ministry demands.

7. I must WASH MY WIFE BIBLICALLY.

The goal of the Christian life is Christlikeness. Emulating Christ is the Christian's foremost passion and this occurs through the powerful transformation of the Spirit. Christ sanctifies His bride, the Church. In the same way, I must sanctify and wash my wife in the Word of God. I must shepherd her soul and pastor her with tender care regularly. I must read the Word *with* her and counsel with the Word with regularity. I must utilize the Word to guide my prayers for her and *with* her. I must lead in the home through family worship as everyone gathers around the family altar to worship God together. Her spiritual growth is my responsibility and my God-given duty and delight. May I diligently pursue the spiritual nurturing and steady growth of my wife in Christlikeness and Spirit-empowered holiness. May God use me as a catalyst for her growth!