

Roles and Responsibilities

By Mark Mayberry

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INTRODUCTION

Let us consider the roles and responsibilities God has assigned to the home and the church. In some ways, they are very similar; in other ways, they are distinct. Duties specifically assigned to one should not be transferred to the other.

THE HOME

Husbands are the head of the family, while wives serve in a submissive and supportive role (Eph. 5:25-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 5:14-15; Titus 2:3-5).

Ephesians 5:25-33 (NASB95) — 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Colossians 3:18-19 (NASB95) — 18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

1 Timothy 5:14-15 (NASB95) — 14 Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach; 15 for some have already turned aside to follow Satan.

Titus 2:3-5 (NASB95) — 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

Both diligently labor to provide resources for the family to fulfill its obligation (2 Thess. 3:10-13; 1 Tim. 5:7-8; Prov. 31:13-16, 24).

2 Thessalonians 3:10-13 (NASB95) — 10 For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. 11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. 13 But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

1 Timothy 5:7-8 (NASB95) — 7 Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Proverbs 31:13-16 (NASB95) — 13 She looks for wool and flax And works with her hands in delight. 14 She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. 15 She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens. 16 She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard.

Proverbs 31:24 (NASB95) — 24 She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies belts to the tradesmen.

Parents provide for the various needs of their children. Physical necessities, such as food, clothing, and shelter, must be supplied (Prov. 19:14; Luke 11:11-13; 2 Cor. 12:14).

Proverbs 19:14 (NASB95) — 14 House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord.

Luke 11:11-13 (NASB95) — 11 “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? 12 “Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? 13 “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

2 Corinthians 12:14 (NASB95) — 14 Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

Fathers also take a leading role in providing spiritual instruction and discipline for their children (Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:7-11).

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NASB95) — 4 “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 5 “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 “You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in

your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Ephesians 6:4 (NASB95) — 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Hebrews 12:7-11 (NASB95) — 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Mothers also should impart words of wisdom (Prov. 1:8-9; 31:1, 26; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15).

Proverbs 1:8-9 (NASB95) — 8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching; 9 Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck.

Proverbs 31:1 (NASB95) — 1 The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him:

Proverbs 31:26 (NASB95) — 26 She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

2 Timothy 1:5 (NASB95) — 5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 (NASB95) — 14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Children should honor and obey their parents (Prov. 6:20-23; Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20).

Proverbs 6:20-23 (NASB95) — 20 My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother; 21 Bind them continually on your heart; Tie them around your neck. 22 When you walk about, they will guide you; When you sleep, they will watch over you; And when you awake, they will talk to you. 23 For the

commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life

Ephesians 6:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

Colossians 3:20 (NASB95) — 20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

THE CHURCH

Elders oversee the local congregation in which they are members (Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Acts 14:23 (NASB95) — 23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 20:28 (NASB95) — 28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

1 Peter 5:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Deacons serve various needs of the church, acting under the direction of the elders (Phil. 1:1-2; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

Philippians 1:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (NASB95) — 8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9 but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. 11 Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. 13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Regarding those individuals appointed to serve tables in Acts 6:1-6 (Greek: *diakoneō*, “to serve, minister,” from *diakonos*, “a servant, minister”), Stephen and Philip were also effective evangelists/preachers, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (Acts 6:8-10; 8:4-6; cf. 1 Tim. 3:8-9).

Acts 6:1-6 (NASB95) — 1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. 2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3 “Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4 “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” 5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. 6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

Acts 6:8-10 (NASB95) — 8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. 10 But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

Acts 8:4-6 (NASB95) — 4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. 6 The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

1 Timothy 3:8-9 (NASB95) — 8 Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, 9 but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

Members of the church, i.e., those who have joined themselves to a local band of disciples (Acts 9:26-28), must be active, each contributing to the well-being of the whole (1 Cor. 12:14-26; Eph. 4:11-16).

Acts 9:26-28 (NASB95) — 26 When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:14-26 (NASB95) — 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Ephesians 4:11-16 (NASB95) — 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Both the home and the church are responsible for spiritual instruction. Each should be involved in evangelism, and also in the related work of edification. Consider the example of Aquila and Priscilla, who were individually active (Acts 18:1-3, 18, 24-26), and who opened their house to the brethren, providing a place for the disciples to assemble (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19).

Acts 18:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, 3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.

Acts 18:18 (NASB95) — 18 Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.

Acts 18:24-26 (NASB95) — 24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; 26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

Romans 16:3-5 (NASB95) — 3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; 5 also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.

1 Corinthians 16:19 (NASB95) — 19 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

Both the home and the church are involved in benevolence; yet, individual obligations in this regard are broader, involving one's neighbor, and mankind in general (Gal. 6:10; James 1:27); in contrast, the church's duty entails coming to the aid of needy saints (Acts 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 16:1-4).

Galatians 6:10 (NASB95) — 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

James 1:27 (NASB95) — 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Acts 4:32-35 (NASB95) — 32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. 34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales 35 and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2 On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. 3 When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; 4 and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.

The home has additional responsibilities, involving family relationships, which cannot be transferred to the church. These include the obligation of earning a living (Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:9-12), and providing for the physical needs of one's extended family (1 Tim. 5:3-16).

Ephesians 4:28 (NASB95) — 28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 (NASB95) — 9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, 12 so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

1 Timothy 5:3-16 (NASB95) — 3 Honor widows who are widows indeed; 4 but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God. 5 Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. 6 But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives. 7 Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 9 A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, 10 having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. 11 But refuse to put younger widows on the list, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married, 12 thus incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge. 13 At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention. 14 Therefore, I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach; 15 for some have already turned aside to follow Satan. 16 If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

Providing meals, social activities, and practicing hospitality are not the work of the church, but rather the responsibility of the home (1 Cor. 11:17-22; Heb. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:9).

1 Corinthians 11:17-22 (NASB95) — 17 But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I

believe it. 19 For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. 20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, 21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

Hebrews 13:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 Let love of the brethren continue. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

1 Peter 4:9 (NASB95) — 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

CONCLUSION

Recognizing the similarities, and respecting the differences, may we fulfill our obligations in both the home and the church. If you are part of a loving physical family, you enjoy manifold blessings and benefits.

Are you a member of the Lord's church, which is God's spiritual family? Concluding his discussion of the family relationship of husbands and wives, Paul said, "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). God is our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ our Elder Brother, and we are brethren, one of another (Rom. 8:14-17).

Romans 8:14-17 (NASB95) — 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.