

## Opening Words

Men, today I want to talk with you about managing your home well. When you get a handle on this, you will take a big step in becoming a man who is above reproach.

## 05 Living Above Reproach – Managing Our Homes Well

We have started the great exploration for men, the exploration that ends with the discovery of the greatest treasure any of us could hope to find – being above reproach, being men of character. We have started unearthing the first area– our home life. We focused on the first area of home life, how to be a one-woman man. This means far more than not having two wives. It means that in our heart, we are men who are devoted to one woman for our life, not just sexually but emotionally and that we are positive in our relationship with our wife, i.e., we are actively seeking to encourage her and build her up in the faith.

But you single men, you may be wondering; how can I apply this? I am not married. The answer is that you start controlling your thought life now. You focus on building a heart of love. You work against looking upon women as sexual objects and as children of God that he loves. You look upon them as sisters and mothers.

And for any women who are listening – there is a phrase in the New Testament in 1 Timothy 5:9 that is similar. In that chapter, Paul was giving instruction to Timothy concerning widows; which widows should be supported by the church and which should not. Paul gives Timothy several guidelines, several character qualities to look for in women and one of them is that a widow must exhibit the character of being a “one-man woman.” She was required to have been devoted to one husband in her life. She was required to be a woman who found her sexual fulfillment in that one man. She was required to have been a woman who found her emotional and relational fulfillment in that man and she was required to have been a woman who was focused on building up her husband and helping him to be a godly man.

So, as you can see, this quality applies to us all. Before we move to the area of managing our homes well, let me ask a few penetrating questions to help us make this area of being a one-woman man practical.

1. If my thought life were put on a video screen would I be proud or embarrassed by what others see? Would people see an easy indulgence or that I am fighting to control my thoughts?
2. Are the things I watch and listen to honoring to the Lord and faithful to my spouse?
3. Am I open and accountable to another Christian man in the moral areas of my life?
4. Is my wife the most important person in my life, and am I seeking to strengthen her spiritually and emotionally and care for her physically?
5. Am I regularly strengthening myself through the Word of God and prayer so that I can overcome temptation?

Again, tough questions, not easily answered, and easily overwhelming to us. But we must take time to reflect on them and pray for God's grace to help us become men above reproach.

Let's move to the second area of home life. Paul said that a man above reproach is one who manages his household well. I remember when I first read over this passage and seriously thought about these qualities. One of the things that jumped out at me and encouraged me greatly was that the passage did not say that I had to manage my household perfectly. It did say I had to do it well, but not perfectly. I took great comfort in that because I knew my household management needed improvement. I hope you will take encouragement as well.

In the first century, a household was different than in our modern, western understanding. A household typically could have consisted of several generations. It wasn't just dad & mom, brother and sister. Grandparents may have been in the household or other family members. A household could have had domestic servants or hired help. These were under the head of the house which was the man. Paul said that a man must manage the household workings and the relationships in that household well.

The word *manage* is the Greek word *proistamee* which means to be at the head of, to rule, to direct, and to manage. We find this word in several places in the New Testament such as in Romans 12:8 where Paul says a gifted leader must lead with diligence. Here we have our first clue as to what it means to lead our families well. We must be diligent. Guys, we cannot afford to be slackers. We cannot afford to be diligent at work and lazy at home. We can't come home, eat dinner, and sit in our easy chair and watch sports or movies all night. We must pay attention to our spouse and to our children. We must give great care and attention to what is happening at home.

We find this emphasis in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 and 1 Timothy 5:17 where Paul is speaking of leaders in the church who diligently labor among the members, have charge over people in the Lord, and who rule the church well. How would you like a pastor who didn't pay attention to the church? What if he just showed up on Sunday and gave a mediocre message because he did not prepare? What if he were never available? What if he was out on the golf course three times a week? What if the church finances were not under control? What if your church facility looked drab and messy? He would not be managing the church well. Well, how about our home management? Just as we want a pastor who manages the church well in every area, and not that he is doing all the work. The pastor won't be, or shouldn't be handling all the finances or doing the upkeep of the building or even doing all the counseling necessarily but he is managing it all and leading others in a cooperative way so that everything is done well and above reproach at church.

In the same way, the man of the house must manage the household well and ensure that the upkeep of the house is in order, the finances are in order, and that people are cared for and nurtured. He may not perform every detail but is overseeing it. See how church and home parallel? This is why Paul told Timothy and Titus, if a man cannot manage his household, he certainly cannot manage the church! The church is bigger and more complex. The home is the breeding ground for church leaders. The home is the training ground for church leaders – not seminary. In seminary, you gain an education, but home is where you get the hands-on experience of working with people in close relationship and making sure that the little world of your home is in good order. Maybe we men

should see our homes as a little congregation within a church, and should rule it well. I like how the Psalms tells us David was prepared to shepherd the nation of Israel by the way he managed his father's sheep. His faithfulness in small things led to greatness in big things.

Paul also uses this concept in Titus 3:8 and 3:14 and here the emphasis is on engaging in good works. Listen to these words: "This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men." And in 3:14 he says, "Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful."

Here, Paul uses this word for leading or managing in the sense that we must take the lead in doing good works. Here is a great application for being above reproach at home and managing our household well. Lead your family in good works. Be an example of leadership in doing good to people. Don't just go off and do it yourself, but take your family with you. Times without number I would take my family with me on evangelistic events or service projects. I wanted our family to be a family that was devoted to good works, but they could not be that way unless I was leading them.

Men, you have a great opportunity to manage your household well by engaging in good deeds for your church and for your community and by involving your family in them.

Now I must quickly speak to two more ideas in this area of managing the household. They are control and dignity. Paul says that a man must keep his children under control with all dignity. The word control is a word that conveys the idea of being in subjection or being obedient. Paul used this word in 2 Corinthians 9:13 to refer to believers obeying Christ. He used it in 1 Timothy 2:11 for women being in submission to their husbands.

There are two kinds of submission in the world. There is the kind where people obey on the outside but not on the inside. They have outward compliance but inward rebellion. Our goal as leaders is to cultivate a relationship where people are happily following. If we must always demand that people follow, then we are not good leaders. Look, I know that when children are young we sometimes must demand they obey us and obey us immediately, but the long-range goal is to develop their character so that they will happily be united with us. So yes, sometimes with younger children we must sit them down and get physical with them and discipline them, but that is training so that as they grow up they will have learned to trust us and to follow us happily.

And then it says we must learn to keep our children under control with all dignity. We must learn to train and discipline our children to show respectfulness and reverence. If we must yell, scream, shout, threaten, or bribe, or if we give in to our children's demands all the time, then we are not leading with dignity. Our children must learn to show respect to us and we must learn to lead them in a way where words are sufficient to guide them into obedience.

I know it's tough for some of you. I had three children and they were all wonderful and they were all challenging in different ways – one especially, was a handful. He was the strong-willed one and the creative one and the one with the most outgoing personality and a natural leader, and he was a handful at times! I share that with you now because I know I am presenting the ideal in Scripture and I know that the reality in our homes is often stressful and far from perfect. But if we can keep

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the goal in mind and can work daily toward this goal, trusting in God's grace and acceptance, we will make daily progress in being men who are above reproach because we are managing our household well.