

# Domesticity

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Bible gives clear albeit limited instructions about home life. But if Christ is to be our model in everything, then Paul's words in Philippians 2:5-8 give us guidance here: we are to practice the humility of a servant. A servant puts the needs of those he loves before his own. On our worst days, it is difficult, if not impossible, to put thinking of others before ourselves into practice. Our selfish wants and needs creep in and fill our thoughts to the point where we can become frustrated, thinking mostly about ourselves. This struggle can only be met by depending on the guidance and power of the Spirit. The role of a roommate, spouse/parent, and child is not to be passively lived out, but rather involves an active pursuit of staying out ahead of the sin of selfishness by planning and acting for the good of those one loves.

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Spousal Relationships**

Instructions for marriage are built upon the vision of creation. Mankind is tasked with exercising loving dominion over the world under God's rule and in God's image (Gen 1:26-28), which includes our procreative (Gen 1:28; cf. Matthew 28:18-20, which echoes and expands upon this idea to include making disciples of the nations, not just of our children) and cultural labors (Gen 2:15). The woman was given to the man to "help" him in this calling. Therefore husband and wife partner together in the tasks of making disciples (including, though not restricted to, raising godly children) and creating culture. The ethics of this particular relationship are most clearly defined in Ephesians 5. There Paul commands every husband to love his wife as Christ loved the Church--by sacrificial, loving leadership. He commands every wife to respectfully submit to her husband.

### **2. Parents and Children**

Parents are called to raise their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord (Deut 6:7; Prov 13:24; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; Eph 6:4). Children are commanded to honor their parents (Exod 20:12), obey them (Eph 6:1-2), and heed their wisdom (Prov 1-9).

### **3. Care for the Home**

A home is a gift from God and we have responsibility to care for it. There are benefits of a well-kept home, however modest and simple it may be. It allows you to host well and makes visitors feel comfortable. It certainly isn't necessarily the sole responsibility of the wife/mother to manage all affairs of the household (e.g., cooking, cleaning, maintenance, vendors, etc.). And in a roommate situation, these things should not completely fall on one person either. Family members and roommates should discuss these things and share responsibility according to their gifting.

### **4. Family Finances**

If you are a husband/father, lead your family in giving. Whether the husband is the primary income-earner in the home doesn't matter. He should take responsibility for encouraging his family in the wise and courageous use of the their finances. In some marriages the wife will have the better gifting in managing the family finances. If this is the case then the husband should stay involved and continue to help. Attempt to model a biblical approach in how you spend money.

The Bible is clear about the risks and results of idolizing money and wealth. Take a stance on giving that stretches you and your family to do without certain luxuries so that you can rest well knowing that you have given the first-fruits of your income. God is clear in Malachi 3 on the blessings that result from faithful giving.

## **PRACTICALS**

### **1. Spousal Relationships**

- Figure out what makes your spouse feel loved and work towards that end, even if you don't feel like it!
- Learn about them day every chance you get.
- Practice date night regularly so that you don't become disconnected. Put your phone down and engage with each other. Try to be an excellent listener.
- Pray with and for your spouse. Ask each other for specific things that you could be praying for so that the other will know that you care about the details.

## 2. Parents and Children

- Use extreme patience when dealing with your children so that you encourage positive emotions in them and don't stir up negative emotions. Come up with some practical way to stop yourself before reacting in anger or frustration and instruct, correct, and rebuke your children in love and gentleness. Model humility.
- Devote your time to your children as Jesus did (Matt 19:13-15). This probably means that you figure out a way to give more fruitful time to your children and less to work and play.
- Pray for your children and with them. Teach them to pray.
- Model service to your children. Let them see you serving others and let them participate. Give them responsibilities and encourage them to work through their apathy, frustrations, etc.
- Decide with your spouse how you will discipline your children and partner in consistently implementing this plan.
- If living at home with your parents, follow their leadership, especially in household traditions and family virtues. Jump into those things with hope for how they might draw you closer to each other and the Lord, and mature your family as a source of blessing to your neighbors.

## 3. Care for the Home

- Be active in sharing the household responsibilities (e.g., cooking, cleaning, managing repairs). Pray that you would have an attitude of service and also hope for how your home can be a place of peace, rest, and welcome.
- Plan who will be the primary manager of assets (e.g., HVAC, vehicles, etc.) in order to steward them well.
- Consider how your home can be a welcoming place to neighbors and friends and be intentionally hospitable.

## 4. Family Finances

- If married, make sure that both spouses know where your family is spending its money. Money is often used as a way to get power over another. Communicate regularly on how much is going to savings, to *free* spending, how much to the church and other charities.
- Make an annual budget, review the monthly results, and revisit and revise that budget as necessary as you move throughout the year and life changes. Good luck. This isn't easy, but it essential and potentially life-giving.
- If you are parents, take responsibility for teaching your children how to make a plan to give away their money. Help play a role in freeing them from the love of money. If you are a child, consider and discuss with your parents how to creatively give away any resources of your own, and share what burdens are on your heart towards which you would like your family to give.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Would my home life be characterized by humility, generosity and love or by selfishness and pride? If the latter, why?
- If I'm married, would my spouse say I am meeting (at least proximately) his/her emotional, spiritual and physical needs?
- If I'm a child, would my parents say that I consistently trust, honor, and obey them?
- If I'm a roommate, would my other roommates say that I respect and care for them? Am I contributing to the needs of the house?
- Am I pursuing my spouse by being intentional about listening to him/her, asking about his/her day, attending to him/her sexually, and going on dates? If not, why not?
- Am I praying with and for my spouse? If not, why not?
- Am I fully present with my children? What are some things that are keeping me from being present? Why are they a barrier?
- If I have children, am I disciplining them? Am I showing them gracious guidance or do they see me as primarily an angry or apathetic parent?
- Am I taking seriously my responsibility to lead our children spiritually? Am I teaching them to read the Bible and pray? If not, why not?
- Am I teaching my kids a good work ethic at home and what it means to be a creative, diligent image bearer of God?
- Am I not only participating in the domestic chores of the home but taking initiative to serve in the responsibilities around the house? If not, why not?
- Does my/our checkbook reflect God's desire for our money? If not, why not? And how can that change?