

# THE THEOLOGY OF STEWARDSHIP: Head of the Household

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## SESSION 1:

## Christian + Husband + Father

In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther clearly emphasized the God-given role of “the head of the household/family,” but often something right in front of our eyes goes unnoticed.

The Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar are introduced with the following: “As the head of the family should teach (it/them) in a simple way to his household.”

The section on Daily Prayers begins, “How the head of the family should teach his household to pray morning and evening.”

Additionally, the Table of Duties clearly lays out some basic biblical teaching about the vocation of “husband” and “parent.”

To get started, read Luther’s cited Scripture:

- › 1 Peter 3:7
- › Col. 3:19
- › Eph. 6:4

How are husbands and fathers to be God’s servants under His authority?

We’ll return to these texts in their larger context later. Now, let’s build a foundation for the vocation of “head of the household/family,” which includes “husband” and “parent.”

We are well aware that not every household or family is Christian. By instituting parenthood and civil government, the Lord provided order for civil society. For the Christian, any discussion of family should begin with our new birth in Christ.

Read Matt. 28:18–20.

Now, follow up by reading the end of St. Peter’s Pentecost Day sermon and what followed in Acts 2:36–47.

- › How do the baptized relate to God?
- › How do they relate to one another?

Consider the Ten Commandments. What two divisions are shown by Jesus in Matt. 22:34–40?

- › Which has priority?
- › What implications does this have for a Christian’s life priorities?

A Christian is a baptized child of God first. That is his or her primary vocation. A child is born into a family. Consider the impact of the Fourth Commandment.

- › What does this mean for a child?
- › What is the vocation of child? Read Eph. 6:1–3.

Next, we will discuss the question “What is God’s will for my life?”

## SESSION 2:

## What Is God’s Will for My Life?

### *Vocation and Decisions as a Christian*

- › Read Jer. 29:11. What people make up the original audience/recipients of this promise? Is it appropriate for Christians? Can you be encouraged that the Lord has good plans for you, yet also be frustrated that He has yet to let you know what they are?
- › Have you ever said to God, “Show me a sign”? When? Why? Was it the best idea?
- › Who received a sign in Judges 6:33–40? What was it? Did he believe it?
- › Read Isaiah 7. When is asking for a sign OK?
- › Matthew 4 chronicles Jesus’ encounter with our old evil foe. What sign does he ask Jesus to perform?

Consider God’s Word and the vocations God gives in the list below.

### *Your Vocations Prioritized*

#### #1: Baptized child of God (Receive the Lord’s gifts)

- › Ex. 20:1–11
- › Commandments 1–3, especially the First Commandment
- › Matt. 22:37–40

**#2: Member of a family:** son or daughter, single, husband or wife, father or mother (Care for the family, keep marriage vows, raise children as Christians)

- › Fourth Commandment
- › Sixth Commandment
- › Eph. 5:21–6:4

**#3: Work** (Provide for the Lord's work and priorities as well as the family)

- › 1 Chron. 29:11
- › 1 John 3:16–18
- › Fifth Commandment
- › 1 Tim. 5:8

**#4: Everything else:** leisure, hobbies, community involvement, sports, spectator sports and even serving at church (Keep priorities #1–3 first)

- › Note the danger for burnout among servants of the Church when #4 takes over #1.
- › Consider Mary and Martha's priorities in Luke 10:38–42. Not all church activities are equal. Receiving God's gifts is more important than our service to Him!

How could this list help you prioritize what should be most important to you according to God's Word? How are our priorities often misplaced apart from God's Word?

Discuss how to resolve conflicts between different vocations according to biblical priorities.

The Lord is not merely one priority among many. He is the giver of all good things, including our life in Christ, family and friends, work and all we need to support this body and life, and rest in Him. Read Col. 3:4 and use it as the basis for a closing prayer for this session.

## SESSION 3:

# Marriage, Love and Honor

As children grow to adulthood, they marry. A church wedding is often more important to some brides and grooms (and/or to their families) than a Christian preparation for marriage.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor in Germany during the time of the Nazis. He was imprisoned and later executed for participating in a failed plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Because he was in prison, he was unable to perform a wedding for a couple as he had promised. So, he wrote a sermon for them from prison and had it smuggled out. He wrote that it is not the love that sustains the marriage, but the marriage that sustains your love for one another. Wise words.

A Lutheran wedding often has the following three readings:

- › Gen. 2:18–24
- › Eph. 5:1–2, 22–33 (I usually include 5:21 and 6:1–4 as well.)
- › Matt. 19:4–5
- › Other texts may include Mark 10:1–9 and Gen. 1:26–28.

How do these texts lay the foundations for a Christian marriage? Describe the vocation of wife. Describe the vocation of husband.

How has Ephesians 5 been misused and misunderstood in the past? How can we work to correct those errors?

Read the Sixth Commandment and Luther's explanation in connection with Gen. 1:26–28.

Revisit the Fourth Commandment in light of Eph. 6:1–4. What does this mean for a parent?

Based on the passages above, who is given primary responsibility for leadership (especially spiritual leadership) in a family?

- › How can this be applied practically today?
- › What pitfalls need to be avoided?

Consider the following passage about authority: Matt. 28:18–20.

- › How does power differ from authority?
- › What kind of authority did Jesus have?

Read 1 Cor. 11:1–16.

- › How is authority explained and shown here?
- › What consequences does this have for today?
- › How are the eternal truths of submission to godly authority shown today? Could a woman's wedding ring be such a symbol?

Read 1 Cor. 14:26–40.

- › How are women given to participate in Christian worship? How are they not given to participate? Why?

Read 1 Tim. 2:8–15 and 3:1–7. These passages give more divine instruction on this topic. Are all men qualified to be pastors?

1 Peter continues this discussion, especially in 3:7, which applies to husbands. Read the whole section in context: 1 Peter 2:13–3:7.

- › How has this text been misunderstood? How does it show honor to wives?

Read Col. 3:19 in context: Col. 3:1–4:1.

- › How does the foundation laid in verses 1–17 help us better understand what follows?

How would you summarize these vocations based on Scripture?

- › Christian
- › Husband/Wife
- › Father/Mother/Parent
- › Head of the Household

#### SESSION 4:

### Law, Faith and Promises

The Old Testament provides guidance for the Christian head of the household.

In Deuteronomy, literally “second law,” the Lord renews His covenant with the generation of Israel that arose after 40 years of punishment wandering in the wilderness. As a part of that, the Law of God — the Ten Commandments — is given a second time. Parents would be wise to revisit the Ten Commandments as a whole, especially Deut. 5:9b–10 and 6:1–9.

Read the following passages of Deuteronomy 6 and summarize their importance: verses 1–3, 4–6, 7–9, 10–15, 16–19, 20–25

- › Which words apply specifically to those of the people of Israel brought out of Egypt?
- › Why does the Lord have such a powerful jealousy over His people?
- › Which words apply to believers in the one true God of any time and place?
- › What has the Lord given parents to teach to the next generation?
- › What ultimately happened in Old Testament history? Were the people faithful or not? What were the consequences?
- › What was the problem? Breaking the First Commandment! They worshiped false gods other than the one true God, as well as adding to what He had said and deleting things from what He had said.

Let's rewind to Genesis. It comes as a surprise to many that the Christian faith is the original religion given to Adam and Eve, our first parents, in the Garden of Eden.

Before the fall into sin, they were in perfect fellowship with the Lord. After the fall, God promised a Savior (Gen. 3:15).

The Old Testament reveals a pattern of faith and unfaith in God's ancient people. He always preserves a faithful remnant.

As Adam and Eve's family grew, murder ensued. Some were faithful to the Lord. Others were not. Even one child who rejects the faith leads to grandchildren, great grandchildren and so on, leaving no family example of faith, “going to church” or a “Christian life.”

Eventually, by the time we get to Noah, nearly all of the human race had fallen away from the faith. In the ark, the Lord rescued only eight people, while the others found judgment in the flood, a preview of the Last Day.

And then what happened? The pattern repeated again. When we meet Abram, his family is called away from pagan Ur of the Chaldeans in preparation for Abram's call to the Promised Land.

The Old Testament reveals this pattern of faith and unfaith in God's ancient people, who bear the curse of original sin going back to Adam and Eve. The Lord rescues His people who promise to be faithful. And then most fall away. Idols, demons and created people or things are worshiped instead of the one true God.

The pattern of the Old Testament rings true for all descendants of Adam and Eve. We are conceived and born in sin, unable to be righteous, unable to choose God. We are in a state of war and rebellion against Him.

What promises are made at a wedding?

How are those promises similar to promises made at confirmation or the Baptism of a child (when you are a sponsor or parent)?

Compare and contrast the promises made at Baptism and confirmation.

#### SESSION 5:

### The Importance of Truth

The most dangerous thing you will ever face in this life is not a terrorist. It is far scarier than an IRS audit. It's not a policeman when you've been speeding, a monster under your bed or a villain from a horror movie. All of those people or things can only frighten or hurt us for this life.

The most dangerous thing you will ever face in this life, according to the Rev. Todd Wilken, is a pastor who doesn't tell you the truth.

A pastor who doesn't tell you the truth is most dangerous because such a pastor is unfaithful to the Lord, his ordination vows and the people the Lord has given him to serve. Such a false shepherd lies about the reality of this world, allowing the sheep to continue in their sins without repentance.

A pastor who doesn't tell you the truth is the most dangerous thing you will face in this life not only because of the damage a person like

this can do to you here and now, but because he can lead you away from Christ and straight into the arms of Satan. Now that's scary!

- How important is truth in the eyes of our Lord when it concerns children? See Matt. 18:1–10. Parents are a child's first teachers.

Think about it another way. Who doesn't love brownies? Suppose you went over to a friend's house, and she offered you freshly baked "secret ingredient brownies." They are made of the highest quality ingredients and one secret ingredient. Just before you take your first bite, thanks be to God, your hostess tells you what the secret ingredient is: doggie doo. It isn't much of that secret ingredient, your hostess tells you, but you don't care. You don't want to eat any!

Something like that gets our attention. If we are unwilling to tolerate any foreign substances in our food — something that affects only this life — why are we so willing to tolerate error mixed in with eternal truth, or error denying eternal truth? This concerns salvation!

What if someone who God says should be under my servant-authority (Session 1) won't submit? This is a question borne out of a lot of common personal struggles. What have we learned that can apply?

First, nothing can come between us and God. If it were to happen, that would be idolatry.

Second, we are given to teach all of the household based on the Word. We are called to be faithful, not successful. We are not responsible for results.

Third, we are to avoid false teaching at all costs, especially when young children are involved. False teaching is sin. It must be avoided. The spiritual head of the household must do whatever he can by example, prayer and action to remain faithful. Eternal salvation is a more important responsibility of a husband and father (regarding his wife and children) than even providing daily bread!

