**The Headship Principle**

In the 2017 British Open Golf Championship Matt Kucher was tied Jordan Spieth with six holes to play. On Hole #13 Spieth hit his ball so far off line he ended up in the practice area. He couldn’t even see the green.

After taking a penalty for an unplayable lie and moving his ball even further back amid some parked trucks he somehow managed to get the ball on the green. He finished the hole with a bogey and trailed Kucher by 1 stroke with five to play.

Spieth then went on to shoot five under par in the next four holes and won the tournament.

Matt Kutcher is a man of class. Although unhappy to not have won the match, he was most devastated when he saw his kids waiting at the last hole. He didn’t know they were there.

He said of that moment seeing his kids red faced with tears streaming, *There was a bit of a crushing feeling as a parent, knowing I wasn’t able to come through and be the hero, the dad you want to be. I think dad’s fit a bit of a Superman role in your kids’ eyes*.

What man doesn’t want to be Superman for his kids? I think every man wants his kids to look upon him as a hero, the one who leads the family to glory. He wants to be somebody the kids look up to and emulate.

What if, when life is over and you and your family move into eternity, what if you discover that you didn’t lead them to Heaven? What if you discover that whatever you did as husband and father left your family outside of the Kingdom of God?

God had a specific plan for men when He made us husbands and fathers. He made us such that we would naturally lead our families. Fathers are part of God’s plan for leading our families to a saving relationship with Himself.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was sitting in a Nazi prison cell when he wrote a wedding sermon for his niece in which he taught that it was God’s plan that families would serve best when fathers and mothers fulfilled assigned responsibilities. The family was ordered in a way that will bring about the honor and glory of God.

Many people beleive that the highest goal in life is to be happy and comfortable and they’ll never accept God’s plan for families. The Bible teaches us that the family belongs to God. He created the family, He determined its form and function and He made men and women with distinct responsibilities that He planned for the family.

God arranged the family according to the principle of headship.

         *The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.* 1 Corinthians 11:3

Headship includes leadership, authority, and most of all servanthood. Christ being the head over man meant He would give His life for man, so for man being head over woman means he will give his life for her. Because he gives his life for her, he is also endowed with the responsibility of leadership and authority.

When I was a kid television shows were much different than they are today. Shows like *Father Knows Best*, *Leave It to Beaver*, and *My Three Sons* portrayed families structured according to the principle of headship:

         fathers were responsible for leadership, authority , and servanthood.

         They spoke with wisdom, demonstrated strength, were able to find solutions to problems, and were in charge of the family.

As a culture we’ve rejected the principle of headship. The shows I grew up with have been replaced with stuff like *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, and a whole list of households in which father, if there is one, tends to be the family doofus. How well is that working for us?

The makers of those shows say they don’t influence culture, they reflect culture. That’s untrue. The reason advertisers pour billions of dollars into those shows is because they know what we see on TV influences what we do.

Ask any man, “*Do you love your wife and children?*” and he’ll answer, “*I certainly do*.” By that some mean that he has strong positive feelings for her and them. But what does he do?

Many, following the example of what they see on TV, pursue as the highest goal of life, to be happy and comfortable with little or no recognition of God’s calling for men.

The Headship principle isn’t about being the boss of the family. It’s about serving and leading. It’s about modeling Christ-likeness. It’s about responsibility according to God’s plan for families.

Someone asked a father, “*Who’s in charge of your house?*” He said, “*My wife bosses the children. The children boss the dog and cat. And I can say anything I want to the peonies*.”

At our Men’s retreat this spring we studied a Biblical perspective of what it means to be a man. In the middle of a series of private communications, almost out of place there appears some admonitions to men. In 1 Corinthians 16:

         *After I go through Macedonia I’ll come visit you*

         *If Timothy shows up take care of him and listen to his teaching*

         *I strongly urged Apollos to go to you*

         Then, *Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; act like men; be strong. Do everything in love.* 1 Corinthians 16:13f

Five verbs, each an imperative, very much like a military commander issuing general orders to his troops. That means these are more than suggestions. This is what is expected of Christian men according to the headship principle.

The key verb here is ανδριζομαι. We applied it specifically to men because the first part of that verb comes from the root ανηρ, which is commonly used to designate a man as opposed to a woman or critter. It’s a plural verb meaning it speaks to all men who read this letter so we translate it, “*act like men*.”

Apparently the Apostle saw that there is something that men should be doing that might not apply to women or children. Something that God would have us do or be. I think this is our responsibility as head of the wife and children, according to God’s plan for families, according to the headship principle, we are to act like men.

The other four verbs spell out what it means to act like men. This is what we explored at our retreat and it’s what the Iron Men Sunday school class in continuing to study.

In order to fulfill the responsibility God designed for husbands and fathers, men, we should be doing four things. Each one is a second person plural imperative. That means it’s directed to all of us as a command. “*You, do this*”.

We’ll look at these verbs individually.

**1.    You, be watchful.**

“Be watchful” means to be like the guard who stands in a tower on the city wall looking out for an enemy who might try to attack. Modern Israel has border guards who constantly watch for terrorists trying to infiltrate to kill and destroy. The border fence will not stop attackers, so they must keep watch.

We have an enemy who wants to kill and destroy. Men, it’s our responsibility to keep watch not only for ourselves but for the people in our lives, our wives, our children, and our church.

If our enemy can take out the watchmen, our families and our churches are at best poorly defended and at worst defenseless. God says it’s up to us, men, to watch out for the enemy.

A lot of pain and suffering is the result of men who failed to keep watch.

         Men who didn’t keep watch against their own selfishness put themselves before their wives and children

         Men who didn’t keep watch over their own hearts, and ”fell out of love”, and violated their marriage vows.

Peter warned, *Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*. 1 Peter 5:8 Men, if you knew that there was a lion in the parking lot today, hiding among the cars waiting for a meal, would you let your wife and children walk to your car?

Some things we should watch out for:

**One**, pride. In our pride we often think we don’t need what God has to offer. *I don’t need church. I don’t need the Bible*. The Bible says that pride leads to destruction. There are about 60 references to the destructiveness of pride. It’s pride when we ignore God because “*I don’t need Him*.”

**Two**, we should watch out for worry. Worry paralyses. *I’m not a good enough Christian. What if I let God down?* Listen, you’re not holding God up. Do your best. God will honor it.

**Three**, watch out for laziness. It’s not unusually to meet a man who has abdicated his responsibility to serve and lead and model Christ-likeness for his family. We work hard at tour jobs, our sports, our hobbies. Even more we should work hard at watching out for our families.

**Four**, watch out for isolation. Have you ever seen one of the safari shows in which a pride of lions catches a wildebeest? They don’t just attack. They first separate one from the herd. Then he becomes easy prey. We watch out for ourselves by not isolating ourselves. Surrounding yourself with Christian brothers who will encourage and challenge you, and hold you accountable.

Are you keeping watch, or are you waiting until something bad happens THEN you plan to react?

**2.** The second verb: **You, stand firm in faith**.

Don’t miss the last two words. Most men feel like we’re big and strong. We’ll protect our families. This isn’t about being a tough guy. It’s about strong faith. It’s about believing and trusting God.

Sometime do a concordance study of the phrase “stand firm”. Eleven times we’re told to “stand firm”. This is especially important because, *our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* Ephesians 6:12

Our real problems are not other people. Our real problems are spiritual powers; real beings with real power and real ability to scheme against us.

Are you familiar with “The Armor of God”? Because we’re at war with spiritual powers the author tells us to, *take a stand against the devil’s schemes. Put on the full armor of God, so that…you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then.* Ephesians 6:11,13,14

To stand firm in faith is how we act like men. If we’re not standing firm it probably means we’re running away. Are you protecting your family by standing firm in faith? Or is it possible that you’re running away from your responsibility?

**3.** The third verb: **You, be strong**.

What are we talking about when we say “be strong”? κραταιοω means strength to overpower something or someone.

To be strong in this sense means that you’re strong enough to continue in faith even when it’s uncomfortable or inconvenient. Christian faith isn’t always easy. In fact it’s often difficult. Do you quit or are you strong enough to keep going?

To be strong means that you overcome distractions to faith obligations. It means you’re able to put Christ first when the world calls you away. How many fathers are teaching your children that relationship with God comes before baseball or fishing?

To be strong means to overcome ourselves in order to serve. People tend to think that gifts, abilities, and talents are intended to make us great. To the contrary, God gives us gifts so that we can serve, like Jesus did. Are you strong enough to use your gifts first for Christ and maybe only second for you?

To be strong means to overcome the tyranny of the urgent. It’s not unusual for men to keep themselves so busy they don’t have time for God. Even though the Bible talks of sabbath we think we’re strong enough we don’t need to rest.

I think we often misunderstand sabbath. Sabbath is not to rest from work, it is rest for work. We rest so that we have the strength to do what God called us to do. The reason God commanded a Sabbath was so that men would regain their strength not in idleness but in Jesus. A good life is not a balanced life. A Good life is a life of rhythm, rest – serve - rest – serve…

Listen, if Satan can’t make you bad, he’ll try to make you busy. Two things happen when you’re busy: One, your busyness will keep you from worship which God intended to strengthen you. There’s always something calling you; and two, you’ll one day get tired and quit. Not that you’ll quit believing, but you’ll quit the serving part.

Are you taking time to rest for service? Are you trying to succeed by your own strength or are you tapping into the real source of strength, the God who created you?

**4.** One more verb: **You, do all things in love**.

At our house we have an egress window in the basement. The original pit was made of wood that had deteriorated allowing water to fill and leak into our basement. So I dug it out, installed a new steel window well with a concrete floor. I made the floor with some concrete mix I had left over from a previous project.

The first time it rained water filled the well from below. The concrete hadn’t set even after several days. It turns out that the cement that holds the sand and stone in the mix together is a hygroscopic material, meaning it tends to undergo hydration over time. It won’t harden to hold the sand and stone together.

Love is like that. It’s the element that holds these other verbs together. As the Bible might say:

         *If I preach thoughtful, clear, and engaging sermons, but have not love, I am like the sirens of the fire trucks drowning out my words.*

         *If I have the ability to offer words of wisdom that penetrate your hearts and if I can help you understand the complexities of relationships, but have not love, I am but a talking head.*

         *If I have faith that sees the will of God in every context, but have not love, who will care what I say about the will of God?*

         *If I’m the hardest working preacher and church leader you’ve ever known but have not, my work is valueless*.

John wrote, *Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.* 1 John 4:7b-8

There are lots of people who say and do nice things, but lacking love, what they say and do has no value beyond life on earth. Love is what makes all of our good deeds reach to Heaven. If we husbands and fathers do not truly love, nothing we say or do will lead our families to salvation.

I imagine most of you are familiar with “The Love Chapter” in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13: *Love is patient, love is kind*… We can evaluate our love by measuring it against the things mentioned therein.

There are eight positive things that love is or does, and there are eight negative things that love isn’t or doesn’t do. When that chapter is a picture of you – you are a man of love. If it doesn’t describe you, or if any one of those elements doesn’t fit you, love is lacking.

If love is lacking you’ll not lead your family to a relationship with the Savior. Keeping watch, standing firm, and being strong won’t matter. Unless someone else leads your family where you should, they’ll be lost.

Are you loving your family to Heaven?

Another thing, when we understand what God says love is, we can see that the opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is selfishness. The opposite of loving your family is loving yourself and using your family to fulfill your dreams and needs.

Men, who’s leading your family?

         Who’s watching out for what might take your family away from Christ?

         Who’s standing firm in faith for the sake of your family?

         Who’s being strong enough to overpower the negative influences?

According to The Headship Principle, the way God designed it, it should be you. You are the first one responsible for your wife and children and church. If you fail, someone else will try to pick up the pieces. But understand this, by God’s design no one will be more effective in this than you, husband and father.

Obviously, this message speaks to you young men who are raising families. Your wife and your children are depending on you. Don’t let them down. You have no more important responsibility than this, to lead your family to Heaven.

Those of us who are done raising children aren’t without responsibility. We have a responsibility to our wives. We have a responsibility to our grandchildren. And we have a church full of children that we’re responsible for.

God knew what He was doing when He designed the Headship Principle. I know our culture of feminism and equality doesn’t like this idea. The Principle of Headship doesn’t diminish anyone. It doesn’t devalue what women have to offer.

It simply recognizes that God made us different according to His plan for families. And He gave the first responsibility for the family to men.

Let’s act like men as God intends for us to be.