

M 2 · W E E K S E V E N

The Royal Priesthood

Your first calling is to your home. The duties of both royalty and priesthood are yours — and they are modeled by Christ Himself.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Why am I a husband and a father?

WEEK SEVEN

Recap

1 PETER 2:9 · NIV

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

PROVERBS 18:22 · NIV

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.

We've been on a journey of discovery. We discovered that there's a problem with the worldly definition of manhood today, and we have set out to discover true, authentic, biblical manhood — what our role is, our calling, and our purpose in life. We started with our core design and makeup, and with the question "who" we are, understanding that design reveals purpose.

Hopefully we discovered more about "who" we are through our spiritual gifts, personality profile tests, and really being introspective with our hearts. Our heart, or our passions, matter — and what we love will often help determine our purpose.

We learned "when" we are by defining the zeitgeist or culture of the day and our roles within it. We also learned "how" we are to respond to our world, which is found in **1 John 4:19**: "We love because He first loved us." Our response to the world should be motivated and our actions interwoven by love. The thirty commands to love found in Romans 12 are impossible unless we first receive the love of God. It is the foundation of our walk.

This week, we will help discover our *why*. We live to leave a legacy. We live to leave the world a better place. God placed eternity inside of you (**Ecclesiastes 3:11**), and that longing is only fulfilled in the perpetuation of our species — through our families, our children, and discipleship. We have a deep longing to be remembered after we're gone. God placed that longing within you, and the first manifestation of it starts with our family: both the one we're born into and the one we make along our journey.

QUESTION

If your house was on fire and you could bring out one thing, what would it be?

WEEK SEVEN

Why we are

When God made the earth and everything in it, He said it was "good." Yet when He made man, He said it was *not* good for man to be alone (**Genesis 2:18**). We are designed for relationship — specifically, we are designed for covenant relationship. That is a deeper level of relationship, where two are one and are intertwined together with Christ as the head.

The family was the first church, and still is the microcosm church. If you were part of the westward expansion of the U.S. and you packed up your wagon full of supplies along with your family, when the Sabbath came, your church was wherever you were. That old frontiersman was the priest of his home, and you are still called to that priesthood. You're not only the priest — you're also a *royal* priest in covenant relationship with your wife.

Your first calling is to your home. That royal priesthood is a duty bestowed upon you from the moment you said, "I do." Therefore, the duties of both royalty and of priesthood are yours, and they're modeled by Christ Himself. God placed it in you to be the protector, provider, comforter, counselor, teacher, and vacation planner for your home. But have you accepted the duties of the royal priesthood? Let's outline them.

SIDEBAR ABOUT FAMILIES

Today, there are fewer and fewer traditional family units. Pew Research states that four in ten Americans have a stepparent, sibling, or half-sibling. No matter how functional or dysfunctional your family was, when you start your own family you get to choose the template by which your family will live. I hope and pray that you'll choose the foundation that the mighty warrior Joshua chose:

JOSHUA 24:15 · NIV

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

The family that raised you might have served the god of alcohol or addiction. They may have served the god of favoritism or pride. But you get to choose your family's spiritual lineage. It's your choice. No matter what happened to you in the past, you get to choose this day whom you will serve. Don't let your parents' failures keep you from the blessing of having your own spiritually thriving family.

WEEK SEVEN

Royal priestly role

As priests, we are to mediate, to pardon, to bless, and to guide our family toward God. We are to pray for and with our families. We are to fast for them, lead them, guide them, and protect them — both away from danger and evil, and toward the light of Christ. We teach the law to our children; we teach them to honor what is holy and what is sacred.

The Levitical priesthood of Aaron had a process of consecration for the altar and all its utensils. They offered sacrifices for their people, and once a year they entered the Holy of Holies to speak to God directly. They established ebenezers so that generations would remember the things that God had done for them. Today, we can enter the throne room of heaven and speak to God ourselves. We need no intercessor. **Hebrews 4:16** says, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Our role is similar, however, to Aaron's — if not in form, at least in function. We do not sacrifice animals anymore; Jesus was our ultimate sacrifice. We do not have to burn incense night and day; instead we are to pray without ceasing (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**) for our family. We are to lead our family to the cross. Jesus is the only way. There is none other. **John 14:6** says, "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" We are to lead our families to the only One who can save them. Anything short of this is eternal failure. Our fervent, paramount prayer should be for the salvation of our children. Who will pray for your children if not you? Who will fast for our children if we do not fast?

This is our solemn duty. If we say we love our families and lead them to love worldly pleasures and modern culture and to forsake the cross of Christ, we have led our children to the gates of Hell. May it not be so. There is still time to change course. It doesn't matter how old your children are; today, put on the cloak of the royal priesthood and lead your children to the cross. No matter the cost, lead them. If you love them, lead them to Jesus.

DEFINITION · EBENEZER

A stone of help and remembrance.

- Mediator
- Teacher
- Offer sacrifice on behalf of
- Establisher of the ebenezer
- Intercessor
- Offer worship on behalf of
- Reminder of the sacred
- Institution of holiness

QUESTION

Do you have an ebenezer in your family?

WEEK SEVEN

Royal role

We are not just the priest — we are the *royal* priest. Therefore, we take on the role of both priest and king over our home. So if we are royalty of the Kingdom that will never fail, our office, our position, is permanent. Our royalty is irrevocable. Your position as husband and father is irrevocable. You are a royal priest. The only one who can lay that down is you. What does a king do for his people?

- Vision caster
- Provider
- Builder
- Protector
- Leader
- Teacher

The roles of a king are as variant as the roles of the priest. **Proverbs 29:18** says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (KJV). We are — and should be — casting a vision for our family. We should have spiritual, financial, relational, educational, health, and recreational goals established for our families. Many of us plan vacations better than we plan our lives.

The weight of our royal priestly role should be setting in by now. Being a husband and a father is serious business and takes planning. We can't do it alone. We need the help of other successful royal priests in our circle, and we need wisdom, endurance, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

16%

of the 1979 Harvard graduating class reported having goals.

3%

had goals *and* a written plan to reach them.

10×

the income earned by that 3% — combined — compared to the remaining 97% of the class.

SOURCE · HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL, 1979–1989 STUDY

Having a written plan or set of goals for your family is essential. Leaders lead with vision. We understand the role of protector, because if anyone broke into your house they'd likely have to go through you to get to your children. We know that we are called to provide because **1 Timothy 5:8** says, "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." That speaks for itself. We are called to honorable and godly work. I've seen several families where the dad stays home these days, and on the outside things seem okay, but as I counsel these men I find them to be broken inside. Their manhood is in breach, and their wives are the leaders of their homes. This isn't the paradigm God designed for us.*

We are also called to be the leaders, builders, and teachers of our homes. Kings advance the technology of their kingdoms, build new roads, acquire new territories, and establish the educational institutions of a society. Earthly kingdoms throughout history are known for their technological advancements. The Phoenicians invented the alphabet; the Romans built roads; the Greeks established the sophists to rule their land. Kingdoms are known for justice or harshness. We use the word "draconian" because Draco the king established that every law broken required death. You establish the rule of law in your home. You establish what is honored, what is holy, and what is permissible.

** Every situation is different. If you are called to stay at home with your children for a season and you've heard from God, then your duty is to listen to God's voice.*

WEEK SEVEN

The weight

You might be saying to yourself right now, "Wow, I didn't know that my role at home was so heavy or difficult." I'm glad you're seeing that it isn't light and easy — but Jesus modeled the role for us, so that we have a guide.

We don't have to plow the field on our own. Jesus said in **Matthew 11:30**, "My yoke is easy, my burden is light." He doesn't put anything on you that you can't manage, and the verse implies that He's carrying the weight along with you. The weight isn't too heavy when we manage it with Christ — but it is very heavy if we try to pull it with our own ability. Our modeled example is to look at Christ and how He modeled the royal priesthood with His bride, the Church.

WEEK SEVEN

Christ loved the Church

EPHESIANS 5:25 · NIV*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.***QUESTION****How did Jesus treat His church?**

GIVING OURSELVES

What does it mean that He "gave himself up for her"? I believe Paul is referring to the cross. Jesus loved the Church so much that He went to the cross for her. Why did Jesus go to the cross? So that we may be reconciled to Him. Jesus made the initiative in reconciliation even though man was first sinful. **Romans 5:8** says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

This is difficult to do in a relationship. This means that *we're the initiators of reconciliation*. When

there's an argument — and there's sure to be arguments — we should be the first to initiate making up.

QUESTION

What does giving yourself mean to you?

FOUR EASY RULES FOR ARGUING

- ① **Never bring up past arguments.** Once a disagreement is behind you, don't bring it up again. There's no keeping score. Let the past be the past. (That also means to watch your tongue and make sure you don't say something that could be damaging to your wife.)
- ② **Don't sleep on it.** Don't give the devil a foothold into your marriage. If you're angry, stay up and work it through until one of you gets tired and decides to make up. Make a commitment to pray before you go to bed every night. It's difficult to sincerely pray for someone while you're angry.
- ③ **The "D" word is off limits.** If you have an old dictionary on the shelf, take a Sharpie and blot out two words that should be out of your vocabulary. *Impossible* — because nothing is impossible with God. *Divorce* — because no matter what, you're making it through. Don't let divorce be an option. If you have divorce in your family, break the curse of divorce by making a covenant with your wife. (Technically, if she's your wife, you are already in covenant.)
- ④ **Listen.** Stop arguing and listen to what your wife is saying. Many arguments continue when one person doesn't feel respected or heard. Stop defending yourself for a moment and really listen to what she's saying. Put yourself in her shoes. Try to understand what she's saying by viewing the argument from her perspective. She will respect you and honor you more if you do this, even if you agree to disagree.

We teach what we know; we duplicate what we are.

JOHN MAXWELL

GUIDE HER SPIRITUALLY

JOHN 17:20–23 · NIV

²⁰My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one — ²³I in them and you in me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Your marriage is a light to others. The family really is the first church. If the outside world were peering into your family, would they see unity? Who is responsible for that unity? Who is responsible for unity within a church — the congregation or the priest? Again, who is responsible for unity in a kingdom — the king or his subjects? Jesus talks about unity within the Church, and there's no unity within the Church if our marriages are fractured.

As men, we must fight for our marriages by having the courage to step out there, be vulnerable to our wives, be humble with them, love them — even more than they love us if necessary — and pray over them. Our role is difficult, and probably impossible by worldly standards. It is not the easiest role. Many will quote that our wives are supposed to submit to us, and that may be true — but a wife will not follow someone who is not spiritually in line with Christ for long. God placed the desire for justice and a right royal priesthood within your wife. She is looking to honor righteousness. She even desires to serve it, but it must be modeled for her to naturally follow her royal priest. If the royal priest is corrupt, she will rebel.

Man has long studied the form of a woman, but has neglected her soul.

ROBERT BLY

SERVE WITH HUMILITY

Philippians 2:8 says, "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!" Humility isn't just a good idea, it's a command. After Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He said this:

JOHN 13:12–15 · NIV

¹²When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

When you put your family's needs before yours, honor and love them, they will follow your lead. We defeat the enemy with the opposing spirit. When we see pride, we demonstrate humility. When we see greed, we are generous. When we see anger, we demonstrate peace. Adopt this practice in your home and watch the change occur.

GIVE HER YOUR BODY

Our bodies aren't our own. **1 Corinthians 7:4** says, "The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife." This isn't just about sex, men — it's about the way we take care of ourselves, as well.

- How we eat.
- How we keep our health.
- How we sleep.
- How we honor the Sabbath.

Your body is hers, and vice versa. Do you eat like your body is hers? Are you grooming yourself or taking care of yourself the way she would want? Are you living in a way that you'll be able to take care of her when you're eighty-five and not just when you're fifty-five? Jesus freely gave His body to the Church. If we are to love our wives as Christ loved the Church, then we are also to give our bodies to our wives as Christ gave His body for the Church. **1 Corinthians 11:24** says, "and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you.'"

QUESTION

Jesus gave us His physical body. What does that mean for us?

WEEK SEVEN

The practical game plan

Do you know your wife's love languages? Years ago, Gary Chapman wrote a powerful little book called *The Five Love Languages*, and it outlined the different ways we receive love. The

book is profound and has had a huge impact on marriages across the world. The author submits that we all receive love in five different ways, and there is one way that makes us feel more loved than the others. That is our personal love language.

- ◆ Physical Touch
- ◆ Gifts
- ◆ Words of Affirmation
- ◆ Time
- ◆ Acts of Service

Chapman submits that we all have one or two of the love languages that are dominant. If you don't know your wife's love language, ask her. If she doesn't know, take the test together. It will be a great bonding experience, and I highly recommend you read the book together as a couple. It has helped Sara and me get in tune with each other, and we've laughed a lot about each other's love languages over the years.

TAKE THE ASSESSMENT

Take the Five Love Languages quiz together as a couple.

5lovelanguages.com

If we are to love our wives as Christ loved the Church, let's be intentional about that love. If you were playing defense against a football team that liked to run the ball between the tackles a lot, you'd stack the box and walk those linebackers up closer so that you could win the game. That's a winning strategy for a game; we need a winning strategy for our wife's heart.

PHYSICAL TOUCH

Physical touch is probably easier for most guys than some of the others on this list because it's usually a predominant love language for men. However, there is physical touch that is intimate but doesn't have to be sexual. If your wife's love language is physical touch, initiate contact with her that is non-sexual, at first.

TIME

Go on a date with your wife. I have the hardest time putting my phone down sometimes, but lately we've decided on a digital sunset. That means after 9 p.m., I put my phone down, look over at Sara, and say, "This is your time now." I'm guilty of being so lost in the day, answering calls, texts, and emails, that I hardly ever concentrate on just one thing at a time. We try to say we are multitasking, but science has proven that we can only focus on one thing at a time.

When you spend time with your family, be intentional. Be there in the moment. Don't let distractions invade your space. That's why having a digital sunset or a box to place phones on the table is a healthy

way to say to your family, "You're important." Carve out your time and push away the rest of the world for a little while. Having a meal together is another great way to spend quality time with your wife and family. The table was modeled by Jesus. There is power in breaking bread together and just enjoying each other's company. No matter your family dynamic, be intentional enough with time that you may even put it on the family calendar. Do this consistently. Not just with your wife, but also with your children. **Psalm 90:12** says, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." No one wishes they had spent more time on the golf course when they're on their death bed. Spend more time with the ones you love.

GIFTS

Ephesians 4 says that Christ gave gifts to the Church. He gave freely and abundantly. There is nothing lacking in God's economy. Even if your wife's love language isn't gifts, I encourage you to take good notes about the things your wife likes and surprise her as often as your budget allows. Investing in your relationship in this way will demonstrate to your wife that you love her and put her above your own needs. Don't come home with a new set of golf clubs and then complain when your wife buys a new pair of shoes or has a spa day. When you put your wife above your own wants or desires, your marriage will begin to thrive.

ACTS OF SERVICE

One of the most beautiful things you can do is to demonstrate to your family how to serve them. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. How can you wash the feet of those in your family? Pray about ways you may demonstrate acts of service to your family. You'll be teaching them more than you know when you submit to this principle. You'll also place inside of them a sense of honor for you.

- Wash the dishes.
- Make her favorite dinner.
- Lighten her load.
- Fill up her car with gas.
- Fold her clothes.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Everyone needs encouragement. Your wife longs to hear that she is beautiful. She desires to be desired by you. She has a longing to feel wanted and needed by her husband. This is one reason why pornography is so detrimental to a marriage. When you satisfy your lusts with the images of other women, it diminishes the gift of a wife that you have.

1 PETER 3:7 · NIV

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

*If you have a problem with pornography, please ask for help. There is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8:1**). Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed; the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (**James 5:16**). God can heal you of this brokenness. Text HELP to 251.648.7580 — we will pray for you and help you through the process of healing.*

WEEK SEVEN

Litmus tests

Two short self-checks before this week's homework — a measure of how you love what your wife loves, and a measure of the boundaries that protect your marriage.

WIFE-LOVE LITMUS TEST — DO I LOVE WHAT MY WIFE LOVES?

- Her children
- Her dreams
- Her hobbies
- Her family
- Her faith

BOUNDARIES LITMUS TEST

- Do I have one-on-one lunch with other women?
- Do I wear my ring?
- Do I have any of my exes on social media?
- Do I have phone numbers in my phone of anyone I shouldn't?
- Does my wife have all my passwords?
- Do I have an accountability partner (*not* your wife)?

Homework

◆ HOMEWORK

Write a letter to your father

Even if your dad has passed away, even if you and your dad never speak, even if you haven't heard from your dad in years — write the letter.

Let these prompts guide what you say:

- What do you need to forgive?
- What needs to be forgiven?
- What's been left unsaid?
- What would you say to him if this were your last conversation?
- How can you honor him?

Dear Dad,

[illegible]

(continued)
