# The Leader and Family

The greatest ministry opportunity God has given us is found right at home. Our family is a "flock" to lead and to serve for Christ. And our effectiveness and credibility for public ministry can be developed and defined by our Christian leadership and behavior at home. Would you listen to one who came to you as an expert farmer when you know that his farm is disorganized, weedy, and unproductive? In the same way your ministry be helped or hindered by your godly family life.

In addition, there will never be any other group of people in your life that you have more influence on for Christ. You have a built-in opportunity because of your close relationship and the time that you spend together. You can lead your spouse and your children into lives of godliness and Christian service naturally and effectively as you follow God's principles for marriage and parenting at home.

## Church Leaders as Spouses

One of the central metaphors of the Bible is marriage and its illustration of our individual relationships with Christ. This fact only adds to the importance of following God's clear instruction regarding marriage.

Both of the major passages in the Bible about marriage (Eph. 5:21-33, 1 Pet. 3:1-7) focus on submission, so we should define it. The Greek word used is  $\mathfrak{v}\pi\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\sigma\phi\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha\iota$ , which is best translated "be subject to" or "submit yourself to." It was used in military contexts to arrange troop divisions in a military fashion under the command of a leader." In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden." I define biblical submission as a strong, independent individual choosing to be subject to another's desires or control. It is meekness. It is the exact same thing that happens when you show respect for and obey a policeman.

Submission is often applied to wives, as it should be. But it is very important to understand that both major marriage passages clearly call each spouse to mutual submission. Yes, God expects husbands to submit to their wives. It may seem paradoxical, but as the head of the home, the husband can exemplify Christ-like servant-leadership by submitting to the needs and desires of his wife (and children). Only when an immediate decision is required should a husband make a unilateral decision when he and his wife disagree. Otherwise, mutual submission is the rule.

It is also important to note that submission does not imply inferiority. Both husband and wife stand before God as equals.

### Wives

The Bible gives clear instruction for the wife in the home. The word is for all Christian wives, but should be especially exemplified by women who are leaders in the church.

Beginning with **submission**, Ephesians 5:21-24 says:

Eph 5:21-24 - <sup>21</sup> and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself

being the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup>But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

The main emphasis in this passage for wives is to subject themselves to their husbands, to submit. The Christ / Church metaphor used to illustrate that wives' subjection to their husbands should be the same type of submission all Christians give to Jesus. This submission should be voluntary, constant cooperation and deference to the husband, setting aside personal desires and priorities for those of the husband.

Of course, when we submit to Jesus it is certain that He knows the future and He is always making decisions with our best interests in mind. That is not always true of earthly husbands, Christian or not. 1 Peter 3:1-6 gives further instruction:

1 Peter 3:1-7 - <sup>1</sup>In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup>as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. <sup>3</sup>And let not your adornment be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; <sup>4</sup>but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. <sup>5</sup>For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. <sup>6</sup>Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

Christian wives are to submit even to non-Christian husbands. God will use sincere submission to draw the unbelieving husband to Christ. Submission is much more effective than nagging. When a wife nags her husband about Christ (or anything), then the husband is in conflict with the wife. When the wife gets out of the way by submitting, then the husband is in conflict with God. God will win that battle!

One more note about wives' submission: How far does it go? Does the wife obey the husband no matter what? No. Submission to God is more important than submission to a husband. So, if a husband directs his wife to do something that is clearly a sin, or if he prevents her from doing something that God commands her to do, then she should obey God and endure any suffering from her husband with joy. Idolatry and adultery are examples of sin and prayer and evangelism are examples of commands where God's Word shows us that we should obey Him instead of man. And a wife should never be subjected to physical or emotional abuse.

What is the outcome of this submission? 1 Peter 3:6 tells us that a wife who is living in submission has nothing to fear. Even if her husband makes bad choices, she can trust that God will take care of her. He will be with her even in suffering. Submission brings freedom from worry.

God puts great value on a wife's **character**. In 1 Peter 3:3-5, God reminds us that He "sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7) Wives are told not to focus on their outward appearance as the way to please God, but to develop a "gentle and quiet spirit" on the inside. Hairdos, jewelry, and dresses will not make you closer to God, but inner beauty is precious in His eyes.

A "gentle and quiet spirit" implies a number of important character qualities. Meekness is strength under control. A horse is said to be "meeked" when it has been tamed and taught to follow commands. It is no less strong than before, but it has learned submission. Be assured that meekness is not weakness! Meekness is when you have

the power and ability to get something you want, but you choose instead to defer to God or someone else.

Another special quality of a godly wife and mother is gentleness. And certainly a wife with this character is at peace. She does not worry. She trusts God and she trusts her husband.

Finally we will discuss the **activities** that God expects a godly wife to fulfill. Proverbs 31 is a great place to find what God wants a wife to be doing.

Prov. 31:10-31 - <sup>10</sup>An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. <sup>11</sup>The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. <sup>12</sup>She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. <sup>13</sup>She looks for wool and flax, And works with her hands in delight. <sup>14</sup>She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. <sup>15</sup>She rises also while it is still night, And gives food to her household, And portions to her maidens. <sup>16</sup>She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard. <sup>17</sup>She girds herself with strength, And makes her arms strong. <sup>18</sup>She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night. <sup>19</sup>She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle. <sup>20</sup>She extends her hand to the poor; And she stretches out her hands to the needy. <sup>21</sup>She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet. <sup>22</sup>She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple. <sup>23</sup>Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. <sup>24</sup>She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies belts to the tradesmen. <sup>25</sup>Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future. <sup>26</sup>She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. <sup>27</sup>She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. <sup>28</sup>Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: 29" Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all." <sup>30</sup>Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *But* a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. <sup>31</sup>Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.

From this lengthy passage we can see where the godly wife spends her time. First and foremost, her priority is the home. She provides food and clothing for her household. She is skilled with farming, finances, sewing, and cooking. She is a hard, tireless worker, and her family recognizes how blessed they are to have her in their lives.

Next, she considers others outside the home who are needy and gives them food and clothing. In addition to her generosity, she also exercises her wisdom by teaching her children and others to fear the Lord.

To be this "excellent wife" should be the goal of every Christian lady. I've heard some discouraged ladies call this passage a myth or impossible dream. But just like Jesus is the perfect example of a man, Proverbs 31 is a standard for Christian women to attain.

Additional encouragement comes from Titus 2:3-5:

Titus 2:3-5 - <sup>3</sup>Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, <sup>4</sup>that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, <sup>5</sup>to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.

Paul tells Titus to instruct older women to watch how they act, what they say, and how much they drink. Most importantly, they are to teach the younger wives how to properly fulfill their primary role, which is in the home.

This role is first to love. Loving your husband can mean a lot of things. It includes meeting his sexual needs, but it also means respecting him and encouraging him, trusting him, and submitting to him. Other ways to love your husband are praying for

him and allowing him to do what God has called him to do. (We will discuss the instruction to love your children in the section titled "Church Leaders as Parents.")

Paul goes on to say that wives should be self-controlled and pure. You should avoid being controlled by any substance such as drugs or alcohol and being involved in any immorality including adultery or sexual perversion.

Remember that your primary role is "worker at home." Don't allow any other activity to prevent you from fulfilling that role. In all this, you should be pleasant, agreeable, joyful, and happy. And finally, you are reminded again to be subject to your husband.

The outcome of this submission, character, and activity will be to honor God's Word and to have a testimony that will point others to Christ.

### **Husbands**

As challenging as the role of a wife may seem, the role of being a godly husband may be even more so since the example is Christ in His relationship with the Church. Even so, a male church leader who is married must strive to obey God's instruction for his role in the home. Once again, Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3 will be our primary passages.

Eph 5:21, 25-33 - <sup>21</sup> and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. ... <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup>So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; <sup>29</sup> for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of His body. <sup>31</sup>FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. <sup>32</sup>This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.

Built on mutual submission, the primary instruction from Ephesians 5 for husbands is to **love** their wives. This love is selfless (*agape*) and Christ's love for the Church is the example. A husband should love his wife so completely that he would give up his life for her if necessary. Since a husband and wife are one flesh, the husband should love and take care of his wife just as he does his own body. Loving your wife is loving yourself.

A godly husband who loves his wife will lead her to Jesus and Christ-likeness. The passage says he, like Jesus, will use God's Word to cleanse her and set her apart for God. That means that he will be a positive spiritual influence on her and will not allow anything in the home that would draw her away from God. He will be the spiritual leader in the home and an example of godliness. He will work to develop holiness in his wife (and family).

Much like a farmer would care for his garden, a husband will care for his wife. He will make sure that there are no weeds stealing away from the plant. He will ensure regular watering and fertilization to provide nourishment for optimum growth. He will protect the plant from oxen, water buffalo, and pigs trampling them, and make sure that no pests are damaging the plant. All of this is to ensure that the plant is able to produce its fruit.

#### Let's look at 1 Peter 3:7 now:

1 Peter 3:7 - <sup>7</sup>You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Before we see the main instruction here, note the word "likewise." Likewise what? The whole passage is in the context of submission, and "likewise" is there to remind husbands that their instructions are in the context of mutual submission.

1 Peter 3 gives two important commands to husbands. First, husbands are to **be understanding**. You could reorder the first part of the verse this way to make it clearer: "Since she is a woman, and is thus a weaker vessel, you should live with your wife in an understanding way." It's pretty obvious that women are different than men, and God wants you to live with that in mind.

There is nothing shameful or inferior about being a woman, but there are definite physical and physiological differences, and those differences make women physically weaker. If the task at hand is to have a baby, women are eminently more able than men, but if the goal is to carry 100kg of rice to the village 3km away, she is less physically equipped to do it and consideration should be made for this difference.

Note that this weakness is limited to physical matters and should not be applied to other capacities such as intelligence. In fact, a physical difference between men and women actually makes women's brains work better. While a man typically uses only one side of his brain and are thus much more logical and less aware of their emotions, the two sides of a woman's brain are connected so she is able to think not only logically, but also emotionally. One way for a husband to be understanding is for him to realize that he should consider his wife's opinion at least as much as his own. There's a good chance that God will reveal His will through the wife.

This consideration will fulfill the direction Peter gives husbands that they should **honor** their wives. He says that since women are fellow heirs to God's grace, they should be treated as equals in the faith. That means that they have equal access to God and His truth. They have equal insight and are gifted just as effectively as men. While there are particular roles that God has defined specifically for men or women, both stand on the same plane before Him. A wife is a spiritual equal and should be given honor and respect.

Before we finish this passage, let's look at another passage where God gives specific instructions to husbands about their **activities**. Two similar passages written specifically for church leaders (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9) have important implications for those leaders who are husbands. (By the way, these standards should be the goal of all Christians, but are explicitly expected of church leaders.) We'll look specifically at 1 Timothy 3:1-7:

1 Timothy 3:1-7 - <sup>1</sup>It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do.* <sup>2</sup>An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup>not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. <sup>4</sup>He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity <sup>5</sup>(but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); <sup>6</sup>and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by

the devil. <sup>7</sup>And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

In verse 2, Paul says a husband should be a "one woman man." This precludes all sexual activity with anyone except his wife. He goes on to require self-control (temperance), which means that a husband should never act out of anger against his wife or children. Prudence suggests a financial wisdom that puts his primary role of providing for his family above making risky financial decisions, including gambling or other wasteful spending.

It is important for a husband to be respectable inside the home. We have talked a lot about a wife's submission to her husband. When a husband acts lovingly and respectably in the home, it makes it much easier for the wife to submit herself to him. A husband should strive to deserve his wife's submission and trust.

Verse 3 begins with the important injunction against drunkenness. There is no place for excessive or chronic use of alcohol in the life of a church leader. Doing so violates the clear command of Ephesians 5:18 where Paul says, "And do not get drunk with wine, ..., but be filled with the Spirit."

Also in verse 3 is a call for gentleness. A godly husband should be gentle toward everyone, especially his wife and children. Striking your wife is unacceptable for any reason. Often the gentleness that comes when a man is under the Spirit's control can be an effective testimony of the grace of God at work in his life.

Finally from this passage, Paul says that a church leader should manage his home well before he can earn the right to lead the church. This is a reflection of what was said earlier, that our Christian lifestyle at home can earn us the privilege of public ministry. We must get our homes in line with God's Word!

Now we can conclude the discussion about godly husbands by looking at the end of 1 Peter 3:7. That verse tells us that the outcome of a proper relationship with his wife will be that the husband's prayers will not be hindered. It is not out of line, then, to say that for a husband's relationship with God to be good, his domestic activities should be right, and he must be loving, understanding, and honoring his wife. For a husband to be right with God, he must be right with his wife!

#### Church Leaders as Parents

It is a frequent temptation for church leaders to become so involved in ministry activities that they completely neglect their families. Reading 1 Timothy 3:4-5 should make us question whether that is God's plan:

<sup>4</sup>He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity <sup>5</sup>(but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?);

It is not possible to fulfill that standard for ministry if you are ignoring your children.

There are at least three very important reasons for a church leader to make sure he or she is successfully obeying God's Word as a parent. First, we've already seen that being an effective parent is a prerequisite for leadership in the church. Second, the interaction between parents (especially fathers) and children will establish the children's view of God. Third, our children are the single greatest opportunity of our lives to

disciple new believers into maturity. Fourth, if our children are out of control it will limit our credibility in ministry.

So it is very appropriate that we look carefully at God's instruction for parents.

The first passage on parenting comes right after the Ephesians 5 passage we have relied upon so heavily in our earlier discussion of marriage. It is directed at fathers but applies to mothers, too. Ephesians 6:4 says:

<sup>4</sup>And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

What provokes a child to anger? Here are five ideas:

Unclear expectations – Before a child can reasonably be expected to obey a rule, the rule must clearly stated and understood. You should never punish a child for doing something they do not know is wrong. Also, make sure your child is old enough to understand your expectation. Young children can only understand simple basic instructions.

Rules without relationship – Children will usually rebel against rules that are given and enforced outside of a meaningful relationship with the parent. Spending time together breeds a relationship that fosters obedience. Rules and boundaries in the context of a relationship give a child a feeling of security and being loved.

No rules – Having no boundaries or rules will make a child feel insecure and unloved. The child will test the boundaries, but they do it not out of anger or rebellion. They do it to make sure the rules are firm and reliable. Children need rules to be happy.

Inconsistency – A child will become frustrated, angry, and rebellious if the application and enforcement of rules changes from day to day. Rules must be applied fairly to every child. Both parents need to agree on the rules and apply them consistently. Enforcement should be prompt, appropriate, consistent, and certain.

Punishing out of anger – It can be angering at times when a child disobeys. It is critical that the parent not react in anger to the child. Angry punishment will often be more severe than the disobedience deserves, and can even result in abuse. If you realize you are about to react in anger, you should stop and wait until you are back in control. Counting to ten (or one hundred!), praying for wisdom, and walking with the child to a private location are all ways to regain your senses before making a decision about appropriate punishment.

This raises an important question. Is corporal punishment right? As always, let's go to God's Word to find out. Solomon's wisdom from Proverbs answers the question:

Proverbs 13:24 - He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

Proverbs 22:15 - Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13-14 - <sup>13</sup>Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you beat him with the rod, he will not die. <sup>14</sup>You shall beat him with the rod, And deliver his soul from Sheol.

Proverbs 29:15 - The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

God clearly tells us that corporal punishment is a necessary part of a parent's discipline. But is it the only way? And how should it be done?

Corporal punishment is one of a few very effective ways to discipline children. Babies must not be punished in any way since they cannot understand rules. Once a child begins to crawl and walk it is appropriate to verbally correct them when they are moving toward danger other undesirable actions and to praise them when they obey such instruction.

Around the age of one or so it will become effective to safely separate the child into another location away from yourself (and others if possible) for a very short time as punishment. This is called a "time out" and should last about one minute for every year of age.

Only after a child is able to understand and communicate should you add corporal punishment to your disciplinary options. As stated earlier, make sure that your instructions to the child are clearly stated and understood and that the child knows what will happen if they disobey. For example, "Do not go near the road. If you do, you will get a spanking. Do you understand?" It is then effective to help the child learn to make wise decisions when you see them considering disobedience. "You have a choice. You can either stay here in the grass where it is safe or you can go toward the road and get a spanking. Please be wise. I do not want to spank you, but it is up to you." They will learn that every choice has consequences.

Corporal punishment should definitely be considered as an appropriate response to a child's defiance, challenging the parent's authority.

Another method of discipline that becomes more effective as the child grows older is removing privileges or assigning additional responsibilities. You can take away a child's toy or favorite activity for a period of time, such as the rest of the day or until tomorrow night for a younger child, or longer periods for older children. It is helpful during the period of punishment to ask them why they are unable to play with the toy or enjoy the activity to remind them of the consequences of their disobedience. Assigning temporary additional chores is effective with older children. You should never punish a child by withholding food at regular mealtimes or by doing anything else that could put their health at risk.

How do you properly apply corporal punishment? Corporal punishment must never be applied in a way that harms the child or leaves lasting marks. The best place is on the bottom above the top of the legs. Some parents use their hands to spank the child, but many wise parents suggest using something in the hand like a paddle, which is a thin flat piece of wood with a handle, much like a ping pong paddle. The goal is to sting the skin with one to three swats. There should be no bruises, whelps, or lasting marks, though the skin might become reddish for a few minutes.

Any time any form of discipline is used, it should be a very intentional, loving, and controlled process. The first step after stopping the disobedient behavior is to get their attention, explain to the child how they were disobedient, and remind them of the rule or instruction they had been given and the consequence.

For example, "Look me in the eyes. The reason I am punishing you is because you hit your sister. This morning I told you that if you hit your sister I would spank you. I love you and your sister too much to allow you to act that way. You hit your sister so I am going to spank you. Do you understand?" They need to affirm that they understand. Then after punishing them, the most critical step is to express physically and verbally your unconditional love for the child. If their behavior has hurt someone else, then it is often very wise to have them offer a meaningful apology to their victim.

In the Ephesians passage, parents are told to raise their children not only with physical discipline, but also the instruction of the Lord. Parents should lead and provide regular and meaningful Bible teaching for their children (and the neighbors' children, too!). Short stories from the Bible make great material and can be followed by a couple of questions to help them apply it to their lives. You should also take advantage of any general educational opportunities available for your children, as long as they are not anti-Christian.

Another important direction is found in Titus 2:4:

<sup>4</sup>that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

Paul says that mothers should love their children. Loving your children can mean disciplining them, making sure they are properly fed and clothed, and protecting them from harm. Children can be harmed by sickness and disease. Children are harmed by those who exploit them for sexual pleasure or slavery.

That raises an important point. In the Ephesians 5-6 passages about domestic relationships there is a separate section (6:5-8) discussing slaves. That means that wives and children are not slaves, and therefore should not be treated like slaves. Husbands, wives, and children should all be mutually loved, respected, and gently treated.

Children learn their behavior from their parents and family. When the parents are living peaceful, godly, loving lifestyles, their children are very likely to do the same.

# Special Notes for the Unmarried

Since most of the material in this section was applicable primarily for church leaders who are married and have children, we should take a moment to consider God's instruction for those who are unmarried. An unmarried church leader who is free from marital and parental responsibilities can serve Christ in ways that others cannot, but should also be aware of the need for wisdom during courtship.

1 Corinthians 7:32-35 - <sup>32</sup>But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; <sup>33</sup>but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, <sup>34</sup>and *his interests* are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. <sup>35</sup>And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and *to secure* undistracted devotion to the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, Paul gives specific instructions to those who are unmarried. He says there are significant benefits to being unmarried, summed up in the phrase, "undistracted devotion." Not only is an unmarried person able to dedicate much more

time and attention to their relationship with God and ministry to others, but they are free to minister in settings where they could not safely take a family. This could be due to there not being sufficient resources to provide for a family while serving in a particular way or because of the danger involved in a particular ministry setting or location.

While some unmarried individuals are called to be so by God and intend to remain unmarried, others are simply waiting for God to bring them together with their life partner. When an individual is unmarried there are strong drives and temptations that must be kept under tight control. God is very clear that He considers all sexual relationships outside of marriage to be sin and seriously harmful spiritually. See 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. A church leader cannot be involved in sexual immorality.

Additionally, a church leader must be very careful about the individuals he or she considers for courtship and marriage. Two important sources for wisdom about potential mates are God through much prayer and parents. God can lead you to His will through the counsel of your parents, even if they are not Christians.

There are certainly many qualities that one would desire to find in a mate, but there is a critical quality that God wants in your mate:

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 - <sup>14</sup>Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup>Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

You should not consider any level of courtship with a non-Christian. This can be difficult in an environment where there are few other Christians, but you must remember Whom you serve. God is able! God is able to bring your and another of His follower's paths together at the right time. The exciting thing is that God is birthing new followers around you every day!

The domestic role God has placed us into is an important part of our service to Him. He has given us clear instruction how we should fulfill those roles. Our obedience in the home will result in effective ministry to our families and greater opportunity to serve God in the church.