

Podcast 228 Blessing Our Wives

We've been talking about 1 Peter 3:7 and how to dwell with our wife in an understanding way. How to honor her, and how to build her up. We have also discussed how to be part of a team, treating each other with mutuality because we're joint heirs. Let's consider the word honor and how we honor our wife. Honoring is not a one time action but an ongoing attitude. I want to have an honoring attitude towards my wife at all times. I remembered one specific way that God honored His Son and that we can apply as we seek to honor our wives. This is something that we've done at our home and it's worked really well.

Let's pray: Father, help us today to grab on to some specifics, things that we can do to honor our wife. In Jesus' name. Amen.

One of the things that came to me is that when God honored his son, he did it publicly at his baptism. He gave his son an incredible blessing. I've talked about it lots of times. But God not only blessed him at the Jordan River, but he also blessed him on the Mount of Transfiguration in the presence of three of his disciples.

"After six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him." (Matthew 17:1-3)

That must've been awesome. "Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here. One for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah.'" (Matthew 17:4)

I wonder what Peter was thinking, or if he was scrambling for words and the appropriate response. Peter was still speaking when God interrupted him. A bright cloud overshadowed them. "A voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved son with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him.'" (Matthew 17:5)

Several times in the gospels God builds up His Son and honors Him in front of others. One morning I was reading through Proverbs 31 in my regular Bible reading. I was wondering where my wife, a worthy woman, received approval and was esteemed. I had heard that men are built up by what they accomplish. They are blessed when their peers acknowledge and praise them for what they have done. They're encouraged when they're good at their job, or when they're proficient at their hobby. They feed off of being recognized when they've finished a project or task and were successful. Men simply like to be acknowledged for accomplishing stuff.

I was thinking, "I wonder how Sandi receives honor?" She doesn't have a job outside the home where people see her at work. She's quietly working in her home. She's laying her life down for her husband and children. She's educating four children. She's building me up. She's maintaining an incredible household. She has regularly entertained guests, for we did a lot of hospitality. Often missionaries and church workers would live with us in the summer and elderly couples in the winter.

I decided that she doesn't really get a lot of recognition for all she does. As a man, I like to be recognized for things I've done. I like to have an impressive resume.

As I was reading Proverbs 31, and with these thoughts in my head, I noticed: "She opens her mouth with wisdom. The teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness." (Proverbs 31:26–27) That passage is a description of Sandi.

The next two verses give the appropriate response to this wise diligent woman: "Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praises her saying, 'Many daughters have done excellently, but you surpass them all'." (Proverbs 31:28–29) Wow.

I know that my wife is laying her life down for her home. She is like the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, and then bears good fruit. Sandi bears really good fruit. We've got wonderful sons to this day because my wife poured her life into them. She laid her life down and she died. Our children are the good fruit of her energy and labors. As I read these passages it looks to me like it's up to her children and her husband to bless her. She's not going to be recognized in the local newspaper. She's not going to be noticed and affirmed from society. She might not even be acknowledged and encouraged from her local church. The responsibility and privilege of praising her is up to her children and husband.

These verses are a call for her children to rise up and call her blessed. They are an exhortation for her husband to join in praising her. I decided that we would do this. I had a chance to apply this principle one bleak day when I arrived home to find my wife sobbing on our bed in a fetal position. It was an exceedingly bad day. Recently she read us the journal entry for that day, "The boys were all at their worst behavior. All five boys." Apparently I was also in the dog house for we only have four sons. She wrote in her journal, "At least the big booger apologized." That was me.

Up to this juncture in our marriage, I'd found that it blessed my wife to bring pizza home once in a while. It blessed Sandi to find ladies to help her with the cleaning. These were some of the things I had done in the past which blessed her. But I knew that none of those activities were going to work on this sad day.

I recalled this principal from Proverbs 31 and assembled all the boys in the living room where I said, "Guys, your mom's having a really tough day and I think we need to encourage her." So we gathered six chairs, put them in a circle in the living room, then I went and I asked Sandi to come with me. We came out and she sat down in the middle of the circle. The boys were already sitting. I suggested that we thank Sandi for what she does for us. I wanted to build her up and bless her.

This is all I could think of to do which might bless her. I started it off. I don't remember what I said, but the boys were amazing and picked right up on what I was trying to do. One son said: "Thank you for teaching me to read, mom." And the next one added to this with: "Thank you for praying for me." Somebody else said: "Thank you for cooking for us. Thank you for reading books to our family. Thank you for washing our clothes." In no time at all we were taking turns and going around the circle. After a couple of circuits, where the boys were just superb, I noticed the tears start to dry up and a little smile emerge on her face. We had set out to bless her. We

were seeking to honor her. We were trying to fulfill that passage in Proverbs 31: "Her children rise up and call her blessed, and her husband also." It was a really good experience.

A few years later we were attending a marriage seminar, where the speaker said, "Women would rather be praised for who they are than what they do." I thought, "Ugh, I'm praising her like I would want to be praised. I am thanking her for things that she had accomplished." What this man was telling me was that was not so important to a wife. It might be nice and come from good intentions, but if you really want to honor her, acknowledge who she is, not what she does."

I recognized that what the boys and I should have done was praise her for her heart and not her accomplishments. Instead of saying, "Thank you for teaching me to read," we should have said, "You're a wonderful teacher. You have a big heart for teaching us."

A couple days before we'd gone to this seminar, Sandi had been telling me that some days she'd wake up depressed, because her labors for John, our son with Down Syndrome, were never going to change. His needs would continue and he would not grow out of this phase. When our other kids were younger and she's changing the diapers there is a comfort from knowing that someday they're going to grow out of it. It's quite different when you have a child with a disability, because this is your life. This is it. This is not going to change. She commented, "Some mornings, the idea of waking up and examining his gums and making sure he has had a bowel movement and making doctor's appointments, et cetera, wears me down, because I realize I will be doing this every day for the rest of my life."

Since we had this conversation, it was uppermost in my thoughts. After the speaker had been teaching us about how a woman needs to be acknowledged for her character and honored for who she is more than what she does, he gave us an assignment. He said, "I'd like all the couples to stand up and look each other in the eye. I want the husband to honor her and praise her character."

I did not even hesitate. God helped me. I looked her right in the eye and said, "Thank you for your diligent and caring heart in taking care of our son." I didn't say, "Good job brushing his teeth and keeping track of his bowel movements." I said, "You have a wonderful heart, and you're diligent and you're caring." I honored her for who she was and not what she had accomplished. Surprisingly, she told me the next day, she woke up and for the first time, felt joy at the prospect of being John's mom.

Now, the speaker didn't tell us that was going to happen. That was just a wonderful fruit from applying this principle. My point is, there's no one who can build up our wives like the husband. There's no one that can bless their mom like the children. Mothers can receive all the awards that the world has to offer, but there's nothing like hearing from the people that she's laying her life down for. As she's daily serving her husband and her kids, it's the husband and the kids who have the privilege and opportunity to turn around and say, "Bless you and thank you for who you are."

It took a while for God to teach me this principle, but I really believe this. There's no one that can honor wives like the husbands. And my sons have continued this practice, to their credit.

I have watched my third son, who is six feet tall and weighs over 200 pounds, walk by his mom in the hall and say, "Blessed." He and Sandi used to write notes to each other, put them in each other's desks telling each other how much they loved one another. It is precious. He picked up on that principle and he diligently followed through with it, and he still to this day. Sandi has a wonderful relationship with all her boys, and kudos to them for appreciating and loving their mom.

When I am speaking at conferences I will often ask the audience to tell me the difference between the foolish man and the wise man in the song, "The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock" which most children learn in Sunday school. It is based on the parable Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Generally they laugh and say, "Oh, he built his house on Christ." I said, "Nope, not the right answer." And when you read that parable in Matthew 7:24, it reads, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Both people could have been in the same Sunday school class, listened to the same seminar, or sat in the same church service, but it's the person who applies what he hears, who is the wise man.

Then I challenge the kids after reading this passage in Proverbs 31, "Her children rise up." Eventually some of the kids get the point and stand up. I affirm them and say: "Now call your mom blessed." I have all the kids gather around their mom, and on the count of three, they look their mom in the eye and they say, "Blessed." It's awesome and one of my favorite things to do. I watch these moms start to cry, and I watch the children lean over and hug their mom if they're not too shy, since everybody's watching them. And then I have the husbands follow up. I address the husbands, and remind them the passage says: "Her husband also" and ask them to repeat after me: "Many daughters have done excellently, but you surpass them all."

The rest of the verse says: "Grace is deceitful, beauty is vain, but a woman that fears the Lord, she shall be praised." I believe it's her husband and kids who are the ones that are doing the praising in that verse. Then I encourage the kids and the husband, "This is not a one-time thing to do at a conference. We need to maintain this and continue to rise up and call your mom blessed, and to continue to tell your wife, 'Many daughters have done excellently, but you excel them all. You're the best!'"

This is an effective way that we can honor our wives and our moms. Husbands can set the tone. If we'll have this attitude of honoring and esteeming her highly and treating her like a joint heir with Christ, our wives will be blessed deep down in their heart of hearts.

Let's pray: Father, thank you for this specific way that we can honor and build up our wives and our moms. And I pray that you'll help us to have something in our hearts that just wants to esteem our wives highly, and think of them as you think of them, and have an attitude of honoring and an attitude of building up. Help us. This

is how Jesus loves us. Help us to love our wives the same way in Jesus' name, and give us new ways that we can do this. Amen.