

CARE OF OUR HOUSEHOLDS

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. (Deuteronomy 5:21, NIV)

WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, the place for women was really a time. Tuesday and Thursday mornings, the course was all theirs. On weekend afternoons, they could join their husbands and fathers.

I suppose some clubs still think this is a good idea. Give the two sexes their space and all that. Pastel golf balls and smoldering cigar butts simply *do not belong together!* OK, OK, we get it.

But when we turn to the pages of Scripture, what we get more thoroughly is the insight that men and women were to progress in faith together—and that the first responsibility for this progression rested with the men. It was men who were the representative heads of their households, and it was men who were called to honor and defend the women, the children, the servants, and the guests. And before you go *there*, you may need to ask yourself if honor and protection ever go out of fashion...

When we review the two presentations of the Ten Commandments—first in Exodus 20, then in Deuteronomy 5—we recognize something quite interesting. After 40 years of watching his people bungle their way through the wilderness, Moses the preacher (for that's what he was doing in Deuteronomy 5) tweaked the last commandment. It had first read, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17). In his recounting the tenth commandment, Moses rendered it this way: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; you shall not desire your neighbor's house" (Deuteronomy 5:21). In both cases, the commandment goes on, to servants and animals and possessions.

What had Moses seen that concerned him enough to flip the order of the commandment? Apparently this: Men had reduced women to possessions. They were another thing to "want." In the big picture, men were drifting from their greatest earthly responsibility. In not caring about their neighbor's household, they were not caring for their own. And this meant one group especially: the people in those houses.

We are still, men and women, meant to grow in our faith together. And we are still, men, meant to honor and protect our households—and those of our neighbors—that they may do this growing in Christ under our God-honoring care.

Opening questions Do you recognize differences in the way men and women are treated where you play golf? If Jesus showed up at your course, how do you think these treatments might change?

READING Proverbs 31:10-31; Galatians 3:27-28; Ephesians 5:21-6:9

Proverbs 31 women and men

How does Proverbs 31 paint a picture of an excellent marriage? How do both contribute well? How does the husband honor his wife and care for her?

Men and women sharing the faith

Consider the Galatians 3 passage. What people are brought together by Christ? How can they help one another grow?

Household care

What phrases in the Ephesians passage emphasize the care to be shown by the husband, father, and master? How would caring for your household in this way be a blessing to everyone inside and outside the house?

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