

# Taking the Reins

Many Christian men are in the position of needing to take the reins of leadership in their home. The level of their success depends a lot on how they go about it.

First of all, as John Maxwell says, "Leadership is influence." We often think of *positional* leadership, but in actuality, to influence someone is to lead them in some direction. When I speak of leadership here, I'm speaking of influencing the family, i.e. shaping its values, direction, culture and so forth.

It is Biblical, that the man should lead the home. It is innate within masculinity as God designed it to be, to lead with vision and to be provider and protector. It is innate within femininity as God designed it to be, to give a man a place of leadership in her life and to submit to him. This is the only model that can lead to a God-honoring family in a way that provides the stable, nurturing environment that is needed for children to grow into "whole" adults. The "foreignness" of this model ought to make us ask some questions.

There are several ways that men got to the place of needing to increase their influence at home.

- Male leadership was not modeled in their growing up, and in fact they may have been dominated by females. They don't even know they are to be the leader, or if they do know that, they don't have a clue what it means.
- They have been lazy, and satisfied to let their wife lead.
- They misunderstood masculine and feminine spirituality. They were intimidated by the supposed spiritual superiority of their wife and falsely assumed that meant she should lead.
- Their wife has taken the reins because of her misconceptions based on the above factors; or out of her anger toward men because of pain she has experienced from them.

## Taking the Reins

When you read this title you might have imagined a husband and wife riding in a buggy with her holding the reins and him sitting alongside, and then he reaches over and assertively takes the reins from her hands. Well, it probably won't work that way! We need to move from influence, not position. The level to which a man applies Biblical principles will shape the measure of his success.

A key scripture in this discussion is the "Husbands, love your wives" of Eph. 5:22-33, which we cover in #6 in this series. If we love our wife, we will give ourselves to her in a way that makes her more fulfilled and a more whole person. As she experiences more "life" through our relationship she will naturally adjust toward a proper husband/wife relationship.

Another key principle is in I Peter 3:1, *Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives.* Obviously we're on the flip side of that, but our loving her in a godly way will produce the same results as a godly woman submitting to a man whom she wants to influence.

Basically, a husband who wants to assume more of his God-given role in the home needs to caress, stimulate and nurture the "woman" within his wife. If she has been leading, she has certainly abandoned some of her femininity as she expressed the masculinity of leadership. He must gently help her move toward being authentically "woman," and a big part of that is to make her feel loved and cherished as a woman. Here are several possible areas to work on:

- He may have used his masculine strength to be family boss instead of servant leader. She needs to feel considered and valued as a part of his/their life in decision making and more.
- What are the things he does that irritate her and that he has still felt free to do? Does he think that his farts are amusing even if he knows they annoy her?
- Words are powerful. Does he use his masculine voice to build her up or to diminish her?
- Consider her personality and gifting, which can create a norm or standard in her mind. Conflict is the result of unfulfilled expectations. It is disrespectful toward her, if she is a neat and tidy person and he carelessly tracks mud into the house. She will be disappointed in him, if she is a "get it done" person and there are things that he says are very important to him, but he just doesn't get around to them.
- He may need to protect her when the children disobey her. "You disobey your mother, you disobey me." Carrying his part of the child-rearing process is a very manly thing to do.
- What can he reasonably do to give her a break, or to take some pressure off of her? Maybe he needs to ask her to carry less responsibility at church, or to work fewer hours.
- He can begin to do more things in their family life that she appreciates. If he doesn't already, help clean up the table and get the dishes in the dishwasher. Or lug the dirty clothes from the hamper to the washer on wash day. Or pick up some of the kids' toys.
- Take her out to eat. Remembering her birthday and your anniversary makes her feel like she's important to you. Dude, don't *ever* forget them!
- This will be a stretch for some guys, but praying out loud in your family is a powerful expression of leadership. At meals, in a time of need or whatever. Go ahead and pray a simple, man's prayer. Ask God to help you. Start where you're at and you'll be amazed by how it will develop! And when you wife is under a lot of pressure, pull her close to you and pray a few words of blessing over her.

When you do more of these things she might suspect that you've been bad and are trying to make up, but when she asks, just tell her it's because you love her and you want her to know that.

Until recent years it was usually men who drove the family vehicle, but it is increasingly women. Is there anything symbolic in that in terms of taking the family to wherever you're going? Step up to that guys, but if she's the "get me there on time" type, don't keep her waiting.

Gradually become the influencer by using your masculinity to bring life (security, peace, stability) to your family. Relational influence/leadership is much more effective than positional.

The wife will need to feel secure in her new role. She may have found her security and value in the leadership she has taken and in things she has done. He needs to impart value to her as a more feminine woman and give her time to become secure in that. Knowing that he truly cares about her as a person is a biggie. It will be a process and sometimes they will need outside counsel. It can be professional help, but often mature couples who are good listeners are just as effective.

This is #7 in the series "For Men Only", and is one of many short articles that can be found at [www.john2031.com](http://www.john2031.com). © 2011, Ken Stoltzfus, P.O. Box 228, Kidron, OH 44636 USA. May be printed for personal use and may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes without further permission if proper acknowledgment is given. Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations are from the New International Version. Posted: March 12, 2011