

*Includes Discussion Questions*

*THE*  
SHEPHERD  
LEADER  
AT HOME



*Knowing, Leading, Protecting, and Providing for Your Family*

*TIMOTHY Z. WITMER*

*The Shepherd Leader at Home: Knowing, Leading, Protecting, and Providing for Your Family*  
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# Introduction

My earlier book *The Shepherd Leader* began with the words, “There’s a crisis in the church.” That book went on to develop the need for leadership in the church based on the biblical metaphor of shepherding.

This book could well begin with the words, “There is a crisis in the family.” Many of the problems in the church, and in society at large, for that matter, can be traced to growing numbers of families that are like sheep without a shepherd.

As I begin this project I am aware that an increasing number of families are not traditional nuclear families. In fact, statistics have revealed that the two-parent, husband-wife family unit is now in the minority in the United States. According to The American Community Survey released by the Census Bureau, “49.7 percent, or 55.2 million, of the nation’s 111.1 million households in 2005 were made up of married couples.”<sup>1</sup> The trend away from marriage continues according to the 2010 census. One teacher in my region was shocked at what has become the new norm.

Jo Soroka didn’t need to see the latest census data to believe one of the more jarring findings: that married couples head fewer than half

## Introduction

the households in Pennsylvania and the country. Soroka recalled the morning two years ago when a boy asked a classmate about the man who had accompanied her and her mother to school. “That’s my daddy,” the girl said. “No,” the boy shot back. “Daddies don’t live with mommies.”<sup>2</sup>

What a sad commentary. The reasons for this new norm go beyond divorce to the fact that fewer and fewer couples are getting married at all. Thirty years ago there were one million opposite-sex couples living together outside marriage, but today that number has risen to 6.4 million and continues to rise. “Cohabiting couples now make up almost 10% of all opposite-sex U.S. couples.”<sup>3</sup>

I raise this issue, first, to show the importance of looking again at the value of the institution of marriage as established by our Creator and, second, to focus on the pivotal role of husbands and dads to the health and survival of the family as established by the Lord. The purpose of this book, therefore, will be to help families by helping husbands and dads become loving shepherds of their families. The strategy will be to apply the biblical shepherding categories of knowing, leading, providing, and protecting to leadership in the home. As a pastor in an urban multiethnic context for twenty-five years, I have seen the desperate need for this material, and my hope is that it might help strengthen male leadership in the home. The style of this book will be down-to-earth with plenty of examples. While the focus of *The Shepherd Leader* was on those called to lead Christ’s flock in the church, the focus here is on all men who are called to lead their families at home.

I trust that the case was made in *The Shepherd Leader* for the importance of the shepherding metaphor for leadership in the church of Jesus Christ. As you begin this book, you might wonder whether it is legitimate to carry this metaphor over from leadership in the church to leadership at home. While there is no explicit application of the shepherding metaphor to family leadership in Scripture, there is a clear parallel between God’s covenantal

care for his people and a man's care for his family. There is also a parallel between the health of our churches and the health of our families. In the words of Richard Baxter, "You are not likely to see any general reformation, till you procure family reformation."<sup>4</sup>

The heart of this book, therefore, will be to walk together through the fundamental shepherding functions of knowing, leading, providing for, and protecting and their application to leadership in the family. These shepherding functions represent four of the most fundamental human needs that God meets through those who lead families. Each of the four parts will begin with an introduction showing its biblical rationale. The introductions to the foundational functions of knowing and leading are given their own chapters, while the introductions to the other parts are brief. This foundational material is where there may be some limited overlap with *The Shepherd Leader*. However, this foundation must be clearly in view as we apply each function to you as a follower of Christ leading your flock at home.

This book is intentionally practical, personal, and heart-to-heart. I write not as someone who has it all together, but as someone seeking to take seriously what God has called me to do and to be as a husband and father. I am reminded of the young minister who, unmarried, taught a class entitled "The Ten Commandments of Successful Parenting." After he was married and had his first child, the course title became "Five Principles of Parenting." When a couple of more children came along, the course changed once again to "A Few Suggestions about Parenting." In light of my own growing pains, I am grateful that the Scriptures give us clear guidance in leading our families, and on this guidance I will seek to depend throughout this book.

Each chapter will include reflection questions that can be used either in individual study or in the "iron sharpening iron" context of men's discipleship groups. These principles are useless if they are left unapplied, and a group of men committed to wrestling

through the challenges together can promote healthy reflection and genuine change.

This project would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of my dear wife, Barbara, who has been very patient with me as I have sought to grow as the shepherd leader of our home. I am also indebted to my grown children, Sara, Rebecca, and Nathan, who are mature followers of Christ despite my shortcomings. How this proves that parenting is by grace as well! Special thanks go to Barbara and our children for their permission to allow readers a personal glimpse into both the highs and lows of our family life through the years. I am also thankful to the members of Crossroads Community Church (PCA) for their help, and for the church's Covenant Keepers men's ministry in particular, where the general principles of this book were presented in a series of monthly men's breakfasts. My thanks are due also to the students in my August 2011 Doctor of Ministry class at Westminster who offered valuable input on the manuscript, as well as to Jeffrey Shames, who compiled the resources for family devotions. I am grateful also to Allan Fisher and Crossway for their enthusiasm about this project and to Thom Notaro for his helpful and careful editing.

In commenting on the early verses of Ephesians 6, my old shepherd friend Richard Baxter wrote, "Thus it is evident that every distinct family relation should be dedicated or holy to God and should be used to the utmost for God."<sup>5</sup> My humble prayer is that this book in some way will enable you to move toward that goal as you seek to be a faithful shepherd leader of your flock at home.



PART ONE

THE  
SHEPHERD  
KNOWS  
HIS FAMILY



# 1

## An Introduction to Knowing Your Family

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own  
know me.

*John 10:14*

As we begin walking through the four foundational shepherding functions of knowing, leading, providing for, and protecting your family, it is important to recognize that they represent fundamental human needs. For example, the concept of knowing and being known speaks to the fundamental need for *relationship*. Research has demonstrated an infant's need to connect with his or her parents early on in order to be properly adjusted, or even to survive. For most of us, something as simple as an invitation to an event or gathering raises the question, *who* is going to be there? Why do

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we ask this? We are concerned because we want to go somewhere where we have the connection of relationship, where we know and are known. On the other hand, some of the worst experiences people can have are described in terms of loneliness, isolation, or alienation. These terms are just a sample of the large glossary of words that express missing or strained relationships.

Think about it. Being made in the image of God, man was made first to be in relationship with his Creator. Unfortunately, this fellowship was broken when man sinned. Things changed from that point forward. The good news is that, from the very beginning, the Lord took the initiative to restore that relationship. The relational element in God's redemptive work is clearly seen in the shepherding metaphor. "The Lord is *my* shepherd" (Ps. 23:1) highlights this covenantal privilege of relationship and mutual knowledge.

Know that the LORD, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. (Ps. 100:3)

As the consummate shepherd who comes into the world, Jesus describes the mutual knowledge between a shepherd and his sheep that characterizes his relationship with his people. "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14). This shepherd knew that this vital relationship with God could be restored only through his death and resurrection.

One of the greatest fears when it comes to relationships is the fear of transparency. If you *really* knew me, would you still love me? My friend Steve Brown used to announce to his listeners, "If you knew me the way I know me, you wouldn't want to listen to me preach." He would quickly add, "If I knew you the way *you* know you, I wouldn't want to preach to you!" Remarkably, the Lord knows *everything* about you and he loves you. "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"

(Rom. 5:8). Jesus *still* knows all about our sins, doubts, and fears and he still loves us.

One of the greatest privileges we now have is to grow in our knowledge of him. For the sheep, this is foundational for every benefit of belonging to him. “Now this is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3). This is a great place to start. Can you see how much he loved you in the indescribable gift he gave that your relationship with him might be restored? The health and wholeness of our human relationships find their source in the wholeness of our relationship with the Lord through Jesus. I might add that strength, wisdom, and love for others are fueled by the vitality of our life in the Lord. His work on our behalf enables us to grow in our relationship not only with our God, but also with others, especially our wives and children.

### **Knowing and the Family**

Let’s go back to the very beginning and take a look at how fundamental this concept of relationship is to marriage. After all, marriage and the family were God’s idea. Marriage did not originate in the primal horde or primitive society dominated by the violent primal father, as Freud suggested. Neither was it, as some anthropologists assert, a desperate human invention by “noble savages” designed to bring some order to an otherwise chaotic loose association of males and females. No, marriage was designed by God to bring blessing and order to his creation. Together with the creation ordinances of work and Sabbath rest, marriage would provide a rhythm to life. Therefore, we must affirm that he ordained foundational principles not only for the natural order but also for the moral order of his creation.

There is both structure and purpose. This order is the foundation of creation (cf. Prov. 3:19). We tend to consider the “foundation” in terms of the physical, material, and biological world on which

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Genesis 1 focuses, but to restrict creation order to these dimensions would be absurd. What kind of a cosmos would it be in which the physical sciences were a worthwhile enterprise—because they look for structure that is there to be found—but in which the fields of personal relationships and morality were undifferentiated chaos? This would be a world in which personhood was still “formless and void,” waiting to be given shape by the subjective whims of each person or succeeding culture.<sup>1</sup>

The shape of marriage has not been left “formless and void,” as we will see from the following seven foundations of marriage established by the Creator.

### ***Marriage Is Designed to Meet the Need for Companionship***

As we consider the creation account in the opening chapters of Genesis,<sup>2</sup> the refrain we hear regularly is “it was good.” The Lord saw the result of his creative power and was pleased. However, there was something that was *not* good. “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18a). This seems strange, given that Adam was in relationship with his Creator. A few verses later we discover the sense of his aloneness. We see the first man hard at work naming the cattle, birds, and beasts, “but for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him” (v. 20). Man was in desperate need of someone with whom he could relate. Simply put, he was the only one of his species! Zebras and chimpanzees were not going to provide what he needed.

The Lord would not allow that need to go unmet. The Lord said, “I will make him a helper fit for him” (v. 18b). The Hebrew word translated “fit” is found only here and means “suitable for” or “corresponding to.”<sup>3</sup> The word indicates an equality of personhood inasmuch as both are made in the image of God.

So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27)

This does not mean equality of roles, as we will see in our subsequent study of leadership. Adam would need someone *like him* who could come alongside him in the work of the garden and the service of the Lord. This need was met in the creation of the first woman. Gordon Wenham explains, “The help looked for is not just assistance in his daily work or in the procreation of children, though these aspects may be included, but the mutual support companionship provides.”<sup>4</sup> This fundamental need for man to know and to be known was to be experienced not only through his knowledge of God but also with another person with whom he could relate. This dynamic has its roots in the very nature of the Godhead. Our triune God exists in perfect interpersonal relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with one another. Adam’s need for someone *like him*, someone with whom he could relate, reflects the mysterious relational dynamic within the Trinity itself. The Lord knew Adam’s need and met it.

Therefore, it is not as though Adam’s need for relationship took the Lord by surprise. It is not as if he looked at what he had made and exclaimed, “Oops!” and then added Eve. The narrative may appear this way, but its inspired form highlights the importance of Adam’s relational need and the wonderful way it was met in Eve. This explains why marriage has been described as a covenant of *companionship* (cf. Mal. 2:14).

In the marriage relationship we desperately need each another. Take a few moments and thank the Lord for the relationship he has given you with your wife. Think about how miserable you would be if you were alone.

### ***Marriage Is Designed to Provide Help in the Tasks of Life***

You will also notice that God saw that man really needed help! When most people think about Edenic paradise, they usually don’t think about work. But the Lord gave Adam a lot to do. In addition to taking care of the garden and naming the animals, he was given larger global responsibilities.

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Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Gen. 1:26–28)

You will notice that these “global” tasks are given to the couple. In fact, it goes without saying that the charge to “be fruitful and multiply” would have been impossible with Adam alone! In addition to this they were called to have dominion over all that the Lord made. The woman was created to come alongside Adam to be a “helper” for him and to complement him in accomplishing these tasks.

If you are married, in order to accomplish what God has called you to do, you must understand that each of you brings strengths and weaknesses to the relationship for the benefit of one another and for the marriage. One vital aspect of knowing one another is knowing and understanding one another’s strengths and weaknesses. It is important not only to *know* what these are but also to learn to *yield* to each other’s strengths and help with each other’s weaknesses.

For example, early in our marriage it became clear that Barb didn’t do so well navigating with a map. This was long before GPS technology, so I was dependent on her to look at the map and tell me where to turn, or whether to turn at all. This led to many occasions of frustration for her and for me as we would get lost with the map right in front of us! On the other hand, Barb has



an uncanny ability to remember details about *every* place she has ever been. I remember one dark and stormy night in particular when we were trying to find our way to visit friends on the hilly roads outside Pittsburgh. We had been there only once before, but (without a map!) she remembered exactly which way to turn, and we arrived safely at our destination. If it would have been up to me, we would have been hopelessly lost.

The lesson, among many others, is that I can trust her directional instincts, but the map reading should be left to me. You may think this is a silly illustration, but when you compound all of the various factors of strength and weakness in marriage, learning and adjusting to them will be a great blessing to both of you. On the other hand, failing to take these into account will result in regular frustration.

Another example is Martin Luther, who was not as handy as his wife was. Martin didn't pay much attention to money and often found himself in debt. But Katherine was very attentive to these matters and managed their household quite well, even developing household industries that kept the Luthers not only in the black but quite profitable. Martin had no problem yielding to his wife's strengths in these areas.

The Lord knew what he was doing when he put the two of you together, too. The point is that if you are to complement one another in the tasks of life, you are going to need *to know* one another. Have you paid attention and yielded to your spouse's strengths? Have you been honest about your own weaknesses?

### ***Marriage Is Designed to Be the Primary Human Relationship***

Another reason that the relational basis of your marriage is so crucial is that marriage is designed by God to be your primary human relationship. In fact, it is the most important relationship you have in this world. This is highlighted in Genesis 2:24, where God says that "a man shall leave his father and his mother

and hold fast to his wife.” While the parent-child relationship is important, the husband-wife relationship is even more so. The husband is told to leave the household of his parents. This doesn’t mean that you no longer respect your parents. It means that when you marry, a new household is established and that this now becomes your priority relationship. It means that the opinion that you value the most is that of your spouse. It means that the counsel that you yield to is that of your spouse. Of course, this doesn’t mean that you no longer seek the counsel of your parents. That would be foolish. It does mean that it is clear to your spouse that her wishes and happiness take priority over that of your parents.

Failure to recognize this principle has caused a lot of stress in marriage relationships through the millennia. For example, when it came time for our children to go to school, we determined that we would send them to private Christian school. This wasn’t an easy decision for us, but it was even more difficult for my mother to hear since she was a public school teacher, and she tried to persuade us otherwise. Her thought was, “Public school was good enough for you, so why not for your children?” I made it as clear as I could to her that our decision was not casting aspersions on my parents’ choices or her occupation. The point was that, as strongly as my mother felt about this and expressed herself about it, Barb and I were consulting together, yielding to one another, and responsible for making these decisions for our children.

Is it clear to your spouse that she is the most significant person in the world to you? Do you tell her that she is? Do you *act* as though she is? Sometimes it’s not only parents who are in the tug-of-war for a spouse’s affection and loyalty. It might be coworkers or members of your bowling or softball league. In *no* case should there be any doubt about who is most important to you. There is certainly a place for appropriate friendships with “the guys,”

but there should be no doubt whom you would like to be with the most and, therefore, who is most important to you.

The primary nature of the relationship between husband and wife is emphasized when the Lord says that a man should “hold fast to his wife” (Gen. 2:24). Another translation of “hold fast” is “cleave” (KJV). It is the familiar tandem of “leaving and cleaving.” The English word *cleave* is interesting because it has one sense of “dividing,” as in a meat *cleaver*. Yet the sense in which it is used here is “to cement together.” The Hebrew word<sup>5</sup> is used “of physical things sticking together.”<sup>6</sup> Think of the strongest bond imaginable. Think about two things welded together or objects attached with superglue. It also “carries the sense of clinging to someone in affection and loyalty.”<sup>7</sup> This provides a natural transition to the principle of the permanence of marriage.

### ***Marriage Is Designed to Be Permanent***

A key implication of the language of “holding fast” is that the marriage relationship is designed to be for a lifetime. Nothing is further from the thoughts of most people these days, even some ministers. When Barb and I were preparing to marry, one minister advised us that “sometimes things just don’t work out.” Perhaps he understood that I was “marrying up”! Though his phrase might represent the experience of many, what terrible counsel to give to a young couple convinced that the Lord called them together for life!

One writer, Dave Sloan, vents his cynicism by suggesting that the standard wedding vows expressing a permanent commitment be replaced by a more “flexible” approach: “I often get betrothed folks one on one and ask them whether they really believe the vow they are about to say, the one that concludes with the words *till death do us part*. So far, the results have been overwhelming. Almost no one believes it.”<sup>8</sup> He suggests the following “True Vow”: “We promise to each other the depth of our dreams and the height of our hopes, the tender treasures and the hidden recesses of our

hearts. We promise to strive in every way to strengthen the permanence of our love, which is our greatest love.”<sup>9</sup> Sloan actually suggests resisting the old vow and rewarding the “True Vow.”

We ought to boycott weddings with the old vow, unless we have good reason for believing those two unusual people actually mean the old-fashioned promise. For weddings using the True Vow, we should buy double or triple the dollar value in gifts, to encourage those who make promises they really mean at the moments when it matters most.<sup>10</sup>

The truth of the matter is that when most people stand before God and take these vows upon their lips, they *really mean* what they are saying. The key is that the old vow, including its lifelong commitment, can be a “True Vow” with the commitment of the couple to the Author of marriage, who is also the source of the love, patience, and strength needed to keep that commitment. Sloan puts his finger on the heart of the problem when he says, “People who do not believe in unchanging truth should not be manipulated into making unchanging promises.”<sup>11</sup> But couples who come to marriage with firm convictions about the unchanging biblical truth about marriage grounded in faith in the living God will, by his grace and power, be able to keep those promises. It must be clear to those who seek to enter into marriage that God’s design is for a permanent commitment<sup>12</sup> between a man and a woman, and that marriage is “as long as we both shall *live*,” not “as long as we both shall *love*.”<sup>13</sup>

### ***Marriage Is Designed to Be the Most Intimate Human Relationship***

This principle follows from everything we have seen thus far and is confirmed by the last words of Genesis 2:24, “and they shall become one flesh.” This terminology certainly speaks of physical union, but here and throughout the Bible, the union of two

people in marriage is much more comprehensive. Marriage is not merely the legalization of physical gratification. It speaks of an emotional intimacy and a spiritual oneness that surpass physical intimacy and, in truth, become the foundation for the most fulfilling physical relationship.

It is no accident that the Hebrew word for sexual intimacy is the word translated “know.”<sup>14</sup> “Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife” (Gen. 4:1) speaks of the physical intimacy that resulted in the conception of Cain. *Knowing* your wife in the comprehensive biblical sense includes a relational union that implies physical, spiritual, and emotional oneness. This is the reason that the marriage relationship is entered through a covenant of commitment. There is only one person with whom this deepest of unions should be entered. In a marriage ceremony, sacred vows are exchanged before God as the witness to this sacred commitment. Rings are exchanged as symbols of those vows and others are called upon as witnesses. These covenant words and symbols point to the sanctity of marriage and to the joy of mutual knowledge of another in marriage that surpasses what is experienced in any other human relationship.

It must be noted here that God’s design for the marriage relationship is between a man and a woman. The language of creation in Genesis is clear.

“She shall be called *Woman*,  
because she was taken out of *Man*.”

Therefore a *man* shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his *wife*, and they shall become one flesh. (Gen. 2:23–24)

For this reason, marriage must be between a man and a woman. The Scriptures are clear that God’s design for this covenantal relationship is heterosexual and contrary to contemporary notions of same-sex marriage.

***Marriage Is Designed to Be a Source of Great Joy***

Adam was thrilled when he first laid his eyes on Eve.

Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.” (Gen. 2:23)

Hebrew scholars have noted that this is not merely a mundane statement of fact but a great expression of joy. After all, Adam had been looking at and naming zebras and orangutans, among other things. Now, standing right there in front of him was one who was “like him.” The words he uses “are expressive of joyous astonishment at the suitable helpmate, whose relation to himself he describes in the words ‘*she shall be called Woman, for she is taken out of man.*’”<sup>15</sup> The fact that “she shall be called ‘woman’”<sup>16</sup> speaks of his understanding of her likeness to him. The result is that he was overjoyed by this one who would complete him. The Lord answered the problem of loneliness that he had seen and created the woman with whom Adam could now be in relationship. It was at the close of this sixth day that “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

***Marriage Is Designed to Reflect the Relationship between Christ and His Church***

Reflecting the relationship between Christ and his bride, the church, becomes the most profound purpose of marriage. Paul makes this clear at the close of his remarkable exposition of the relationship of husbands and wives. “‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:31–32). Paul’s concept

of “mystery” refers to something that was once hidden but is now revealed. As he comments on Genesis 2:24, he shows us that the oneness described finds its fulfillment in the coming of Christ. In this case, as the church is called upon to follow Christ, so the wife is called upon to follow the loving leadership of her husband. On the other hand, as Christ loved the church so much that he gave himself completely for her, so a husband is called upon to demonstrate selfless, sacrificial love for his wife. The union between husband and wife mirrors the union between Christ and his church. John Piper explains:

God patterned marriage purposefully after the relationship between His Son and the church, which He planned from eternity. And therefore marriage is a mystery; it contains and conceals a meaning far greater than what we see on the outside. What God has joined together in marriage is to be a reflection of the union between the Son of God and His bride the church. Those of us who are married need to ponder again and again how mysterious and wonderful it is that we are granted by God the privilege to image forth stupendous divine realities infinitely bigger and greater than ourselves.<sup>17</sup>

This mystery is at the same time the foundation of marriage as well as the goal toward which we strive through the power of the Spirit.

### **So What Happened?**

If marriage is to be all of this, why is my marriage such a struggle? The answer is that Genesis 3 happened! The first couple rebelled against the Lord, and sin entered their hearts and our world. Though marriage was established to solve the problem of loneliness, husbands and wives feel isolated and alienated even though they are living together. Sin also leads to competition and counterproductivity in accomplishing the tasks of life as husbands and wives fail to yield to one another's strengths and help in areas of weaknesses. Sin leads to exploitation of weaknesses rather than

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support in overcoming them. Our sinful natures also allow other people and things to compromise the primacy of our relationship with our spouse. This is harmful and hurtful.

The permanence of marriage has been sorely tested by every conceivable sinful, selfish excuse imaginable. The intimacy designed for marriage has been replaced by an isolation that could be described as “two strangers living together.” It’s no wonder that the joy that captured the first marriage has been replaced by sadness and longing. The good news is that Jesus came to address the sin in our hearts by forgiving us through his death on the cross. In union with him we are given the Spirit to drain the poison from our hearts that we might first be reconciled to God and then to one another. It is important to have that vertical relationship with your Creator set right before you can experience the promised fullness of the relationship with your wife.

In summary, can you see how the function of *knowing* is foundational to all the rest? After all, how can you effectively lead your wife and children if you do not know them? How can you provide for them if you don’t know what they need? How can you protect them if you don’t know what threatens them or if you don’t know their fears? How do you grow in this knowledge of those who are nearest to us? The rest of part one will offer some practical suggestions to help you grow in the knowledge of your wife and children.

### FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Do you have an appreciation for the ways in which your wife’s strengths counterbalance your weaknesses? For the ways your strengths complement hers? Take some time soon to reflect on this concept by using the chart below. Rejoice in the ways God enables you to complement one another, and discuss how you can better support and encourage each other.



Your weaknesses	Her strengths
Your strengths	Her weaknesses

2. Is it clear to your wife that your relationship with her is the most important human relationship to you? Talk to your wife and ask for her assessment and how you could both improve in this area.
3. Review the seven foundations of marriage. Discuss which ones are most alien to today's culture. Why? Then discuss which is strongest and which is weakest in your marriage.
  - Marriage is designed to meet the need for companionship.
  - Marriage is designed to provide help in the tasks of life.
  - Marriage is designed to be the primary human relationship.
  - Marriage is designed to be permanent.
  - Marriage is designed to be the most intimate human relationship.
  - Marriage is designed to be a source of great joy.
  - Marriage is designed to reflect the relationship between Christ and his church.
4. Have you settled the matter of your relationship with your Creator through faith in Jesus? Do you see why it is important to have this vertical relationship settled as you seek to grow in your knowledge of and love for your wife?

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