

HUSBAND

(A Meditation for the centennial observation of Father's Day)

There are five different Hebrew words, and one Greek word that are all translated as "husband" in the Bible. They are:

1. Ish - a mortal, or man in general. Some think it comes from the root "enosh" which means to be weak". Consider: "What is man?" (Ps. 8:4). Obviously man is weak in comparison to God.
2. Enosh - a male or champion. Some think this word comes from the Akkadian "Ishnu" which means "strong". A man is strong when compared to a woman (Ex. 35:29).
3. Baal - chief man, master. Man could "rule" over a territory (1 Chron. 4:22), and also "rule" over his wife. The word "baal" recognizes that man was created with the capacity to govern.
4. Chathan - bridegroom, son in law. Marriages are sometimes contracted for political purposes. Saul, for example, enticed David to be his "son in law" to satisfy his inordinate jealousy (1 Sam. 18:26 - 27).
5. Rea - friend, lover. The word is translated many times as "friend" or "neighbor", but only once as husband (Jer. 3:20). This is the word quoted by Jesus in Lev. 19:18 "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself".
6. Aner - (Greek) man, fellow. In the KJV it is translated as "fellow" (1), "husband" (50), "man" (156), and "sir" (6). A "husband" is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25, 28).

It is interesting that those who gave us the Bible in English used "husband" to translate all six of these different words. "Husband" obviously encompasses a wealth of associations to enrich the word with meaning. The Wikipedia Encyclopedia states that the term "refers to Middle English huseband, from Old English hu-sbo-nda . . ." The word "band" refers to a cord or chain by which anything is bound together. Hence the "husband" is the master of his house and binds it together. The word "husband" was obviously, at one time, an endearing term of great honor.

The word "patriarch" literally means rule by fathers. Husbands and fathers once ruled as prophets, priests, and kings among the Hebrew people. Even in Roman culture the father had nearly absolute, coercive authority over his family in what was known as "patria potestas". Jesus, however, in spite of the power that fathers had, taught His disciples that fathers were good. He said: "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:11-13)

Unfortunately, in modern times husbands and fathers have been vilified as evil. Sonora Louise Smart resented such attacks on her father and went to the Y.M.C.A. in Spokane, Washington for help. Her mother was dead and her godly father did an excellent job of binding his household together and raising Sonora and her five siblings. As a result of her effort the first Father's Day was observed on June 19, 1910. In 1914 Congress officially recognized Father's Day and in 1924 President Calvin Coolidge set the annual observance on the third Sunday of June.

Let us review the Bible words used to describe the men whom we honor as fathers. First they are mortal and very weak by comparison with God. Secondly, they are champions who give honor unto their wives as weaker vessels. In the third place God expects them to rule their households well. In fact, this is one of the requirements for the man who aspires to be a leader in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Next, they are bridegrooms whose influence helps provide support for the extended family. If a man does not take care of his relatives, and especially them of his own family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim. 5:8). The husband is also a friend and lover whose godly influence helps bind the family together. Perhaps the diminishing influence of husbands in our modern world is one of the primary causes for divorce.

The Law of Moses commands that we honor our father and mother. If the Hebrews did this they would live long in the land the Lord our God gave to them. If we honor our fathers and mothers it will also provide stability to our nation that we also might live long in this land.