

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Husbands held accountable for wives?****Husbands held accountable for wives? - posted by madmatg (), on: 2004/12/31 20:49**

Know I dont contribute to the conversations very often but I'm always lookin and learnin. And I gotta question about marriage. I've been getting some teachings that say husbands will be held accountable for their wives(spiritual wellbeing). Just wondering if yall might have references for this.

Re: Husbands held accountable for wives? - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/12/31 23:19

Hmmm, curious where these 'teachings' are coming from, what scriptures are they basing this on?

Re: - posted by phebebird (), on: 2005/1/1 1:24

The Bible says that husbands are to "love their wives as Christ loved the church" and love their wives "as their own bodies" (Ephesians 5:25,28). Further on in this same passage the Apostle Paul says "each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself" (vs. 33).

The Bible obviously does hold men accountable for loving and caring for their wives, but no one is accountable for anyone else's spiritual well-being. That is something that each of us stand before God alone on.

Of course husbands should pray for their wives and encourage them in the Lord, but they are not responsible for their souls.

As a side note, (speaking as a wife) wives can sometimes run into trouble along this line. We can expect our husbands to be everything to us, shoes that they can never fill. Only God can be all we need.

Re: Husbands held accountable for wives? - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2005/1/1 3:53

Well, in the Mosaic Law:

Numbers 30

3 If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth;
4 And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand.

5 But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the LORD shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her.

6 And if she had at all an husband, when she vowed, or uttered ought out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul;
7 And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it: then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand.

8 But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect: and the LORD shall forgive her.

The husband was very much held responsible for his wife in a number of respects, but I don't know exactly what would be meant by him being responsible for her "spiritual wellbeing".

From the Apostle:

1 Corinthians 14:35

And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

The idea being, perhaps, that the husband is responsible for being well versed enough in spiritual matters (and willing to do further investigation where his understanding is lacking) that his wife would have no need to disrupt the group meeting to ask those sorts of questions.

But responsible for her spiritual wellbeing in general? As a Brother in Christ is responsible for his Sister, and somewhat more due to the depth of their relationship and his position of headship, but there are definitely directions in which one could take "Husbands will be held accountable for their wives' spiritual welfare" that I would not be willing to follow.

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edit - There's also the fact, as mentioned, that the husband is required to love her as Christ loves the Church. In failing to do so, he would be lying about Christ's love for the church, and conceivably he would be held accountable for any resulting damage to her spiritual health.

Re: Husbands held accountable for wives? - posted by madmatg (), on: 2005/1/1 9:53

Aha, well thanks for yall's info on this.

crsschk: Well I heard this on a local radio broadcast sermon on my way from auburn to pensacola. And I was tryin to figure out where he was gettin it from.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/2 9:38

Until comparatively recently a British man was held responsible for his wife's debt. There is a classic bit of Dickens' Oliver Twist whose punch line you have probably often heard...

Mr. Bumble: I hope this unfortunate circumstance won't deprive me of my parochial office...?

*Mr. Brownlow: My hope, sir, is that it will!***Mr. Bumble:** *But it was all Mrs. Bumble, sir. I knew nothing of it until yesterday!***Mr. Brownlow:** *That is no excuse. In the eyes of the law you are the more guilty of the two. For the law supposes that your wife acts under your direction.***Mr. Bumble:** *If that's what the law supposes, sir, then the law's an ass! If that's the eye of the law, sir, then the law's a bachelor! And the worst I wish the law is that its eye may be opened by experience. By experience, sir!*

This aspect of British Law was almost certainly based on the texts that Keith has quoted. The OT pattern was that the woman was always, at every stage of life, under the care of a man. Consequently she was not allowed to make vows against the will of the man trusted with her care. If the 'carer' did not know, the vow was invalid. If the carer knew and did not protest, the vow was valid.

There are principles here which we should note and acknowledge, but the exact outworking will probably take a different course in our day.

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/1/2 11:26

How timely!

Rather like this sir, seems applicable to another thread here, no? *IN principle* that is...

Re: - posted by KeithLaMothe, on: 2005/1/2 14:42

Quote:
-----The OT pattern was that the woman was always, at every stage of life, under the care of a man. Consequently she was not allowed to make vows against the will of the man trusted with her care.

With the exception (right after the verses I quoted) that widowed or divorced (and non-remarried, obviously) had no such man trusted with her care, and her vows were immediately binding upon her and not reversible in such a manner.

Something I see a lot (being in a college town most of the time) are never-married women in a kind of "in-between" state between the authority of her father and the authority of her (future) husband (I'm speaking here of women who would actually recognize said authorities). This can leave them quite vulnerable.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/2 18:13

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The whole concept of the 'student away from home' is quite foreign to the OT, as is the concept of the teenager. The nor

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mal pattern would have been for the son to remain at home under his father's roof until he married and set up his own home. This would have been the same for the woman. The concept of the single man or single woman living away from parental authority has no place in the revelation. What would we deduce from that in present day (and covenant) terms?

The son or daughter moving away from home to college has the psychological effect of marriage in that even when they return 'something' has changed irreversibly (see next).

Quote:
-----With the exception (right after the verses I quoted) that widowed or divorced (and non-remarried, obviously) had no such man trusted with her care, and her vows were immediately binding upon her and not reversible in such a manner.

You're right. It is interesting that marriage clearly created a new entity and that its cessation left no room back to the former. What lessons might we deduce from that?

I think the original poster had heard teaching which suggested that this whole OT pattern should be continued. But should it?

Re: - posted by phebebird (), on: 2005/1/3 0:58

Perhaps to some degree and in certain circumstances. However, trying to live too much by OT law can, in my opinion, lead to living by the letter of the law and not the principle--or just living by and trusting in the law period, as opposed to grace. Remember, Christ fulfilled the law. The other danger of trying to live in the re-created OT is that of trying to make heaven on earth--i.e. focusing on fixing the ills of society instead of focusing on God Himself. We can fix the surroundings, but that will not fix the man.

That said, plenty of kids get messed up going far away to college where there are no boundaries and sometimes little support for morals they have grown up with. Lots of kids get messed up one way or another, though, and there is no way to protect them indefinitely from the trial of their faith.

I remember college as a fairly lonely time. I had a lot of friends, but I missed my parents and eight brothers and sisters terribly ("going away" to college was a must since my family lived overseas). Thankfully, I was going to nursing school, so, between getting up at 4:30 a.m. to go to clinical and working the graveyard shift at the hospital, I didn't have much time to get too lonely or too mixed up. :) No, really, God was faithful...

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/1/3 4:41

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Hi phebebird

Yes, true. I wasn't trying to find a law to keep but principles behind the law which might still have some relevance.

One of the things I was trying to highlight is how dramatically patterns of life have changed in the last hundred years. The education boom, and the career paths for young people have completely disrupted the centuries old patterns of people being home based until they married and set up their own home base.

We can't turn back the clock even if we wanted to, but to understand the principles behind this Numbers law, (interesting that it wasn't Sinaitic?) might help us in providing some kind of support structure for our teens and singles.