

“Maybe We’re Doing Marriage All Wrong When YouTubers Sound More Like the Fathers Than We Do”

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The theme of the conference is nature, and I’m here to talk about nature—specifically, human nature, and, even more specifically, our male and female natures, which lately we have not respected as much as we might think.

First, I should warn you that I’m a writer, and as the late great American novelist John Updike said many years ago, “writers don’t make good speakers—they’re always editing.” You’ll start to say something, and then suddenly think of a better way to say it, and the result will be a bit confused. Well, I have a lot to say today, and I want to be very careful about how I say it, so I’m going to read most of my remarks. It won’t be the best speech you’ve ever heard, but I guarantee you won’t fall asleep.

Second, before I begin reading, I should explain that what I’m about to say is the result of 40 years of writing about gender issues, plus 40 years of marriage to a wonderful woman I loved very much, plus a year and a half without her since she died of cancer in October of 2024. In that year and a half of thinking over our marriage—how it was, how it could have been—I have come to realize that even I have been too feminist in my thinking about women, despite all my years writing against feminism. Men and women are actually much less alike than we have all been made to think.

And now for my written remarks.

Did you know that “marriage counseling,” also known as “couples therapy,” was invented a hundred years ago by German eugenicists? Racist, feminist eugenicists, pushing birth control. Before the 1920’s, nobody thought it a good idea to sit a husband and wife down together, invite them to complain about each other, and then prod one of them, usually the husband, to change his ways to suit the other. But that’s what we do today, even we Orthodox.

You’ve heard it said that “Orthodoxy is not a religion, it’s a way of life.” But when it comes to a large part of life—marriage and raising children—the Orthodox way hasn’t really differed much from the world’s way, not in the past and not at present.

The problem is that the world’s way of marrying and raising children has changed radically in the past hundred years, and most Orthodox have followed right along.

Many in fact celebrate this radical change. The French Orthodox scholar Jean-Claude Larchet does, in his new book *Renewing Gender*. Larchet argues that the way most Westerners now live is the way

Orthodox Christians *should* live because “social structures have evolved” and a “strong egalitarian mentality” has taken hold.¹

Larchet is wrong about many things in his book, if you’re interested, you can read my review of his book on my blog, brianpatrickmitchell.com.² But Larchet *is* right that a “strong egalitarian mentality” has taken hold of most Westerners, including most Orthodox. Most of us raise our girls very much like our boys. We may dress them a little differently, but we send them to the same schools to learn the same things, push them to compete in the same sports and to aspire to the same careers, and expect them to do all the things that men do in life, while also marrying and raising children.

About the only thing we tell our girls they can’t do is serve in the altar, but we have hard time explaining why, and the push is on for altar girls and deaconesses. Many priests are already churching girls through the altar, turning an opportunity to teach the difference of male and female into an opportunity to deny the difference.

As for our boys, we raise them to do all the things men have always done—except exercise any real authority over women. We expect men to treat women as equals, to compete against women for jobs, to work full-time to support their families, to help out more at home, and to do everything possible to make their wives happy.

And all this is assumed to be simply be the modern way of life, and it certainly is the modern way because it has taken hold only in the late twentieth century. It is the *boomer* way of life, which means that it must be wrong, right?

Larchet is a boomer, and that explains his assumption that the way we live now is the only way we can live. Most boomers assume the same.³ I am also a boomer, but fifty years ago I read a book called *Sexual Suicide* by George Gilder, who argued that women naturally exercise tremendous social and sexual power over men and that this is good because it motivates men to build safe and prosperous communities for their wives and children. But what feminists demanded and got was political and economic power: They wanted to “empower women” to dominate men and otherwise live as they please, unconstrained by traditional sex roles.⁴

We’re seeing the disastrous results of that power shift now.⁵ Maybe you’ve heard of the “Great Feminization.” Maybe you have heard of Helen Andrews. Helen is a Yale graduate, a former editor of *The American Conservative* magazine, and the author of about entitled *Boomers: How the Men*

¹ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Renewing Gender: An Orthodox Perspective* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, 2025), p. 160.

² See “Origenism in the Service of Feminism à la Larchet,” originally published in two parts as “Gimme That Old-Time Feminism: Jean-Claude Larchet on Gender and Revolution,” Union of Orthodox Journalists, now available at <https://www.brianpatrickmitchell.com/2025/08/06/origenism-in-the-service-of-feminism-a-la-larchet/>, July 19, 2025.

³ Boomers did not create the feminized world of today; they inherited it. The first laws forcing people to ignore obvious differences between men and women—the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964—were enacted while the oldest boomers were still in their teens and ineligible to vote. (The voting age was not lowered to 18 until 1971.)

⁴ *Sexual Suicide* (New York: Quadrangle/New Times Book Co., 1973) was later revised and expanded as *Men and Marriage* (Gretna, LA: Pelican, 1986). Neither edition was as successful as Gilder’s series of bestsellers on economics and technology, beginning with *Wealth and Poverty* in 1980.

⁵ For a scholarly account of the disastrous consequences by an Orthodox ethicist, see Mark J. Cherry’s *Sex, Family, and the Culture Wars* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2016). More recent data and analysis are available at the Institute for Family Studies, <https://ifstudies.org/>.

and Women Who Promised Freedom Delivered Disaster. She's also an Orthodox Christian, a member of our cathedral parish in Washington, DC, and the stay-at-home mother of three little boys. In the past year she has become quite an Internet sensation describing the disastrous efforts of the overwhelming dominance of women in many fields—in academia in general, especially the social sciences; in the professions such as law, medicine, and religion; in advertising and the media.

The problem with this dominance is not individual women but women in groups—in Helen's words, "feminine group dynamics." A few women in a group of men might not make much difference, but when women are the majority, the focus of the group shifts to maintaining good relations within the group. When someone threatens those good relations by arguing too strongly against someone else's ideas, the group's reaction is to isolate the troublemaker, and that explains wokeness and the cancel culture.

Helen talked about this at another Orthodox conference in Pennsylvania this week. What I talked about on the same panel with Helen was the demographic consequences of feminism, which are just as disastrous.

Marriage and birth rates are collapsing because feminism has turned many women into arrogant narcissists who think women are normal and men are childish if not toxic. Feminism has taught young men feel guilty for just being men. Boys used to be taught to take the lead with women; now they're taught to be ashamed of taking the lead.

Young men have also heard the horror stories online about men whose lives have been ruined by divorce. They know that women know divorce law favors them and a man can lose his kids, his house, and half his income just because his wife decides she's not happy living with him.

So more and more young men now see women as not worth the trouble or the risk, and they're giving up on finding mates. There's even an acronym for this trend: MGTOW—"Men going their own way."

The Problem of Hypergamy

Then there's the problem of hypergamy. Hypergamy—from the Greek words *hyper* and *gamos*, meaning "marriage"—cannot be blamed on feminism or any other cultural influence. It is the natural and universal preference of women for marrying someone *above* them. Women do not marry down unless desperate. They instinctively want a man who is not their equal but their superior—a man who is bigger, taller, stronger, older, more mature, more secure, more confident, more assertive, making more money, and higher in social status. Why? Because they want someone to take care of them better than they can take care of themselves. That's what Daddy did. Daddy is every woman's model of a man, because Daddy is what they grew up thinking a real man is.

By the way, when I say that hypergamy among women is "natural and universal," I mean that absolutely: No woman wants to marry a man she knows is less than herself. Even feminists want a Chad.

Those are the facts of life—the facts of life we have not been teaching.

And because we have not been teaching them, more and more of our sons and daughters will never marry. Why? Because the more educated women are, and the more successful they are in their careers, and the more money they make—the less need they have for a man and the harder it is for any man to impress them, so instead of settling for a lower-status man, they'll keep looking for Mr. Perfect until they age-out of the marriage market.

Even when our young do marry, they often marry as equal partners, both working with neither relying fully on the other for anything. The danger is that such marriages are more likely to fail because both the husband and the wife know that she doesn't really need him; she can provide for herself.

The Patristic Witness

Our Orthodox ancestors understood this danger. St. John Chrysostom even tells men to marry a poor woman rather than a rich one, because a poor woman will value you more, whereas a rich one will take pride in her wealth and independence and think less of her husband for it, as modern working women indeed do.⁶

Church Fathers had much more to say about marriage that doesn't fit our modern, feminist, egalitarian conception of marriage. They did not doubt that God made man male and female. Neither did they doubt that God made men and women different enough to take very different roles in life. Women were to be "keepers at home" (Titus 2:5), bearing and raising children and managing the household as "helpmates" for their husbands (Gen 2:18). Men were to take the public role on behalf their wives and families, working outside the home to provide for their wives and children, representing the family in all civic matters, taking the lead in church, and of course serving in the military.⁷

St. John Chrysostom says God Himself created this division of labor to bind husbands and wives together in mutual dependence—"to her entrusting the house, and to him the market; to him the work of feeding, for he tills the ground; to her that of clothing, for loom and distaff are the woman's. For it is God Himself who gave to woman-kind skill in woven work."⁸

It *should* go without saying but must indeed be said, owing to influence of feminism among us, that all Church Fathers expected the husband to exercise real authority over his wife such that he could command and she would obey. The sayings in support of this are many in both Scripture and the Fathers.⁹ "With us, indeed, the woman is reasonably subjected to the man, for equality of honor causeth contention," says Chrysostom (Homily 26 on 1 Cor 11).

The family is not a democracy but a monarchy, says Chrysostom, who also likens the family to an army, with the husband as the commander-in-chief and the wife as his lieutenant commander—his chief subordinate charged with seeing that all other subordinates do his will, charged also with setting the example of reverent obedience to the commander-in-chief.¹⁰

⁶ Homily 20 on Ephesians, NPNF1, Vol. 13, p. 151–52.

⁷ Men even did the shopping in the ancient world, so their women could stay safe and comfortable at home. See Jerome Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), p. 183. Also, Tamara Talbot Rice, *Everyday Life in Byzantium* (New York: Dorset Press, 1987). Larchet writes, "In the Byzantine Empire the general rule was that wives of aristocrats took part in politics alongside their husbands" (158), but that is a gross exaggeration. Wealthy women did meddle in politics and church matters, but they did so mostly through male intermediaries and never publicly. St. John Chrysostom complained about such women in both Antioch and Constantinople, and, indeed, that's why he was deposed and exiled.

⁸ Homily 34 on 1 Corinthians, NPNF1, Vol. 12, p. 205.

⁹ For a collection of such sayings, see Patrick Mitchell, *The Scandal of Gender: Early Christian Teaching on the Man and the Woman* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Homily 34 on 1 Corinthians, NPNF1, Vol. 12, pp. 204–205.

Chrysostom also says the wife should “fear” her husband, not just “respect” him.¹¹ *Respect* is a rather weak word, meaning merely to treat someone as they ought to be treated. Well, then, everyone deserves respect, in the sense that everyone deserves not to be abused. That’s how most people now understand Ephesians 5:33. Most people now read feminized Bibles, saying, “Let the wife see that she respects her husband.” That’s the Orthodox Study Bible and most modern translations. The King James at least says “reverence her husband” because the Greek of Ephesians 5:33 says *phobeō*—“fear.”

Chrysostom is quite clear that the Apostle Paul means “fear” and not just “respect,” explaining that he doesn’t mean fear of physical harm, which he emphatically condemns, but fear of disobeying her divinely appointed “head,” for such disobedience is a serious sin, an act of infidelity to both her head and her husband’s head, which is Christ.¹²

The Nature of the Sex

Chrysostom and many other Fathers are also not shy of noting several distinguishing characteristics of the female sex. I say “distinguishing characteristics” instead of “distinctive characteristics” because there are men who are “that way” (so to speak), but in our common experience of men and women, we find that women are much more “that way,” and this has been commonly acknowledged by both men and women from ancient times until very recently.

These recognizably feminine characteristics are often seen as faults in the fallen world, but they are all also partly natural and serve positive purposes:

- “The sex is somewhat talkative,” says Chrysostom¹³; well, they need to be, to teach children to talk.
- The sex is “fond of ornament,” he says¹⁴; well, the woman is “the glory of the man” (1 Cor 11:7), made beautiful by God so as to be desired by the man, and natural beauty does require maintenance if not also assistance.
- The sex is fond of luxury, he says—silks, baths, and other physical comforts¹⁵; well, a woman’s skin is actually more sensitive than a man’s skin, having more nerve endings, and this suits her for cuddling children and receiving a man’s caresses.
- “Full of feeling somehow is the female sex, and more inclined to pity,” he says¹⁶; well again, this suits women to comfort children, tend to their needs, soothe their sores, and teach them to behave and not hurt others.

¹¹ Homily 20 on Ephesians, NPNF1, Vol. 13, p. 146-148; Homily 10 on Colossians, NPNF1, Vol. 13, p. 304.

¹² Homily 26 on 1 Corinthians, NPNF1, Vol. 12, p. 156.

¹³ Homily 13 on Ephesians and Homily 37 on 1 Corinthians. In his Letter 262, St. Augustine of Hippo takes a superficially pious wife to task for (among other outrages) disregarding her husband’s desire by dressing as a nun while he was still with her.

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¹⁵ Homily 30 on Matthew, NPNF1, Vol. 10, p. 203.

¹⁶ Homily 86 on the Gospel of John, NPNF1, Vol. 14, p. 323. He says this of Mary’s tears upon finding the tomb empty. It is worth noting that St. John does not credit St. Mary or the Myrrhbearers with greater faith or courage compared to the Apostles, as some people do today to flatter women and shame men; instead, he credits her with great zeal and loving affection for our Lord, but he also notes her “feeble nature” and ignorance of Christ’s prophecy of His

- “The sex is somehow weaker, and needs much support, much condescension,” he says.¹⁷ Well, if he means physical weakness, an awareness of her weakness would incline her toward the man for protection.¹⁸

But the ancients, both pagan and Christian, commonly assumed women were weaker in the sense of being less rational and more biological, meaning governed more by their bodies. Women are subject to mood swings owing to the hormonal shifts of their menstrual cycle and in childbearing, and this used to be commonly acknowledged as the cause of fits of hysteria in women and also as a reason to not entrust women with great decision-making responsibility.

The Fathers also often associated the woman’s weakness with her ancestral deception, Eve being “beguiled” by the serpent (Gen 3:13).¹⁹ This, too, has a basis in nature: The woman was created to be a mate, a companion, and given a mental and emotional nature suited to that role. This, however, leaves her vulnerable to those who will flatter her so she will become *their* mate. That’s what the serpent does to Eve, telling her she can be “as gods” (Gen 3:5).

The woman needs company. She needs someone to be with, someone to talk to, someone to lean on, someone to flatter her, comfort her, confirm her choices in life, make her feel good about herself, make her feel loved and not alone. There aren’t many “lone wolves” among women, are there? No, being a “lone wolf” is a guy thing.

Unfortunately for women, in the fallen world the woman’s natural desire for company is never fully satisfied, which is why women are always reaching out emotionally to other people—visiting friends, sending cards and letters, giving each other little gifts, and sharing their feelings good or bad online.

But it also explains why women are uncomfortable with conflict and don’t respond well to criticism or opposition, especially from the husbands. Every married man learns early not to give his wife his honest opinion of her appearance or behavior.

I learned this on a beach on the island of Rhodes during our second year of marriage. I was stationed in Turkey in the Army, and my wife came over to join me for a few weeks, and while she was there we took a tour of the Seven Churches of the Book of Revelation, which included a few days on the island of Rhodes. So, there we were on a beach in Rhodes, and eventually the conversation turned to where to go for dinner, and then what she would wear to dinner. She brought it up; I certainly didn’t,

Resurrection given only to the Twelve. It should also be remembered that preparing the dead for burial was women’s work, not something men normally did.

¹⁷ Homily 20 on Ephesians, NPNF1, Vol. 13, p. 148.

¹⁸ This inclination is part of the sentence of Eve in Gen 3:16: “Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” The Septuagint does not say “thy desire”; it says “thine *apostrophē* shall be to thy husband.” An *apostrophē* is a turn away from one thing and toward another—away from the serpent and back towards Adam.

¹⁹ E.g., St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lecture 12, NPNF2, Vol. 7, p. 73; St. John Chrysostom, Homily 16 on Genesis, Hill, Vol. 1, pp. 208-216; St. Ambrose of Milan, *On Paradise*, Savage, pp. 301-302; St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, NPNF1, Vol. 2, p. 272. The Apostle Paul himself notes that Eve but not Adam was deceived to justify the rule against women teaching or exercising authority over men (1 Tim 2:11–15). Many early heretical sects were disproportionately female, such as those of Montanus, Arius, and Paul of Samosata. See, for examples, St. John Chrysostom, Homily 11 on Ephesians, NPNF1, Vol. 13, p. 107–8; St. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 69.3; Socrates, *Church History* 2.2, NPNF2, Vol. 2, pp. 36–7. The same is true of secular religions. George Orwell notes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, “It was always the women, and above all the young ones, who were the most bigoted adherents of the Party, the swallows of slogans, the amateur spies and nosers-out of unorthodoxy.”

but when she mentioned her red-and-white plaid blouse, I made the mistake of telling her that I didn't like that blouse. It reminded me of busty blonde country girl in the television series *The Dukes of Hazard*, which I didn't like. I may have told her I thought the blouse looked "hickish." I might as well have said that my wife looked hickish, because that's how she took it. We argued over it for over an hour, right there on the beach with everyone watching—she accusing me, and me defending myself. I don't remember what ended the argument. Maybe it was because we were touring the island on a motorcycle, and I was the only way she would back to the hotel.

I mention this because in hindsight I realize that my wife wasn't a bad wife because she sometimes behaved that way, she was just a woman, and that's how women sometimes behave. And the reason I didn't know this at the time or realize it sooner is because feminists have taught us to assume that men and women are more alike than they are and that women are not in any way characteristically bad.

Fortunately for us today, there is a great awakening going on online, in which both men and women are rebelling against everything feminists have taught us to believe in the past century, and a leading topic of this online anti-feminist commentary is the difference in how and why men and women argue. Hardly any of these daring YouTube influencers are Orthodox, but the way the best of them explain arguments between men and women reveals a lot about the way men and women are meant to relate according to Orthodox Scripture and Tradition.

The Theological Basis of Male and Female

I mentioned a moment ago that the woman was created to be the man's companion and "helpmate" (Gen 2:18). Well, one way the woman helps the man is in completing the image of God in man.

Here, I should warn you, I'm going to get deeply theological for a moment and I'm going to say things that you won't hear anyone else say. No Father has said just what I'm going to say, though what they say does often support what I will say.

The creation of the woman completes the image of God in man, and it does so in three ways:

1. First, God is more than one Person, so man must be more than one person to be fully created.
2. Second, God is Person from Person, the Son and Holy Spirit both coming from the Father, who is the source of both, the *Archē* of both, in the words of the Fathers, the word *archē* meaning "beginning" and therefore also "origin" or "source"; and likewise the man is the source of the woman. This is true not just for Adam and Eve but for all women ever since. Every woman owes her womanhood to a man. Every man has within him the source of womanhood, the X chromosome, and it is his contribution of either an X or a Y that determines the sex of the child. I find this amazing, how biological science now confirms the biblical account of creation: What God does in Genesis 2 is take the X from the side of the Y within Adam and double it to create Eve.
3. Third, and most importantly, as Person from Person, the Father and the Son relate to each other through self-giving by the Father and thanksgiving by the Son and Holy Spirit. We are told this by Our Lord Himself in the Gospels, in which all the giving is done by the Father and all the thanking is done by the Son. Not once is the Father said to thank the Son, and not once is the Son said to give anything to the Father *except* thanks.

This is also how we relate to Christ: Christ gives Himself to us, and we give thanks to Him. That's what the word *Eucharist* means—the Thanksgiving. And in Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul tells us that the man and the woman are also to relate to each other through self-giving and thanksgiving,

which is why he calls the man the “head” of woman, in both Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 11. The Greek word for “head” (*kephalē*) can also mean “beginning” or “source,” which is why the Septuagint sometimes uses *kephalē* interchangeably with *archē*, meaning “beginning” or “source.” Isaiah 9:15 even uses *archē* to explain *kephalē* in the preceding verse.

We see this difference of the *archic* and the *eucharistic*—self-giving by the head and thanksgiving by the body—also between parents and children, clergy and laity, Christian employers and their employees, and Christian princes and their people. The head in each of these relationships is to give himself for the other, not in just *serving* the other but in *leading* the other, instilling in the other his own sense of meaning, purpose, and direction—sharing his very essence in the case of God the Father.

For example, with her children a mother takes the archic role of self-giving. When she serves them lunch, she doesn’t just give them food—she shares with them her way of life: She makes sure they pray before eating, mind their manners, chew with their mouths closed, use knife and fork properly, treat their food with respect as a gift from God, and behave as they should at table. But when that mother, that wife, serves her husband lunch or dinner, she doesn’t do any of those things; she just gives him food and joins him in enjoying it or maybe leaves him alone if she has already eaten.

That’s the difference between archic self-giving and eucharistic service. Our Lord speaks of this difference when He says that He has come “not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).²⁰ He also demonstrates this when he washes the feet of his disciples as an example of their calling to imitate His self-giving for others. So serving or ministering can be either archic or eucharistic depending upon who is serving whom, with archic self-giving also being a eucharistic service to God.

Natural Male-Female Relations

So, between parents and children, both the man and the woman take the archic role toward their children as their source of life. But when the woman turns to the man, she turns to him in the eucharistic role, as the child, as the one to be taken care of—provided for, protected, comforted, flattered, entertained, or pleased in various ways. When she feels herself taken care of, she will allow herself to be guided and even governed by the man. In moments of leisure, when not bothered by other things, she will even act like a child to get the man’s attention, doing silly little things to entice him to play with her.

But when instead of comfort she receives criticism, she will feel betrayed—her man is not doing his job, he is not making her happy. Unmarried women do expect that marriage will make them happy. When a woman is unhappy, she will often find something her husband did or didn’t do to complain about, so she can let him know she’s unhappy and he needs to make her happy—even if he’s not the real reason she’s unhappy.

This is also partly natural. Within a marriage, both the husband and the wife must, by necessity, trust the other to fulfill their different obligations. The husband works in the world to provide for himself and his family; the wife works at home to educate the children and manage the household. The husband can easily see his wife doing her job, but the wife can’t often see her husband doing his, and

²⁰ The word *minister* is the comparative of *magister* (whence *master* and also *majesty*). A minister is therefore a servant of a master trusted to ensure that the master’s will is done. The same is true of the very similar words *deacon* (from the Greek *diakonos*) and *sergeant* (from the Latin *servus*).

that makes her sometimes anxious, often without her even knowing why. A foolish wife, not seeing her husband at work—not knowing his fears, his defeats, his victories, or his humiliations—will often even resent him wanting to relax after work while she continues with her work. But even the best wife will sometimes feel anxious for no obvious reason, and this is only natural. She is the family’s alarm system, responsible for alerting her husband to possible dangers by signaling her need for reassurance that all is well, and thereby keeping him aware of the risks so he doesn’t risk too much without due regard for her and the children.

Sometimes a woman will be unhappy because she sees her husband, at that very moment, not being the man is supposed to be for her; instead of being her adult and doing things that make her happy, he’s being a child and only making himself happy—doom-scrolling, gaming, indulging in some hobby, vegging in front of the television, or just sleeping in when there’s trash to be taken out.

Here, I must say that though wives do often expect too much from their husbands—often expecting him to do things just when and how she wants them done—nevertheless, it is only natural for a woman to be put off seeing her husband spending time doing things that do no-one else any real good, pleasuring himself and no-one else. That’s what boys do, and when a husband behaves like a boy, his wife will naturally respond to him like his mother, shaming him for not behaving like a man.

Men do need time to themselves for rest and recreation and fellowship with other men, so I’m not saying you have to give up gaming for good. But a wise man must consider the effect too much such time will have on his life and his wife. To have her habitually regard him as her head, with real authority over her, he must always appear to her as the adult in their relationship—a serious man engaged in serious business. Seeing him in that way—seeing him make things and fix things—comforts her that she’s given herself to a real man, a man who can take care of her and the children, so she doesn’t need another man.

Being the adult in the relationship also means not always doing what your wife wants you to do. Good men often make that mistake, thinking they are loving their wives in doing so. But always doing what your wife tells you to do puts you in the role of the child, which will not comfort her. Do it too often and she will think less of you. There are times when you need to tell your wife, “Woman, what am I to you?”²¹ Women do need to be reminded of their place from time to time.

Being the adult in the relationship also means never losing your temper with your wife. When a woman—“full of feeling,” as St. John says—loses all reason and resorts to gaslighting or to expanding the argument to include past complaints and saying things a woman should *never* say to her husband, her husband needs to recognize that this is just her being a woman, voicing her insecurities, and that that’s just what women do now and then.

At such times, he needs to not take what she says about him seriously and instead respond to it by remaining securely in control of his own emotions, not just to avoid escalating the argument but to demonstrate his strength of character to her, because his strength, his security, will actually comfort her that he’s a real man and not just a boy.

²¹ These are, of course, the words of our Lord to His mother at the wedding in Cana (John 2:4). Chrysostom clearly understood them as a correction of the Theotokos, saying Christ’s words “brought her into a right frame of mind” and also saying that His words were not disrespectful of her because He is not just her son but her Lord and God. See Homily 21 on John, NPNF1, Vol. 14, pp. 74–75.

On this, the best influencers online—male and female, secular and Christian—all agree. The man, to be the man, must not act like the woman in an argument. He must instead regulate her emotion by demonstrating his own self-control, as parents do when children throw tantrums.

The mistake men often make is thinking of their wives as equals, peers, someone they can spar with emotionally and overcome by argument, as they can with other men. They would do better by recognizing that women really are the “weaker vessel,” as St. Peter says (1 Peter 3:7), and need to be dealt with like children when they behave like children.

A Fundamental Unfairness

So the man needs to be the adult in the relationship at all times. But it’s not all on the man to make the marriage work. Unfortunately, many pastors, many priests, afraid of offending the woman, will put it all on the man, blaming the man for not leading, stressing the man’s responsibility to love his wife while saying little or nothing about the wife’s responsibility to “fear” her husband.

It is fundamentally unfair to blame men for not leading when women have been raised to *not* follow. For the man to lead, the woman needs to believe that she must follow her husband as her head, even when he doesn’t act like it. No man—no matter how saintly, no matter how loving, no matter how good a leader he is—can succeed as the “head” of a woman who does not recognize him as her head.

This is true of all heads. A king can only be the king when people hail him as the king. That’s the reason for saying, “Long live the king!”—to declare your acceptance of a king. Likewise, the father of the Prodigal Son can only again be a father to the Prodigal when the Prodigal returns and submits himself to his father. It’s the same with spiritual fathers. You can’t be a spiritual father to someone who doesn’t turn to you for guidance and ask your blessing.

The offer a relationship by a head does not itself constitute a relationship; there must be an acceptance of the offer for the relationship to begin. Women and girls need to be taught to accept their husband’s or father’s headship—to *revere* not just respect their heads—to submit, to obey when required, to not talk back, to not complain, to practice modesty not just in dress but also in behavior, to know their place and not begrudge the man his place.

Many influencers online can help with all this. Quite a few of them are women, and most of the women are Christian. The best male influencers are mostly not Christian, because most Christian men online who talk about women are still afraid of offending women. The male influencers who are not afraid of offending women do talk a lot about what they call “low-value women,” but that’s because “low-value women” are a serious problem now, thanks to feminism and the sexual revolution and social media.

What we need to do is teach our daughters to be “high-value women”—not “high-status” women with degrees and careers, but “high-value” women, women worth marrying. To raise “high-value” women, we must teach our daughters to not think only of themselves, to not think too much of themselves, to be what they were created to be, to pursue marriage instead of careers while they are young and most attractive, to do that which is most needful for civilization that only women can do, to know the great joys of motherhood and grandmotherhood, to live according to their nature both archicly and eucharisticly, and thus be “saved through childbearing,” as the Holy Apostle Paul says of women (1 Tim 2:15)—saved not by living for themselves but by living for others.

Thank you.