



GOODCHRISTIANS GOODHUSBANDS?





Resourced by thorough research into the marriages of Wesley, Whitefield and Edwards, this is a truly wise book on the problem of combining ministry and marriage to the glory of God and the good of all concerned.

J. I. Packer,
Professor of Theology, Regent College, Vancouver, Canada

Doreen Moore has done more than write a typical book on marriage. She has seen the impact of life itself upon real people who had real needs and real struggles. The result is a wonderful blend of biography and helpful insight into how God works in our marriages for his kingdom's advance through weak and unworthy servants.

John Armstrong,
Founder and President of Reformation and Revival Ministries



Driven by a confluence of four motivations, Doreen Moore has produced a study of marriage that is helpful and charming. She is a good historian. I remember this from excellent work that she did in the history program at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Her desire for accurate helpful history gives energy to the historical investigation of the three highly pertinent examples of how evangelical 'calling' impacts to the marriage relationship. She is a concerned theologian. Marriage as a part of the divine order and a subject of divine revelation has an important part in a comprehensive display of God's purpose in the world. She has been careful to give it a theological arrangement. She is a wife. She understands the pressures brought to bear on a marriage by intense ministry goals and demands. Developing a deep sense of the stewardship of marriage is important to her and helps as her argument unfolds. She is a mother. The mysterious union achieved in a family through the begetting of children and rearing them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is both a personal experience and a theological truth for her. Christian Focus should be congratulated for the pursuit of this manuscript by Doreen and each reader will receive rewards in personal development far in excess of the time invested in reading.

Tom J. Nettles
Professor of Historical Theology,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY

Outstanding analysis of the tensions between marriage and ministry and how the two need not be competitors. Very well worth the reading.

Dwight Edwards,
Senior Pastor, Grace Bible Church, College Station, TX



GOODCHRISTIANS GOODHUSBANDS?



**Leaving a Legacy
in Marriage & Ministry**

Lessons from the marriages & ministries of
Elizabeth & George Whitefield
Sarah & Jonathan Edwards
Molly & John Wesley



Doreen Moore

CHRISTIAN FOCUS



Copyright © Doreen Moore 2004

ISBN 1-85792-450-9

Published in 2004

by

Christian Focus Publications,
Geanies House, Fearn,
Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Scotland

www.christianfocus.com

Cover design by Alister MacInnes

Printed and bound by
Cox & Wyman, Reading, Berkshire

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher or a license permitting restricted copying. In the U.K. such licenses are issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.



Acknowledgements:

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, of whom Jonathan Edwards said is “worthy, that we should serve Him to the utmost of our power in all things.”

To my husband, Dave – for being my nearest and dearest partner in life and ministry. Thank you for all you do and say to draw me closer to Christ. Thank you too for all your encouragement and editorial assistance.

To my sons, David and Christopher – you have brought so much joy into my life. I love who God has made you. My life is richer and a whole lot more fun because of you. I love being your mother!

To my mother and father – for all your encouragement. I am especially grateful that you created an environment where I always knew I was loved. I also am grateful that you have encouraged me to seek to excel at whatever I do.

To Dr. Woodbridge and Dr. Nettles – Thank you for making church history come alive. Dr. Woodbridge, I am indebted to you for teaching me the skills of historiography.

To my publishers – in a day and age when many seek only to entertain the sheep, I thank you for being



Good Christians, Good Husbands?

faithful to feed the sheep. A special thank you to my editor, Anne. May God bless you richly in your new ministry as a mom (Isa. 40:11).

To my many friends and co-laborers in ministry who have devoted their lives to the glory of God and the well-being of others – especially Darin and Allison Maurer, Brooke and Karen Butler, Mike and Marlena Rupp, Lore and Michael Cooper, Linda and Dennis Ryan, Kurt and Susie Richardson, and Tsh and Kyle Oxenreider. Though the world thinks we are making a sacrifice, we know that a life lived in service and love to God is the best life one could have.

To my Austin friends who have provided ongoing encouragement and prayers over the years. A special thank you to my friend, Vickie Hooper, for her never ending supply of encouragement. Jane and Denise, your prayers held me up. Thank you to the Rogan family for a computer.

Thank you to everyone who expressed interest in the book. It doesn't take a village – it takes a Body – the Body of Christ!

I am a blessed woman!



Introduction

When C. T. Studd¹ felt that the Lord was calling him to Africa as a missionary, his wife Priscilla objected. It was not that she was not committed to missions. In fact, she had been a missionary in China when he met her, actively involved in people's lives. However, Priscilla now had a serious heart condition and could not go with him. Despite her feelings, he left her. She was devastated. Even when her heart problems grew worse, he did not return. In Africa, he worked eighteen hours a day, with "no diversions, no days off, no recreation."² In his zeal, he expected his co-laborers to do the same. This caused strained relationships with the other missionaries. He even dismissed his own daughter and son-in-law because they failed to meet his standards. C. T. Studd believed "the cause of Christ" took precedence over his family.

When William Carey, the father of modern missions, decided to go to India as a missionary, his wife refused to go. She had three children and was pregnant with a fourth. He resolved to go even if he had to leave her and the children behind. Shortly after the birth of her fourth child she gave in and accompanied him to India.³ What followed was a



Good Christians, Good Husbands?

nightmare for her. It started with a five month sea voyage where she was seasick most of the time.⁴ When they arrived in Calcutta, their inadequate funds were quickly depleted, forcing his family to live in a rundown place outside of Calcutta.⁵ Even worse, the other missionaries lived in relative affluence in Calcutta. His wife complained because they had to “live without many of . . .the necessities of life, bread in particular.”⁶ Dorothy was also afflicted with dysentery and their oldest son almost died from it. Later, Carey moved his wife, infant, and three sons under ten, into an untamed malarial infested region where alligators, tigers, and huge poisonous snakes were in abundance.⁷ They moved soon after to Mudnabatti, where Dorothy again became ill. But far worse, their five year old son Peter died.⁸ After this devastating loss, Dorothy Carey’s mental health declined. She never recovered but deteriorated to such an extent that she was described as “wholly deranged.”⁹ William Carey believed “the cause of Christ” took precedence over his family.

When David Livingstone undertook his missionary journeys to Africa, his wife Mary and their children accompanied him. His wife had been raised as a missionary kid and was accustomed to hardship. On the first journey together, their newborn daughter died from lack of water,¹⁰ the other child almost died, and Mary suffered temporary paralysis.¹¹ Livingstone realized the rigors of an exploratory lifestyle were too hard on his family.¹² Seven years into their marriage he decided to send Mary and their four children¹³ to Scotland to live with his parents.¹⁴ He would remain



Introduction

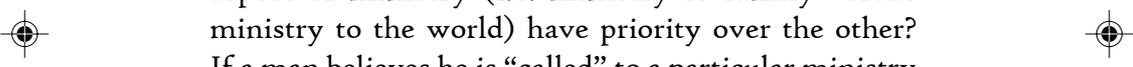
in Africa and continue his explorations. He wrote how this “act of orphanising” his children was painful to him because they would not remember him.¹⁵ Yet he based his decision on a “strong conviction that this step will tend to the Glory of Christ.”¹⁶ While Livingstone dreamed of seeing the end of the African slave trade and discovering the source of the Nile (to verify Biblical accuracy),¹⁷ his family lived close to the poverty level. It seems likely that Livingstone’s wife became an alcoholic to deal with depression.¹⁸ She begged him to return, but he wouldn’t.¹⁹ When Livingstone finally did return to England he was welcomed as a hero and received a gold medal from the Royal Geographic Society.²⁰ He later wrote how his time in England “was so busy that I could not enjoy much the company of my children.”²¹ On his next journey, Mary refused to be left behind even though this would be a dangerous journey. She left her children, including a newborn, behind with Livingstone’s relatives.²² Three months later, after having been “pushed ... beyond human endurance”²³ by her husband, Mary Livingstone died of malaria.²⁴ In 17 years of marriage, they had only lived together for 4 years.²⁵ David Livingstone believed “the cause of Christ” took precedence over his family.

Throughout the history of the Christian church and even today, similar stories could be told. Other great men, who had extensive influence in their labors for “the cause of Christ,” believed that their public ministry took precedence over their families. These men followed the course they believed God had called them to follow and expected their wives and children



Good Christians, Good Husbands?

to follow as well. These men had a passion to spread the gospel and change the social evils of the cultures to which they went. We admire, for example, William Carey's dedication to seeing sati (widow burning) and infanticide banned from India.²⁶ We admire the extent of his translation work. He translated the Bible into six languages and parts of it were translated into twenty-nine other languages.²⁷ Yet it is difficult not to have angst over his domestic relationships. Should he have been a missionary? Could there have been anything he could have done to ease some of the hardships?



This raises many questions regarding the relationship between one's marriage and one's ministry outside the home. For instance, does one aspect of ministry (i.e. ministry to family versus ministry to the world) have priority over the other? If a man believes he is "called" to a particular ministry outside the home (e.g. to be a missionary, pastor, etc.), is his wife to accept this regardless of how she feels? Could her reticence be a sign that perhaps God is not calling that man into such a ministry? On the other hand, is it not possible that undue concern over family matters can become idolatrous? And perhaps the question that encompasses all the others is: what biblical and theological convictions should govern how one views one's role as a minister of the gospel in relation to one's role as a husband and father?²⁸ How a person answers these questions has serious ramifications for both his family and his ministry. These questions are not to be taken lightly.

In trying to come to godly convictions regarding the relationship between one's family and one's



Introduction

ministry, it is helpful to look historically at those who have made what is deemed a significant contribution to the cause of Christ to see what biblical and theological convictions governed their lives. For this task I have chosen three prominent eighteenth-century Christian leaders: John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards. We will see how they viewed their ministerial responsibilities in relation to their responsibilities as husbands and/or fathers. All three of these men were married and all three were leaders during a unique time in Christian history when surely it was incumbent on ministers to “spend and be spent” for the work of ministry. This time was known in England as the English Evangelical Revival, in Scotland as the Scottish Cambuslang Wark, and in America as the First Great Awakening. Scholars today acknowledge it as one great intercontinental revival that spanned England, Scotland, Wales, and America. John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards all played a significant part in this great revival. A brief biographical sketch of each will demonstrate their commitment to Christ and to the work of Christ.

John Wesley was born on June 17, 1703 in Epworth, England.²⁹ When he was five years old, a fire broke out in his home and his was a near miraculous rescue. He later viewed himself as a “brand plucked from the fire” (Zech. 3:2). It seemed Providence spared him for a unique destiny.³⁰ He devoted himself to God and to good works, even going on a mission trip to Georgia (America). His personal failure while in Georgia prompted him to record in his journal that “I who went



Good Christians, Good Husbands?

to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.”³¹ It was only after he returned to England that he went to a prayer meeting at Aldersgate and heard Luther’s preface on the Epistle to the Romans. He wrote of this experience, “About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.”³² Soon after, Wesley began itinerating and preaching salvation by grace through faith alone. Revival broke out and lasted until he died. For fifty-two years he travelled as an itinerant minister, averaging 4,500 miles yearly and a total of 40,000 sermons.³³ Wesley was committed to reforming the social evils that plagued his society as well. Poverty, slavery, and prison reform, for example, were issues to which he was committed.³⁴ He later broke with the Church of England and founded the Methodist denomination.³⁵ He labored until he died in 1791.³⁶ John Wesley’s desire was to “spend and be spent” for the work of Christ.

George Whitefield was born in Gloucester, England on December 16, 1714.³⁷ The sins of his youth, he said, were endless yet he also remembers the Spirit stirring in his heart.³⁸ When he went to Oxford, he met Charles Wesley. Wesley gave Whitefield a copy of *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* by Henry Scougal.³⁹ It was in this excellent treatise that Whitefield discovered that “true religion was union of the soul with God, and Christ formed within us.”⁴⁰ Whitefield



Introduction

wrote, “a ray of Divine light was instantaneously darted in upon my soul, and from that moment, but not till then, did I know that I must be a new creature.”⁴¹ From that moment on Whitefield’s sole desire was to live for the glory of God. All he desired was to tell people about Christ and that “there was such a thing as the new birth.”⁴² Two years later, in 1737, he was ordained in the Church of England.⁴³ He later became an itinerant evangelist and traveled to Scotland, Wales, Ireland, America, and throughout England as well.⁴⁴ Many attribute the interconnectedness of the revival to this great preacher.⁴⁵ He preached close to 18,000 sermons in his thirty-four years of public ministry.⁴⁶ He also established an orphan-house in Georgia.⁴⁷ He died in 1770,⁴⁸ his body literally worn out from his extensive labors. George Whitefield’s desire was to “spend and be spent” for the work of Christ.

Jonathan Edwards was born on October 5, 1703, in Windsor Connecticut.⁴⁹ He was raised in a godly home.⁵⁰ Later on, he wrote regarding his testimony, “The first instance, that I remember, of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, 1 Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.* As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before.”⁵¹ From that time on his “sense of divine things” kept increasing. On January 12, 1723, he wrote a dedication of himself to God, “giving up myself, and all that I had, to God;



Good Christians, Good Husbands?

to be for the future in no respect my own; to act as one that had no right to himself, in any respect. And so solemnly vowed to take God for my portion and felicity, looking on nothing else as any part of my happiness, nor acting as it were; and his law for the constant rule of my obedience; engaging to fight with all my might against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the end of my life.”⁵² Not only did Jonathan Edwards grow in his godliness, but his mental powers were also used for the glory of God, prompting even secular scholars to acknowledge that Edwards was the greatest thinker America ever produced. During the Great Awakening, this Congregational minister and theologian, pastored a church in Northampton, Massachusetts.⁵³ He reported that when revival broke out in his church, there were over three hundred converts.⁵⁴ While pastoring, he also wrote many works on the revival.⁵⁵ By the late 1740s he was dismissed from his congregation because of some doctrinal differences.⁵⁶ He moved his family to Stockbridge where they labored among the Indians.⁵⁷ Edwards also wrote some of his finest theological treatises in that ten year period.⁵⁸ He later was asked to be the president of the College of New Jersey (now known as Princeton).⁵⁹ In 1758, before he could begin his work there, he died from a smallpox inoculation.⁶⁰ Edwards had resolved, “Never to lose one moment of time,”⁶¹ and never to do anything unless it brought glory to God.⁶² Jonathan Edwards’ desire was to “spend and be spent” for the work of Christ.

As the reader can see, all three of these men were wholeheartedly and unreservedly committed to their



Introduction

ministries. All three were also married and faced the same tension regarding balancing (or not balancing) marriage/family and public ministry.

This issue is not just theoretical for my husband and me. We have both been in vocational Christian ministry since graduation from college. Independently of one another, before we even met, we had committed our lives to the ministry. When we married, we dedicated ourselves together to the ministry. Children came along and the issue became more important. Our love for our children and our love for the people we are called to serve, plus the sobering reality that we answer to God, make this issue even more acute. My husband and I have had countless conversations with others over this issue. We have heard different perspectives on balancing marriage/family and public ministry. Some wives embrace the ministry. Others struggle deeply. Friends of mine who have been “ministry kids” have shared their stories with me. Some have deep scars from neglect, others have expressed how they loved growing up in a ministry home.

The Scriptures command God’s workmen to “handle accurately the Word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15) and to “pay close attention” to our lives and to our teaching (I Tim. 4:16). We are to “approve the things that are excellent” (Phil. 1:10). We are to be “an example of those who believe” (I Tim. 4:12). In light of this, the purpose of this book will be to help us develop Biblical convictions regarding one’s relationship to ministry in light of having a wife (and in Jonathan Edwards’ case, a family as well). The



Good Christians, Good Husbands?

Scriptures tell us of those who have “a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). This book hopes to bring knowledge to our zeal, light to our passion.

The format of this book will be to devote one chapter to each person, looking at four specific areas. These areas are: the biblical and theological convictions of each of these men regarding their role and responsibilities as ministers of the gospel; the biblical and theological convictions of each of these men regarding their role and responsibilities as husbands and/or fathers; how their biblical and theological convictions shaped their actual marriages and/or families; and, how each wife responded to her husband’s convictions.

The last chapter will be the conclusion. I will summarize the three perspectives and propose guidelines drawn from Scripture and some modern day “greats.”

My prayer is that God will give us wisdom in the knowledge of Him and His ways! I also pray that our lives will bear much fruit for His glory, for the well-being of others, and for our own eternal joy!