

## The Ideal Husband

### **Psalm 112**

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The Holy Bible is our best guide to family life. Here we will find what God says about how to be a man, how to be a husband and how to be a father. Psychology is helpful and self-help books can provide inspiration, but the Bible contains a word from our manufacturer—God himself—about who we are and how life works.

Psalm 112 is a description of a truly blessed man, but it is not possible to understand this Psalm without also considering the one before it, Psalm 111. These two Psalms are twins and probably came from the same author who is not named. Both of these Psalms are acrostics—that is, they each contain 22 half-lines and each line begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet: Aleph, Beth, Gimel and so on to the last letter, Taw. This explains why the flow of ideas in these Psalms is somewhat uneven, because the author is using the alphabet to structure his poem, and this does not provide us with a natural flow of ideas. What is more, these two Psalms have the same theme: Psalm 111 is about who God is and what wonders God has done. Psalm 112 is about a faithful man of God and how he corresponds to God’s character.

Even the verses show a rough correspondence:

111:3 “Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.”

112:3 “Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.”

111:4 “...the LORD is gracious and compassionate.”

112:4 “...light dawns for...the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.”

The first verse of Psalm 112 picks up on the last verse of Psalm 111:

111:10 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding...”

112:1 “...Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.”

This is to say that the primary aspect of a true man of God is to imitate God; to be like God in character and heart. For Jewish men, this was accomplished by studying and applying the Law, which for them encompassed the revealed will of God. But for Christians, the revelation of Jesus Christ has fulfilled and surpassed the Law. Christian men can fulfill Psalm 112 by following after Ephesians 5:1 “Be imitators of God...and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” For the Old Testament, the word of God was expressed in the Law, but for the New Testament, the word of

God has been made flesh in Jesus Christ. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, we seek to be men of the Word by following Jesus Christ as closely as we can in every detail of our character. But we cannot follow the ways of Jesus if we do not know the words of Jesus. The Bible is our guide here. To be men of the Word we must delight in the Gospel, studying, confessing sin and seeking transformation after the character of Christ. This is what it means to be a man of the Word.

A man of the Word comes to worship every week. A man of the Word reads the scriptures daily. A man of the Word prays daily on his own and with his family. A man of the Word reads the scriptures out loud to his children and never eats his food without giving thanks. A man of the Word lets the Word wash over him and cleanse him daily. His family sees and knows this man puts the Word first in his life.

Psalm 112:2-3 says, "...the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house..." The man of the Word is someone who blesses children. He does not curse them with bad language, bad habits, negative thinking and a critical spirit. He builds up, encourages and inspires his children. The man of the Word is an active father. He shows up for dinner. He is there in the evenings and when the kids are out of school. He is both a physical and emotional presence in the home. He speaks and shares his heart with his family. He is not silent and passive but takes a speaking part and an active role as spiritual leader in the family. This is not to say that he is a coercive force, but rather, he seeks to actively lead and serve as Christ led and served his own disciples.

The wealth and riches are not to be thought of in the literal sense of cash and jewels, but as the Proverb put it: "He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor." (Proverbs 21:21) The real wealth is in the love, joy and peace of family relationships. Money really does not figure in wealth.

Psalm 112:4 says, "Even in darkness light dawns for the upright..." The darkness may come in the challenge of unemployment or the stress of crying children or take the form of serious illness. But love is proven in suffering. Light really shines in the darkness.

I visited a 90-year-old shut-in once who fretted over her son and his wife. It seems the daughter-in-law suffered from mental illness that grew progressively worse as she aged. She lamented that her son had given up golf, travel and even retired early to be her care-giver. But the more she lamented, the more inspired I became. Finally I interrupted her and said, "This is not a shame, it is a beautiful thing! It is the greatest work of his life to live out his marriage vows

in sickness and in health.” Even in the darkness—especially in the darkness—light shines from the godly man.

Psalm 112:5 tells us “Good will come to him who...conducts his affairs with justice.” Paul Swift is nearly 99 years old. He used to run a hardware store in the other Houghton (in the Upper Peninsula). He established a remarkable reputation for justice. Locals would drive a little further and pay a little extra just to buy things from Mr. Swift. He once got an order of wheel barrows in but found the quality to be deficient, so he welded on additional supports and repainted each one for free to anyone who purchased one. Even though he has been out of the business for almost 30 years, people still talk about his integrity and justice.

Psalm 112:6-8 speak of bad news and the foes of a godly man, yet through adversity, the godly man has a secure heart: “His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.” The fearful person operates constantly in anxiety. The fearful person believes in scarcity: there will not be enough of anything—not enough money, time, love ... In fear men give in to their foes: selfishness, greed and lust.

The opposite of fear is faith and trust. A man of faith believes in abundance. With God, there is only abundance. In acting out of this faith, the godly man is free to be generous, free to be selfless, free to make sacrifices for others because he knows there is always enough. God will make sure we each have what we need. With this faith he is able to overcome his foes: selfishness, greed, rage, alcohol, or lust. What keeps his heart secure is faith in Christ. He feeds that faith with prayer and worship and Holy Communion. He knows that if he does not feed his faith, his foes will swarm and overwhelm him, like mosquitoes from the Deadstream swamp in May.

The last aspect of the godly man is his “gifts to the poor.” (Psalm 112:9) I never knew Russ Graham; he is not in any history book. But he is remembered every year in the Houghton Lake community when the Elks host their annual free Thanksgiving dinner in his memory. Russ was a man who is long remembered because of his gifts to the poor. Most of the men of his generation are forgotten, but even complete strangers like me know of Russ. This is what the scripture means when it says that the memory of the righteous endures forever. (Psalm 112:9) We do not remember who shot the biggest buck in 1961. We do not remember who had the nicest car or the highest salary. But we do remember is the godly men in our lives who blessed their children,

worked for justice and shared with the poor. We remember them because they were men of the Word. They were imitators of God and lived a life of love.