



Baucham, Voddie Jr.

What He Must Be ...If He Wants to Marry My Daughter

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

What He Must Be is an interesting and I think intentionally provocative book. Baucham writes very matter-of-factly and presents his position as if it is the only right way to see things. There's nothing wrong with this in and of itself, and I'll grant that it's good to be confident in your position, especially if you feel your position is the truth, but I have some reservations about Baucham's overall presentation.

In chapter 1 Baucham shares quite a bit of personal information in what I can only describe as a statistical format. He recounts how he grew up with a single mother, estranged from his father for most of his life although toward the end of his father's life they developed a bond. He discusses the number of siblings and half-siblings that he and his wife have, how many marriages their parents have been in, the number of children born out of wedlock among his various family members, and many other tidbits that form the background for his viewing marriage in the manner he does. In short, he was determined to break the negative multi-generational legacy that had plagued his family. This is a large part of the reason why he feels that parents, especially fathers, are to play such a crucial role in helping their daughters find good husbands and helping their sons to become good husbands.

In chapter 2 Baucham expresses a high view of marriage, maybe a little too high, saying that "perhaps there is no higher calling." (36) He sees marriage as a ministry, which is hardly debatable, but in his estimation those who are "serious about serving the Lord" should get

married (see 42 cf. 46). Baucham sees marriage as God's best and the norm expected of all unless they are specifically given the "gift of singleness." (see 36-42) He believes that you can judge the minister's qualifications by taking a look at his marriage, and naturally he appeals to the Pastoral Epistles in support of this.

Chapter 3 offers a defense of patriarchy (later Baucham coins the term "gospel patriarchy") and outlines what Baucham believes to be the father's role in his family's life according to the Bible. He offers third hand a couple of lists (citing Andreas Köstenberger who cited Daniel Block) on the father's role in the family and then the father's role with respect to his daughter according to the Old Testament (e.g., protecting her virginity; arranging marriage by finding a suitable husband; providing security in the case of a failed marriage; etc.). He offers brief a commentary on the various roles listed before discussing how these duties defined in the Old Testament apply to Christians in the modern age. In short, "Jesus makes it clear that there are principles in the Law that simply cannot be ignored. Therefore, we must look at the role of fathers in all of Scripture with a view toward obedience to the timeless principles of God's Law." (59)

Chapters 4-8 provide the meat of the book but are also the most self-explanatory from the chapter titles. Throughout this section Baucham details what a potential husband must be. He must: 1) be a Christian, 2) be prepared to lead, 3) lead like Christ, 4) be committed to children, and 5) practice the four P's which are: Prophet, Priest, Provider, and Protector. To elaborate a bit on the four P's Baucham is basically saying that as a prophet & priest a man must guide his family spiritually. They must pray with the family, teach the children, ensure that there is some kind of religious standard in the home, etc. As a provider a man must work, even if he doesn't earn a lot of money he must show a strong work ethic and willingness to work and provide for his family. As a protector the man must be a man of great resolve, true bravery, gentleness, kindness, and personal holiness. These are the characteristics that Baucham believes we need to find evident in those who might potentially court our daughters.

The majority of what has been described in the previous paragraph is rather uncontroversial. Who wouldn't like the man their daughter marries to have those qualities? But Baucham is an unabashed complementarian and to those who are not of a like-mind he ends up at points appearing woefully behind the times. For example, in chapter 5 he eschews the idea of the "stay at home dad" thinking it the result of feminism. (86-7) I have to be honest in saying that I don't quite understand his objection. For one who feels a father needs to be intimately involved in the choosing of a husband Baucham seems to feel that the father shouldn't be as involved in the everyday menial tasks of raising the children. God forbid that a man's wife is able to provide financially for the entire family. Suffice it to say that the meat of the book is only going to appeal to those who already agree with Baucham. Those of an egalitarian mindset are not going to find his propositions (which are asserted more than argued for) very convincing at all.

Chapter 9 “Don't Send a Woman to Do a Man's Job” Baucham expresses his discontentment with “modern dating” which he describes as “no more than glorified divorce.” (160) He shares that his 18 year old daughter has never been on a date and when she's ready to get married that he and her mother will help her to evaluate potential suitors. He sees sending our daughters out on unchaperoned dates as “sending a woman to do a man's job.” (163) He believes that the father's duty is to protect their daughter's purity and when they send them out unchaperoned then they are leaving them to protect their own purity. I must confess that I have some problems with Baucham's thought process here. In essence he's arguing that the father has to keep his daughter from premarital sex. No doubt fathers should teach their daughters to abstain and provide them with all of the reasons for doing so, but where do we draw the line in keeping our children from sin? Would Baucham likewise advocate locking the cabinets and refrigerators and regulating our children's food intake to protect them from gluttony? Wouldn't the preferred method be to teach them the danger and consequences of sin and trust that we've raised children of good character, children who love the Lord enough to want to obey him? Of course we can't guarantee that they will but we can't force them to live upright either.

The final chapter, which bears the name of this blog tour, is a call to raise godly sons that will make good husbands. It also offers advice on how to keep your daughter in an environment where she's likely to find a godly young man that could potentially become her husband. His suggestion to surround yourself with men seems a bit strange at first but I suppose it makes sense because he's advocating surrounding yourself with the right kind of men. He also suggests investing in young men, i.e., mentoring, teaching, being an example of how they should be. This has mutual benefits and it might produce exactly the kind of man you want your daughter to marry.

My final estimation of this book is that it's definitely unique. When I accepted the invitation to participate in this blog tour I did so with hopes that I'd pick up some good tips that I could use somewhere down the line when my daughter reaches marrying age. I already had my idea of what the process would be like and what role I'd play in it and I can't say that this has changed since reading the book. I wasn't convinced that the evidence really supports what Baucham wants to do with it. I think that parents should be involved in their children's lives but not in the micro-managing sense that Baucham lays out in this book. I also have to express my disagreement with the way that Baucham views “biblical manhood and womanhood.” This colors his entire presentation and like I said earlier, unless one already agree with this view of men and women then it's not likely that they'll find his overall thesis that helpful or convincing. Would I recommend this book to others? I don't know. It was well written, containing plenty of stories and anecdotes, some personal, others from history, but it's not the quality of the writing that bothers me; it's the content of the writing. I'd say this: if you are interested in a firmly convicted complementarian's view on this subject then give this book a read. If not, then don't.