

# Understanding the Family

## Colossians 3:18-21

August 20, 2017

This week's verses are very short instructions for marriage and parenting. In no way are they to be construed as the "complete" teachings on family life. Many other verses speak to the complexity of marriage and parenting. We will look at what Paul says in Colossians.

### **DAY 1: Duty of a wife**

*Colossians 3:18 **Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.***

*<sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.*

1. Today, we look at v. 18, a command to wives. Before we look at it, we must remember that there is a reciprocal command to husbands in v. 19.

2. The New Testament lifted the value of women far above any other culture at that time. In every other culture, women were perceived as inferior to men. They had no rights and were treated like objects. Both the apostle Paul and the apostle Peter teach the equality of the genders.

*Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

*1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

3. Is submission an inferior position or role? It depends on what is meant by "submission." Let's start with what submission is NOT. Submission is not a synonym for a servile attitude, someone menial, or a menial position.

4. Jesus gladly submitted to God the Father's will:

*Matthew 26:39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

5. Jesus was simultaneously equal with the Father and submissive to the Father. Equality and submissiveness can co-exist in human relationships.

6. The rule of the road for social harmony is mutual submission, which includes husbands and wives submitting to one another.

*Ephesians 5:21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for the Lord.*

*Colossians 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, **as is fitting in the Lord.***

7. How does the last phrase of Col. 3:18 elevate the wife's role in marriage?

## DAY 2: duty of a husband

*Colossians 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

<sup>19</sup> **Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.**

1. We are to remember that Paul looked at these commands to both husband and wife, but we must also remember that these are reciprocal commands similar to what he will say to parent and child, master and slave, and by inference to boss and worker, which we'll look at next week.

2. In this sense you might read this verse this way: "Who would not love a wife who was loyal no matter what? And who wouldn't respect a husband whose love was demonstrated repeatedly?"

3. Let's look at Paul's command to husbands. First, what Paul is not saying:

a. Blurting out, "I love you,"

b. "Of course I love you. I wouldn't have married you if I didn't love you."

4. Love is commanded. It is not limited to feeling loving. It is loving actions, loving words, and loving attitudes.

5. The Greek word for "love" is "agape," the highest and costliest kind of love. It is the same word used in Ephesians 5:25...

*Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

6. This love is sacrificial for the sake of the one loved. A husband is to demonstrate to his wife (and their children, and those who know them) what the sacrificial love of Jesus for them looks like in daily life. On any given day a husband may be called upon to sacrifice his:

\_\_\_ Time, (such as serving his wife, helping with the kids, doing dishes, etc.)

\_\_\_ Leisure (such as listening to his wife's thoughts or asking about her day)

\_\_\_ Money (does the family budget require more sacrifice of you, husband?)

\_\_\_ Pride (such as in asking forgiveness, humbling himself first, listening to her ideas about decisions, etc.)

7. Notice the last part of v. 19. Why do you think Paul adds, "...and do not be harsh with them"?

8. What is your biggest take away from today's verse?

### DAY 3: Duty of children

1. The prime duties of children in their growing up years are to learn two important qualities: (a) To honor authority, (b) To obey authority. (This does not imply that there aren't instances where something different is needed. Though this goes against current "culture," the virtue of learning to respect authority and obey authority has far-reaching benefits in the lives of people, and in the social contract of society. Without this, we succumb to anarchy.

2. These twin virtues are put together by Paul in Ephesians.

*Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

<sup>2</sup> *"Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise--*

<sup>3</sup> *"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

*Colossians 3:20 **Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.***

<sup>21</sup> *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.*

3. "In everything" does not mean to obey when immoral or illegal behavior is inflicted on a child. (See Acts 4:19 and Romans 13:1 for exceptions to prime principles).

4. What are the benefits of obeying and honoring parents? Paul and Moses name a few.

*Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*

5. This is not a promise for "long life" to individuals. This verse is one of the Ten Commandments, given not just for individuals but for building stable societies and families. The promise is for the long-term stability of a culture or society.

6. Paul tells children that their obedience "pleases the Lord." Why would this be important for a child?

7. The necessity of obeying and honoring parents becomes patently clear when they hit the "terrible twos." They illustrate the desperate problem that lies in the human heart...

*Proverbs 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.*

*Proverbs 19:3 A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD.*

8. What strikes you most from today's verses?

## DAY 4: Duty of a father

*Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

<sup>21</sup> **Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.**

1. Paul addresses fathers, and not mothers, in Colossians.
2. What is Paul getting at when he tells fathers not to provoke their children?
3. Generally mothers are more in tune with the effects of their relating on their kids. It's harder for a man to see his effect on his kids.
4. Generally, fathers focus on advice-giving with little thought about how they come across. Because their intention is good, they don't consider how they come across.
5. Paul tells fathers that that's a mistake! What result in the child does Paul identify?
6. Maybe you were raised by a father who "provoked" you and had the effect of discouraging you. Sometimes this happens through these kinds of dynamics:
  - \_\_\_ "Endless" criticism
  - \_\_\_ Not nearly enough encouragement
  - \_\_\_ Standards that are too high
  - \_\_\_ An attitude he portrays of performance is more important than the person.
7. The biting irony is that in an effort to "help" his kids, he may move them in bad directions!
8. What strikes you from today's verses?

## **DAY 5: Family thoughts ...**

1. The dominant theme of Colossians is the rule of Christ in the life of the Christian. It is this theme that sets the context for these short verses on the family.

2. None of the concepts we read and studied will be put to much effect without the rule of Christ in everyone's heart. Consider the foolishness, stubbornness and self-centeredness latent in us all:

a. What husband will continue to sacrificially love his wife when he doesn't feel respected by her?

b. What wife will continue to be loyal to her husband when she's "not feelin' the love?"

c. What child will continue to honor and obey his parents when they discourage him?

d. What father will continue to be patient with his kids when they are disobedient and disrespectful?

3. What strikes you most from this week's verses?