

“The Christ-Centered Family”

Ephesians 5:21-6:9

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Ephesians 5:21-6:9 ...submitting to one another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24

Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: 3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." 4 And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. 5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. 9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

5:21-24

Few passages in scripture today can rankle women as much as this one. However, we must take note that this directive is not addressed to the world for they *will not* and further *cannot* obey this directive. It is addressed to the **married believing woman** in the context of *her husband*. Despite the screams to the contrary, it does not say that woman are to submit to all males!

Yet if this passage offends you as Christian woman, you can avoid it's command by simply not getting married! But sadly, that advice usually falls on deaf ears, as we instead want what we want and we want it on our own terms. However, be assured, that if you insist on such, God will not bless your venture.

And ladies, let us not ignore verse 21! Men are not to be without a heart of submission either! So no one is picking on you or relegating you to a second-rate citizen! This is a matter of 'order'...as in a military structure, not a judgment of value and worth!

The word 'submit' (Gr *hypotassō*) is an old military word meaning to line up under (Col 3:18) and means to *subject yourselves in line in a specialized way*. It's funny, because in reality if anybody should be freaked out by this passage it should be the husbands! Because it is also a demand for us men to lead our families well! Truth is, we can lead them toward Christ and Christian maturity or we can lead them off a cliff! *Where are you leading your family gentlemen?*

But please note that this is the one direction God has given all Christian wives. And if this one direction is followed, it will have a multitude of effects. Ladies, you cannot expect your husband to lead unless you actually *let him lead!* This call is not a matter of your *inferiority* but His *authority*. Someone needs to lead, otherwise the marriage will lack a cohesive direction.

Having witnessed this plan of God being ignored if not simply rejected, I have seen the result! The end is dysfunction, confusion, and strife...and frankly, often divorce. Any couple that lives in the fantasy of a 50-50 arrangement of power, will soon find that unless someone has the last word, there never will be a 'last word' and the fighting will be the only normative in your house.

Our marriages are to represent "Christ's relationship with the church." Let me ask you, is your relationship with Christ a "50-50" sharing of authority? When we reject God's call here, we falsely represent Christ...something He takes very seriously. A wife that is in rebellion to her husband is in reality in rebellion to God. I am quite aware that despite all that I have said, there will be many who will reject what the Bible is teaching here. Sadly, it is only *their loss*...as they will never know the joy of God's prescribed relationship or the godly respect of their mate.

5:25-27

Husbands...you are not getting out of this unscathed either: *Here is your part of the equation*. If marriages were to simply obey *these two directives*, the rest will follow!

Men...how *does* Christ love the church? *Perfectly...absolutely, unconditionally, singularly...without recompense and with grace and patience!* However, it is also a love that sometimes says no, and sometimes says "stop it." However, Christ "gave Himself for the church" as we are to "give ourselves for our wives."

See, if we love our wives in this way...and give ourselves for them, our wives will most often follow us without reservation. When we lead in such a manner, we "sanctify" our wives...setting her apart for God's sacred service, because we are leading by God's word...by God's direction. In other words, they're better because of you...closer to God...stronger and more mature, more of a servant to God's kingdom...more of an example to others. Let me ask you...*is that what is happening in your house gentlemen?* Because men, one thing is clear...**you** are responsible before God as to what goes on in your house.

Men...hear this though, there are times for you to submit to your wife as a partner in your marriage, realizing that God can often speak through her in ways that you are not hearing. That is the power and joy in such a mutual relationship. If you want to be a good leader and be successful in this venture, you need to be wise in accepting her council.

5:28-30

Paul simply calls us to *love our wives*. Seems like a simple request! But let us remember that love is a *verb*...not merely an emotion. It's an **action**. It's something that we **choose to do**. The world tells us that we need to be taught to love ourselves. God says we already do. A *lot*. The love which the husband is to have for his wife is

the very love of God Himself. And when we love our wives, we love ourselves. But it doesn't work in the opposite direction. Agape love, is a selfless love.

We are "members of His body." I wonder if we truly understand the magnitude of what that means? We are so apt to think of ourselves *here* and God is over *there*. But we are herein reminded that we are one with our God upon rebirth. That's why we know to whom we belong...because we begin to emulate the traits of our Father. And we can't do that for very long outside and separate from Him.

5:31

When a man and woman are joined in marriage and in the marriage bed, they become 'one.' That word "joined" in the Greek speaks of being glued together, adhering to one another. Your plans as far as God is concerned are then unified...one road, one course. That does not mean you cannot have your own individual interests and personality. You're not a two-headed monster. It means rather that you are in unison as to life direction, goals, and ministries. In 'harmony' on the decisions of life. This is one way to find out if God has brought you together, *by the way*. You had better be sure that your roads are going the same direction before you walk the isle together. Because you are going to be 'one' person in God's eyes.

This is why the man needs to actually leave his mother and father, the same with the woman, because they are joined together *with each other*, not their parents! If that cord is not cut, then there will be problems. I hope you hear me on this! **You** are a family now. If this fact is not acknowledged and embraced, there is going to be a world of hurt!

5:32-33

When Paul says the mystery is great, he does not mean it is *very* mysterious! He means that the *implications of the truth* are huge! Couples...we represent Christ's love and His church. In marriage, we walk away from the life that we led before...we are no longer the people we were before. It's the same with the church family. When we become part of God's church, we are to walk away from our old life, because we are new people. So love your wife gentlemen. And by doing so, we do the very work of the kingdom

Chapter 6

6:1-3

Still operating in the realm of the extremely practical, Paul moves on from the instruction to husbands and wives and now addresses children and parents. In the "new order" within the faith, we each are to "take our place." The wife in the place of submission and reverence, the husband in the place of loving and leading, and the children in the place of obedience and honor.

Paul's opening remarks on this subject seems almost overtly simplistic in its presentation; "*Hey kids...obey your parents, because it is the right thing to do.*" The language of the original text speaks of 'giving heed with listening and attentive ears.'

But there is something else here to notice, ...*something crucial*, and that is the phrase "in the Lord." That addition affects this directive in two ways: **One**, it alters *how* you as a child are to obey. Thus it is more than just doing what you are told, but rather you are to obey them as you obey God...in the attitude and respect...in the *way* that you fulfill your obedience. The other side of this "in the Lord" is that if in some strange scenario you are being asked to do something contrary to the God, you are to decline and take the consequences.

With all that being said, you need to realize that to reject this scriptural directive is not merely an innocent case of ‘spirited youthful rebellion.’ According to Romans 1:30 and 2 Timothy 3:2, *it’s a sin*. So you should not make light of it. One other note here is that the directive is to *children*. In a sense, you may be your parents’ child forever no matter the age. But you at some time cease to be a child, (hopefully!), taking control of and responsibility for your own decisions and actions. This fact is especially true as you enter into a marital situation.

That does not mean you don’t seek and perhaps heed your parents’ advice! For hopefully their council and their involvement in your life *is... and continues to be*, a blessing to you. The passage calls upon us to ‘honor’ our parents. Such means to “place a value upon.”

Sadly, some folks have used this passage to bind the will of their adult children to them long after such a relationship should have been changed with the arrival of adulthood for that child. Such ultimately stunts the child’s development in the adult world and creates a “Peter Pan” scenario. This is a parent’s problem, not the child’s. However, it can happen in the reverse, where a child continues to look to his or her parents to guide them in decisions that should grow between an individual and God. This is a cop-out on our part if we are guilty of this. We need to grow up and be adults ourselves.

Please note that “honor” is not “revere.” Your parents are not perfect and they are not a form of the second coming. They are imperfect *albeit no doubt loving* individuals to the best of their ability. But the day must come...and no doubt *will* come, wherein we see them no longer through ‘rose colored glasses’ and see them in truth...with all of their good points as well as their weaknesses! If you fail in this, God help you when *your* kids begin to arrive at adulthood!

6:4

OK parents...*your* turn. This verse is not discouraging or prohibiting discipline. Proverbs, as well as other scriptures, is full of references to disciplining your child and in fact clearly condemns other practices and positions on the issue. **Know that**, no matter how hip and modern you seek to be in raising your kids. However, such can indeed ‘go too far’ where a parent can become exasperated and overly controlling or punishing in dealing with their child. So the warning is given rather to not to take things too far and “provoke them to wrath.” The New English translation renders this “*don’t goad your children to resentment.*”

Notice that the directive may be implied toward both parents, but it is especially directed toward Fathers. No doubt because fathers have the greatest problem in this area. Men especially have a way of attempting to vicariously live out their glory days...or the lack of glory days, in their children. Excessive expectations can lead children to “exasperation’...to “wrath.”

John MacArthur lists 10 ways we can “provoke our children” in such a way:

- (1) **Overprotection**--never allowing them any liberty, strict rules about everything. They do not trust their kids and the child despairs & can lead to rebellion. Parents must communicate that they trust.
- (2) **By showing favoritism**, often unwittingly.
- (3) **By depreciating their worth**. Many children are convinced that what they do and feel is not important. One way to decrease worth is by not LISTENING. These children may give up trying to communicate and become discouraged, shy, and withdrawn.
- (4) **By setting unrealistic goals--by never rewarding them**. Nothing is enough so they never get full approval. Are you trying to make them into a person they are NOT? Some kids become so frustrated that they commit suicide.
- (5) **By failing to show affection** (verbally and physically).

(6) **By not providing for their needs.**

(7) **By lack of standards** (the opposite of overprotection). These children are left to their own. They cannot handle that freedom and begin to feel insecure & unloved.

(8) **By criticism.** "A child learns what he lives. If he lives with criticism he does not learn responsibility. He learns to condemn himself and to find fault with others. He learns to doubt his own judgment, to disparage his own ability, and to distrust the intentions of others. And above all, he learns to live with continual expectation of impending doom." Parents should seek to create in the home a positive, constructive environment.

(9) **By neglect.** David was indifferent to Absalom.

(10) **By excessive discipline.** Never discipline in anger.

(Adapted from John MacArthur - see MacArthur, "Colossians")

The verse calls for you to "*bring them up.*" That means more than just "feed and clothe them." The original language means to "*nourish to maturity.*" We must raise them in the way that GOD wants them to be, not the way *we* want them to be! The call is to bring them up in the training and the admonition of the Lord. Not **your** admonition and training. This means that we better keep our priorities straight. Remember, we get one shot at this. What is the most important thing in their lives? That they are successful in sports or business, or that they are right with God?

For sure, if they do not see a true passion for Christ in you, don't expect them to have it. I have seen a lot of parents who raised their kids in the realm of faith, but the child fails to see a driving passion in their parents and so they fail to catch the fire.

The wisdom of the indwelling spirit is crucial in successful parenting. If you try to 'go it alone' ...or you intend to raise them according to the latest "how to book" on the market, you are sure to make a mess of things. Such takes constant and consistent discernment, biblical wisdom, and leadership by example.

6:5-8

The term 'bond-servant' speaks of a person who is *there by choice*...this is not a bondage/slavery issue, in the purist sense. Despite that nuance, this addition to his letter would no doubt fail to endear Paul in the hearts of the Ephesian church. However, Paul was not renown to acquiesce to peer pressure!

We need to equate this instruction with our being employees. (though you may feel sometimes that such is very much like slavery!) Despite the hardship of our work, if we are going to work there then we called to be obedient. We need to remember that God is ultimately in control...and sometimes we need to hold onto that fact. Our jobs are our personal mission field, so what are we saying about Christ in you and in your family?

"*According to the flesh*" they are our masters. It is a fact of this life in the vocational world. Paul calls upon us to serve in our jobs with a "*sincerity of heart.*" Not just grudgingly, but as if we are serving Christ Himself. In this act, we do the will of God from the heart, not just in physical action.

The bottom line is that we are being called to do more than just 'our job.' We are being called to **excel at it.** We are told that how we work at our jobs is how we work for God. Such is a 'game-changer' to say the least. What we do for our boss we do for Christ. "The Christian" should be a sought after employee.

Zechariah 4:10 speaks of "despising the days of the small things." But for us, there are no "days of small things." It is all "God's days" if we are one of His.

A missionary was sailing home after spending forty years in Africa. On the ship with him was President Teddy Roosevelt, returning from a safari. As the ocean liner pulled into the docks of New York City, thousands of people were on the wharf cheering. Bands were playing. Reporters were waiting. And everyone was saying, "Wow! Teddy Roosevelt killed a rhinoceros and an elephant!" The missionary turned to his wife and said, "You know, I'm a little bit bitter. After two weeks of big game hunting, Teddy Roosevelt receives a hero's welcome because he killed a rhino and an elephant. Yet we spent forty years in the jungle, laying down our lives to help people, and no one's here to welcome us home." That night, the Lord spoke to the missionary's heart and simply said, "You're not home yet."

We need to remember that throughout Scripture, it was those who were already hard at work whom God called to serve Him. Moses was shepherding his father-in-law's sheep when God called him (Exodus 3:1). When the mantle was passed from Elijah to Elisha, Elisha was plowing a field (1 Kings 19:19). Peter was fishing when Jesus called him (Matthew 4:18). Even Paul was wholeheartedly persecuting Christians when God called him! (Acts 9:1, 2).

Our marriage, our family, and our work...*and the way we do it all*, expressly testifies of the reality of Christ in our lives. **Or it doesn't.** The choice is up to us. Do not underestimate the witness that you can have in these matters. If you are spirit led, then you are there for reason. Welcome to ministry...

This passage has an interesting promise. Whatever "good you do" you will receive in kind from God. This is the proverbial "what goes around, comes around..."

6:9

Not to be left out of the mix, lastly Paul addresses the employers. They too are expected to live and act differently than those in the world. They are expected to adhere to the same 'code of ethics' that were given to the employees. We are to avoid the 'good-old-boy' way of doing business...the "respector of persons" and the self-serving dealings of our normal secular business world.

As the boss, you have a chance to move the world for Christ as a Christian employer if you can set aside the worldly motivations that drive our secular workplace. Again...as a Spirit-filled believer, you must understand that God has placed you where you are for His plan and glory. But as always, the choice is ours. We have free-will. But let us remember...no matter who you are...husband, father, children, employee or boss, we all have a "master" that is above us. And HE is beholding to no man, and is not impressed with anyone's earthly status. No one gets a "pass"...