

Last week we looked at God's design for marriage. The husband was to love his wife and give himself up for her like Jesus gave Himself for us, the church. This meets her deepest need, to know she is loved and that her man will care for her. The wife was to submit to her husband and let him lead while showing respect to him, just as the church submits to Jesus and lets Him lead. (1Peter 3:1) This fulfills man's deepest need to be respected and valued. This loving home in which each seeks the other's good, is the foundation of society and a picture of our relationship with Jesus. If every home were truly like this, every family would be as God intended, joyful, at peace, and blessed. That would result in a blessed church, a blessed city, state, country, and world. It would be a foretaste of heaven.

Of course we live in a fallen world and this is the exception rather than the rule. But as much as you would like to experience it, by the grace of God and the power of His Spirit, you can in your own home. Christian husbands, you can choose to love your wife and lay down your life for her. Wives, you can submit to and respect your husbands. This is God's loving instruction to us for a happy home. (Ephesians 5:33)

I'm not saying that it is easy. We have to learn what it means and make the effort to die to our self to seek the other's good. We have the power of resurrection that we talked about on Resurrection Sunday, to enable and equip us. (Romans 8:11) You have to have a dead husband and dead wife (dead to our old nature) to have a marriage that is alive by the power of the Spirit. The reason we will never have a utopian society on earth before the return of Jesus is that man has freewill, and most people will not die to selfishness. Many will not love their spouse as they love their self, let alone their neighbor. (Leviticus 19:18) It all begins in the home.

Our passage today expands outward from the marriage. Next, Paul addresses the child and father. Just as there are two sides to the husband and wife relationship, there are two sides to the father and child relationship. We can see that in each of the three relationships addressed, Paul begins with obligation of the one that submits and then moves to the obligation of the one in authority.

<sup>1</sup> *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* What God asks of us, He asks because it is right. We could say because it is righteous. God has established order. (1Corinthians 14:40) To have order we need those in authority. Because God is sovereign, those that are in authority are placed there by Him, for His purposes, and to oppose them is to oppose God. (Romans 13:1-2) Both Peter and Paul tell us we are to submit to those in authority in the home, in the church, in the workplace, and in government. (1Peter 2:13-15) We are only free to disobey when they asked something that is contrary to God's laws.

**Commented [notes1]: 1 Peter 3:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives,

**Commented [notes2]: Ephesians 5:33 (ESV)**

<sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

**Commented [notes3]: Romans 8:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

**Commented [notes4]: Leviticus 19:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

**Commented [notes5]: 1 Corinthians 14:40 (ESV)**

<sup>40</sup> But all things should be done decently and in order.

**Commented [notes6]: Romans 13:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

**Commented [notes7]: 1 Peter 2:13-15 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,

<sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

<sup>15</sup> For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

It is right for children to obey their parents, especially if your parents are “in the Lord”. They have your best interest at heart. They are seeking to raise you in a way that will keep you from evil. Because of our fallen nature, children usually think their parents are clueless and just don’t understand. What they don’t yet realize is that we were once in their shoes and thought the same about our parents. We’ve been where they are now and know the trouble into which they are anxious to dive. We tell them they can or can’t do things because we love them and want the best for them.

Once again we see the relational picture with the Lord. Yes, we are Jesus’ bride, but we are also our heavenly Father’s children. (1John 3:1) Just like our children, we justify disobeying because we think we know best, or we just plain choose to disobey because we don’t think the consequences will be that bad. Obey because it is right! Obey because God is good and desires what is best for us. Obey because He is worthy of our loving obedience. (Psalm 11:7)

<sup>2</sup> *“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup> “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”* Paul gives us the proof text for his command to children to obey their parents. It is one of the Ten Commandments. We honor those in authority and respect the position in which God has placed them. Parents also deserve honor because they nurture us. Like our heavenly Father, they see our needs are met. They often sacrifice to see that we get the best. In some cases they even give their life that we might live. (Romans 8:32)

In a recent earthquake, the body of a mother was found hovering over her baby. She used her body to shield the baby so it would live. Once again we see a picture of the reason we should always honor our Lord who gave Himself that we might truly live. (Ephesians 5:2)

This is the only one of the Ten Commandments that came with a promise. (Exodus 20:12) Honoring your parents results in things going well with you and a long life. It does not say to only honor them if they are perfect, or if they leave you in their will, or any other condition. If you want things to go well with you, and you desire a long life, then do it because it is the right thing to do.

**It is a paradox that in the Christian faith we die to self and selfishness, and yet in doing so we are blessed.** The one that loses their life finds it. (Matthew 10:39) If you really believe the Word of God, you realize that you are actually acting in your own best interest to die to self. That is not our motivation, but that is the result. And isn’t that just like God? His ways are often counterintuitive, a step of faith, and yet from the other side, they make perfect sense. (Isaiah 55:9)

I should also add at this point that it is so disheartening to watch the decline in our culture. Parents are often so self-focused that they don’t care what their children do. I’ve witnessed a number of homes in our city where the children were pretty much left

**Commented [notes8]: 1 John 3:1 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup> See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

**Commented [notes9]: Psalm 11:7 (ESV)**  
<sup>7</sup> For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.

**Commented [notes10]: Romans 8:32 (ESV)**  
<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

**Commented [notes11]: Ephesians 5:2 (ESV)**  
<sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

**Commented [notes12]: Exodus 20:12 (ESV)**  
<sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

**Commented [notes13]: Matthew 10:39 (ESV)**  
<sup>39</sup> Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

**Commented [notes14]: Isaiah 55:9 (ESV)**  
<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

to fend for themselves. The parents give them things, necessities, but they really don't care enough to give them instruction and guidance. I thank the Lord for Young Life. It seems like it is our last line of hope to reach them as so few youth even consider going to church. Without some move of the Spirit to awaken our nation, I shudder to think what life will be like in the world of my grandchildren. We need to invest our love and time into youth every chance we get! Maybe you can help some of these youth go to Young Life camp.

*<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.* Now, on to the responsibility of the one in authority. This is to fathers. Fathers have a God given duty to discipline and instruct their children. Discipline shows love. (Proverbs 13:24) Taking the time to instruct our children demonstrates love. Men are inclined to leave this to the mother, but they need to be personally involved. But when we do, we must be careful not to do so in anger. Anger makes a child resentful. Loving discipline and instruction endears their hearts to us in the long run. (Proverbs 29:18)

Children need both the father and the mother. They can survive without one or the other, but they flourish with both, for that is God's design. Just as we saw the ideal marriage described in the previous chapter, here we have the ideal home. God didn't have to give instruction to the mother. He put it in her heart. He gave it to the children, because they have a fallen nature that tends toward rebellion. He gave it to us fathers, because we can act in anger or ignore the need to lovingly discipline and instruct our children.

Grandfathers, your grandchildren are your children too. You may have more time to instruct them than their father. Just be on the same page with your son or son-in-law. They need our years of experience and especially our loving direction toward the things of God. (Proverbs 13:1)

Statistics regarding church attendance show that children are more likely to continue in church if their father regularly attended, much more so than if the mother attended without her husband. That covers God's order for the family. How different society would be if we would live accordingly.

Now we turn to the work place. In the first century, a good part of the labor force were slaves. They were the most receptive to Christianity. After all, it offered them freedom of the Spirit. (John 8:36) As they already surrendered their will to their master, it was not such a big step to surrender their will to the Master of all.

*<sup>5</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,* While Christianity considers all men and women of equal value before the Lord (Galatians 3:28), it does not call for us to demand that others recognize the truth we have found. In fact, we are to submit to the situation we find ourselves unless

**Commented [notes15]: Proverbs 13:24 (ESV)**  
<sup>24</sup> Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

**Commented [notes16]: Proverbs 29:17 (ESV)**  
<sup>17</sup> Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

**Commented [notes17]: Proverbs 13:1 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup> A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

**Commented [notes18]: John 8:36 (ESV)**  
<sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

**Commented [notes19]: Galatians 3:28 (ESV)**  
<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

the Lord provides the opportunity to change. (1Corinthians 7:20-21) Paul had the runaway slave Onesimus return to his Christian master Philemon. (Philemon 10-12) At the same time, he encouraged Philemon not to punish him but to treat him like a brother. **Christianity doesn't seek to change the structure of society, but rather to change the heart of man toward one another within that structure.** (Ezekiel 36:26) Sometimes it will eventually result in a change of the structure as well, such as the end of slavery. When the church allowed slaves to partake of communion it was really the end of slavery in Europe. If you saw the slave as your brother, you had to treat him as such.

Slaves are exhorted to obey their earthly masters with fear and trembling and sincerity of heart as they would obey Christ. God allowed them to be in that situation. (Acts 17:26) They were to serve their master as serving the Lord. Paul, by the Spirit, even addresses the heart behind their service. *<sup>6</sup> not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,*

It was not just to get a promotion, or to earn favor, but to please God by doing His will. It is God's will that we submit to the authority He places over us. This kind of diligence can get one in trouble with his or her fellow workers. They may feel you are showing them up, making them look bad. Hopefully it earned them the privilege of sharing Christ with their master. Obviously some were converted for we have the following command to masters. They must have seen the change of heart in their servants and become curious about what could change a person like that. Not only were the slaves hard working but they had joy.

God accepts a person's hard work whether slave or free, when done from the heart, as service to Him. He will reward such service. Does the passage not say that it is as servants of Christ that they serve and even that it is the will of God? Then it is service to God. This is confirmed by the next verse. *<sup>7</sup> rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,*

And is there any reason this would not apply to the employee and employer relationship? Certainly there we have a choice of whom we serve, but the principle is the same. Whatever we do we should do it with our whole heart as to the Lord, and for His glory. (1Corinthians 10:31) God gives us extra incentive to do so in verse 8. *<sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.* God is just. He will repay. If you do it for yourself, He owes you nothing. If you do it for His glory, He will repay you. There are numerous Scriptures that confirm that God keeps records and will repay those who serve Him, and that can be in any capacity. (Luke 14:14) When we do what we do for God's glory, He promises to repay. Is that not what this verse declares? (Revelation 22:12) Are you investing in eternity by doing what you do for God's glory?

**Commented [notes20]: 1 Corinthians 7:20-21 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. <sup>21</sup> Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)

**Commented [notes21]: Philemon 1:10-12 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.

<sup>11</sup> (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)

<sup>12</sup> I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.

**Commented [notes22]: Ezekiel 36:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

**Commented [notes23]: Acts 17:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

**Commented [notes24]: 1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

**Commented [notes25]: Luke 14:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

**Commented [notes26]: Revelation 22:12 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done.

This gave the slave meaning and purpose beyond the dreary tasks and burdens of life. We all need to see that we are doing something worthwhile. We all need a cause that gives our life meaning. **Bringing glory to God in our work and daily life gives us the highest purpose of all.** (Isaiah 43:7) It is the highest calling. We can bring Him glory in the way we wait on tables, in the way we deal with customers, in the way we build a house, or in any gift and calling. Do it as unto the Lord. Do it to please Him. He will repay. That is certain, for He is just.

**Commented [notes27]:** Isaiah 43:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

*<sup>9</sup> Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.* Once again we go now to the responsibility of the one placed in authority. The Christian slave owners had to treat their slaves in a whole new way. Instead of threatening to beat them or withhold their food, they had to reason with them and treat them with respect. You can imagine how whole households came to the Lord and were even more productive because of this relationship. Those who serve out of respect and with sincerity will do a much better job. They don't need to be threatened. Their masters' kindness and personal concern was so different that it made the slave appreciate their faith in God. And both slave and master realized that in the way they serve one another they serve the Lord, for they are both the Lord's servants. Just as marriage and the family are transformed by following God's will, so the workplace could be an example for all to see the change Jesus makes in lives!

When a slave owner went to worship, he would sometimes find his slave was his elder in the Lord. The master would submit to the slave in spiritual things. (Hebrews 13:17) Christianity is all about submission. (Ephesians 5:21) **Wives submit to their husbands, children to their parents, slaves to their masters, and all of us to the Lord. Submission requires humility.** Godly leaders, whether husbands, employers, officials or elders, all require humility to turn leadership into service. That is the example we have in our great leader, Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life. (Mark 10:45) Each and every one regardless of calling or position will receive from God the just recompense for what they did while in this life, whether good or evil. (2Corinthians 5:10)

**Commented [notes28]:** Hebrews 13:17 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

**Commented [notes29]:** Ephesians 5:21 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

**Commented [notes30]:** Mark 10:45 (ESV)

<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

**Commented [notes31]:** 2 Corinthians 5:10 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Are you living a life of submission? Are you following Jesus' example of living to serve? Are you living for the glory of God? It's very counterintuitive, but it is the life of those who have found the greatest love of all. It's a satisfying life, and it is rewarding both now and in eternity.

#### Questions

- 1 What is God's design for marriage?
- 2 How does it affect the world?
- 3 Where does authority come from?
- 4 Why should children obey their parents?

- 5 What is the paradox of Christian living?
- 6 What is a father's responsibility to his children?
- 7 What example do we see in Paul and Onesimus?
- 8 What is the focus of change in Christianity?
- 9 What should be the focus of our labor?
- 10 What is our highest calling?