

# THE BELIEVER AND HIS FAMILY

## COLOSSIANS 03:18–21

### *Introduction*

This is a critical passage of Scripture, no matter the generation. Every generation witnesses an attack upon the union of husband and wife and the family. The lust of man for sensual pleasure drives him to attack the faithfulness between husband and wife that is demanded by God. Christ and Christ alone must be at the centre of every family if it is to survive the attacks made against it. And it is not enough for one or two members of the family to be obedient to Christ — every member has to make Christ the centre of his life. One disobedient and unfaithful member dramatically affects the union of the family and brings trauma, pain and often destruction to the family. This is the critical importance of this discussion on the Christian and the family.

- I. Christian wives: submit to your husbands (v. 18).
- II. Christian husbands: love your wives and do not be harsh with them (v. 19).
- III. Christian children: obey your parents (v. 20).
- IV. Christian fathers or parents: do not embitter your children (v. 21).

### **I. *Colossians 03:18 Family, Christian Wives***

Christian wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands. This is the only fitting or right thing to do. Scripture pulls no punches: it tells the wife exactly what the Lord expects. The husband's turn comes in a moment, but for now the Lord's will for the wife is covered. His will involves two striking points.

1. First, Christian wives are to submit themselves to their husbands. The word *submit* (hupotassesthe) means to subdue and subject in obedience.

=> Vine points out that the word is primarily a military term meaning to rank under (*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Old Tappan. NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1940.)

=> Robertson says that the word has a military air and that the word is the same kind of obedience that a citizen is to give to the government (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 506).

In modern society this is strong; in fact, it is too strong for many. Many reject the idea of woman's subjection as archaic, outdated and old-fashioned. Some even react in anger and hostility against the Word of God and those who preach the duty of wives.

Are they right? Has Scripture gone too far in declaring that wives should be subject to their husbands? Has God made a mistake within the order of the family? To the Christian, the answer is no. The problem is not in what God has said, but in *our understanding of what He has said* or in our rebellion against what He wills. Any wife who reacts to God's command is reacting either because she does not understand

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what God is saying or is just *unwilling to give her life to God and follow Him as He says*. What does God mean by subjection? God does not mean *dictatorial subjection...*

- that a wife is to subject herself to a tyrant
- that a wife is to submit herself to the demands of a husband who acts like a beast
- that a wife is to be a slave or footstool for the husband
- that a wife is to serve her husband without restraint
- that a wife is to be treated as inferior to her husband

What God means by subjection is order, cooperation, relationship, partnership — the way a husband and wife are to walk together throughout life. Every body of people — even when the body is only two persons — must have a leader who takes the lead in ploughing through the wilderness of the world and its trials, temptations and difficulties. Between the two, wife and husband, one of them has to be the primary leader. God's order for the two is that the husband take the lead.

2. Second, Christian wives must submit because it is the only fitting thing to do. The word *fitting* (*aneken*) means the right thing to do. Why is it the only fitting and right thing to do? Not because the husband is superior and the wife is inferior as a human being. The reason is because the wife is *in the Lord*. She has surrendered her life to live in the Lord and to love and follow Him and to witness for Him by *living just as He says to live*. Therefore, when the Lord says that it is His will for her to submit to her husband, she submits. She submits because the Lord tells her that submission is the way He wants her to live with her husband. Again, submission is simply...

- God's order for the family.
- the relationship, cooperation and partnership that is to exist between the wife and husband.

*1 Cor 7:10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.*

*Eph 5:22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.*

*Col 3:18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

*1 Tim 3:11 In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

*Titus 2:4 Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children.*

*1 Pet 3:1 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives.*

## II. *Colossians 03:19 Family, Christian Husbands*

Christian husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. This command destroys all opposition and reaction to the command of subjection given to the wives. How?

The word “love” is not only the love of affection and feelings, but the *agape love* of God Himself. The Christian husband is to love his wife just as much and in the same way that God has loved us. *Agape love* is...

- a selfless and unselfish love
- a giving and sacrificial love
- a love of the will as well as of the heart
- a love of commitment as well as of affection
- a love that works for the highest good of the wife

Very practically, the husband does not seek to have his wife fill his needs, desires, comfort and interests; but he seeks to meet, nurture and nourish all these for his wife. It is God’s will for the husband to totally sacrifice himself for his wife. And note: he is to do it without being harsh. Wives are just like husbands; they sometimes fail to submit; and when they fail, the husband tends to become harsh or resentful. It is the very nature of men to sense resentment or harshness; therefore, the Christian husband must struggle and fight against the temptation. A husband is to love sacrificially even if the wife does not deserve to be loved and is utterly unworthy of being loved. Husbands are to obey Christ regardless. It is the will of Christ.

**Thought 1.** Think what an enormous difference would exist between husbands and wives who loved and submitted as Scripture says.

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

**1 Pet 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.*

**Gen 2:24** *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

**Prov 5:18** *May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.*

### III. **Colossians 03:20 Family, Children**

Children obey your parents in all things. The word *obey* (hupakouete) means to heed, hearken, comply and follow the directions or instructions of some guide. When parents guide and direct a child, the child is to obey. And note: he is to obey “in everything.” How about the terrible problem of sinful instructions sometimes given to children by abusive parents? This is not what Scripture is talking about. (See *Children*, Eph 6:1-3.) Scripture is talking about the normal day to day instructions and guidance which parents give to children. Children are to obey their parents *in every instruction*. What happens when older children have different opinions? They feel like they should be able...

- to have something
- to do something
- to go someplace
- to come in late

Differences always arise, and yet God says that the child is to obey *in everything*. Does this mean the parent is always right? No. It means that the child has a unique opportunity to learn discipline, control and order. When they go out to face life alone without their parents, they are going to be facing a world that is...

- self-centred
- powerful
- demanding
- competitive
- corrupt
- threatening
- evil
- dangerous
- sinful

The child has to be prepared, and one of the major preparations is that of discipline or control. When the child becomes an adult, he will have demands made upon him, some of which will be unjust and unfair. He will have to obey the demands in order to survive in this corruptible world. It is up to the Christian children to learn to obey and follow instructions now — while they are still at home. They are to use the instruction of their parents as the training ground for the future — for their adulthood. The more obedient the child, the more disciplined and controlled and prepared he will be to face life when he goes out to face the world.

Note one other point: the child's obedience pleases the Lord. The Lord has one primary objective for the child: to prepare him to be the most balanced and productive adult he can be. Therefore, when the child obeys his parent, the Lord sees the child being disciplined and controlled; He sees the child preparing himself to become a strong adult. Therefore, the child's obedience pleases the Lord.

**Mark 7:10** *For Moses said, 'Honour your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.'*

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

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

**Prov 1:8** *Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

**Prov 6:20** *My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

**Prov 7:1** *My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you.*

**Prov 10:1** *The proverbs of Solomon: A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.*

**Prov 20:11** *Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.*

**Prov 23:22** *Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*

*Eccl 12:1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them."*

#### **IV. Colossians 03:21 Family, Fathers and Parents**

Fathers and parents, do not embitter your children to anger. Parents are not to exasperate their children. Parents are bound to upset and irritate their children sometimes; we all upset and irritate people sometimes. Discipline, correction and reproof are seldom enjoyable experiences. Their very nature is that of disturbance and irritation. This is not what this instruction means. The word *exasperate* (parorgizo) means to arouse to wrath or anger, to provoke to the point of utter exasperation and resentment. Note two significant discussions.

1 Four things will exasperate a child.

- a. Failing to accept the fact that things do change. Time and generations do change. This does not mean that a child should participate nor be allowed to do everything that his generation does. But it does mean that parents need to be alert to the changes between generations and allow the child to be a part of his own generation instead of trying to conform the child to the parent's childhood generation. The parent's childhood generation does not exist nor will it ever exist again.

What changes should and should not be allowed by a Christian parent? Three words provide a good guideline: *rebellion*, *immorality*, and *injustice*. Open defiance or resistance to authority and immorality and injustice are contrary to God's Word. Any change that involves rebellion, immorality or injustice needs to be dealt with and controlled by the parent. We are probably safe to say that any change not involving one of these areas should be allowed. Whether true or not, these three areas provide a good practical guideline.

The point is this: a parent must not resist normal and natural change that takes place between generations. If he resists and forbids his child to grow up in his own generation, the parent is asking for trouble. Most likely the child will be exasperated — to react.

- b. Over controlling a child will also exasperate a child. Over control ranges all the way from stern restriction and discipline to child abuse. Disciplining and restricting a child *too much* will either stifle the growth of a child or stir him to react and rebel, causing the child to flee from the parent. What is too much discipline? How much should a child be restricted? Should he be allowed to do everything he wants? No! There is a limit, and the limit must be placed upon the child and discipline must be exercised when the limit is crossed over. What Christian parents need to remember is this:

⇒ *Some parents allow their children to participate in every function and activity offered to the child. They are usually the ones without proper parental guidance.*

The point is this: there must be a balance between family life and the child's community life. The child should be allowed to do his own thing sometime, and

should be required to share with the family at other times. As he grows older, he should, of course, be allowed to break away from the family more and more in order to prepare him for the day when he will step out into the world on his own. A child needs free time away from the parent and family as well as some family time in order to grow into a healthy person.

**Eph 6:4** *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

**Col 3:21** *Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

c. Under controlling a child can exasperate a child. It should be noted that this is the most prevalent problem in an industrialized society. There is a tendency for those with plenty or with wealth to pamper, indulge and give a child everything imaginable — well beyond what a child needs and what is really best for him. Parents pamper and indulge children for five reasons.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to the child — in order to escape responsibility for the child: to keep a child from interrupting the parents' time or schedule or desires; to get a child out from under the parents feet. The parent, of course, needs some free time; but too many parents live selfishly, wanting nothing interfering with their own desires and needs. Too many parents push their children out and away and allow their children to run around too much. Too few sacrifice their own time and desires to look after their children as much as they should.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — in order to gain social standing or to relive his own childhood. The parent did not have and was not allowed to do what he wanted as a child; therefore, he sees to it that his child has everything and does everything that everyone else does. He is determined that his child will have everything no matter what it costs.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — because he has a false understanding or philosophy of child-rearing. He gives in to ill behaviour, whining, pouting, sulkiness and temper tantrums just to secure peace and quiet.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — because of misguided devotion and love: to keep from losing the loyalty, quietness, cooperativeness and affection of the child.

=> A parent indulges and pampers — gives in to a child — because of insecurity and lack of purpose. For example, some pamper and cling to a child because they (the parents) are insecure in the world. Others cling and pamper because they lack any other purpose. The child fills the need for security and purpose. *Playing house* is lived to the limit: the parent plays house with his child, clinging and pampering to the limit.

**Prov 13:24** *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*

**Prov 19:18** *Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.*

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

**Prov 23:13** *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.*

**Prov 29:15** *The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*

**1 Sam 3:13** *For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them.*

- d. Living an inconsistent life before a child can exasperate a child. A parent who tells a child one thing and then turns around and does the opposite thing himself is full of hypocrisy and false profession. Yet, how common! How many children are doing things because their parents do them:

=> drinking alcohol

=> taking drugs

=> watching sexual scenes on television or movies

=> reading immoral stories

=> looking at magazines exposing the human body

=> eating too much

=> wasting time

=> dressing or exposing the body to attract attention

=> attending socials or parties that are loose on decency, morality, marital faithfulness and on and on

Seeing an inconsistent life in a parent can exasperate children.

**1 Kng 22:52** *He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, because he walked in the ways of his father and mother and in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin.*

**2 Chr 22:3** *He too walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother encouraged him in doing wrong.*

**Jer 9:14** *Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts; they have followed the Baals, as their fathers taught them."*

**Mat 14:8** *Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."*

2. A parent is to bring up a child in the ways of the Lord, in the training and instruction of the Lord.

=> The word *training* (*paideia*) means “the whole training and education of children which [involves]... the cultivation of mind and morals... commands and admonitions... reproof and punishment...correcting mistakes and curbing the passions...the increase of virtue” (Thayers Greek-English Lexicon).

=> The word *instruction* (*nouthesia*) means counsel, exhortation, correction.

Note that the parent is not to rear the child after his own ideas and notions of what is best for the child, but after the training and instruction *of the Lord*. The Lord’s Word is to be the guide for Christian parents in rearing their child. The benefits in bringing up a child in the Lord are innumerable. Just a few are as follows:

- a. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning love: that he is loved by God and by all who trust God. He grows no matter how evil some may act, knowing that he is to love even those who do wrong.
- b. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning power and triumph: that God will help His followers through all; that there is a supernatural power available to help, a power to help when mother and dad and loved ones have done all they can.
- c. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning hope and faith: that no matter what happens, no matter how great a trial, we can still trust God and hope in Him. He has provided a very special strength to carry us through the trials of this life (no matter how painful); that He has provided a very special place called heaven where He will carry us and our loved ones when we face death.
- d. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning the truth of life and endurance (service): that God has given us the privilege of life and of living in a beautiful earth and universe; that the evil and bad which exists in the world is caused by evil and bad people; that despite such evil, we are to serve in appreciation for life and the beautiful earth upon which God has placed us. We are to work and work diligently, making the greatest contribution we can.
- e. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning trust and endurance: that life is full of temptations and pitfalls which can easily rob us of joy and destroy our lives and the fulfilment of our purposes; that the way to escape the temptations and pitfalls is to follow Christ and endure in our work and purpose.
- f. A child who is brought to Christ grows up learning peace: that there is an inner peace despite the turbulent waters of this world; that peace is knowing and trusting Christ.

***Eph 6:4*** *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

***Col 3:21*** *Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

***1 Tim 3:4*** *He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.*



**1 Tim 3:12** *A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.*

**Deu 4:9** *Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*

**Deu 6:6-7** *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

**Prov 22:6** *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

**Isa 28:9** *“Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast?”*

**Isa 38:19** *The living, the living — they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness.*

**Lam 2:19** *Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord. Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street. ■*