

COLOSSIANS 3:18-20

SPIRIT-LED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Paul has just finished explaining that acceptance of Christ not only secures our eternity, but empowers us to think and live life differently. Where we were previously enslaved to our fleshly, selfish desires, now a new lifestyle of righteousness and joy is possible.

Now he turns to a practical example: our family relationships.

I. **“Wives, be subject to your husbands...” (v. 18).**

- A. **A wife’s natural tendency is to rise up over her husband.** Women tend to think, talk, make decisions, and identify solutions a little quicker than men. Although they are quick, they are not always right (think of Adam & Eve). It’s difficult for them to be humble and patient. But God promises that if wives will partner with their husbands by honoring them and submitting to them, then He will speak to their husbands and use them to lead the family in a good direction. But it’s almost impossible for a husband to hear what God is saying when his wife is nagging and / or overbearing.
- B. **There are limits to what a wife should submit to.** If a husband asks his wife to do something illegal, should she do it? What if it’s degrading or immoral? What if it’s a perfectly fine thing to do, but she just doesn’t think it’s a great idea? Husbands, if our wives think we’re off-track, how careful should we be before we push forward?
- C. **A husband should only expect his wife to be as submitted to him as he is to his leaders.** The Greek word for “be subject” that’s used here is the same word that’s used to describe how everybody should “submit to” church leaders (Heb. 13:17).

II. **“Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them...” (v. 19)**

- A. **A husband’s natural tendency is to withdraw emotionally and blame their wives when life doesn’t turn out like they expect.** They tend to have big ideas and they want to battle to achieve them. But the Lord has different achievements and different weapons in mind. It’s difficult for them to trust that God has better things for them than they had imagined for themselves. Where they dreamed of sex and money, God offers love and joy. But if they hold onto their fantasies, they will end up bitter and alone.
- B. **Emotional vulnerability (a.k.a. “love”) is a choice.** Many men make the mistake of deciding that they aren’t very emotional... and so they rob themselves true satisfaction and fulfillment. Although it may not happen automatically (like it seems to for their wives), **husbands can choose to be**

emotionally intimate. Wives should not take it personally or decide that their husband's affection is not authentic just because it requires his conscious effort. Just like it doesn't come naturally for her to submit, it doesn't come naturally for him to remain emotionally engaged.

- C. **God designed husbands and wives to be a perfect fit;** that they would complement each other in every dimension of their being: physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. This miracle begins when a husband loves his wife "just as Christ also loved the church" (Eph. 5:25).

III. **"Children, be obedient to your parents in all things" (v. 20)**

- A. **Why do we want our kids to be obedient?** Is it for our convenience?
- B. **A child's natural tendency is to do whatever enters their mind.** They are driven by whatever impulse is the strongest (Prov. 22:15). As parents, our job is to provide stronger incentive for them to be obedient than any other impulse that might motivate them. Because they often can't understand the rationale behind the instructions that we give them, it is very difficult for them to choose obedience. But if they are not trained in obedience at a young age, then life will be very confusing and painful when they are grown up.
- C. **The most valuable inheritance we can give our children is boundaries (Duet. 32:8-10).** When we train them in what is OK and what's not, we are giving them value. Like the deed to a beautiful piece of property, when we instill a solid sense of right and wrong in our kids, it's an investment that brings greater returns with each passing year.

IV. **"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart" (v. 21)**

- A. **A father's natural tendency is to be frustrated when his kids don't understand or don't obey.** It's difficult for them to empathize with their kids' incredibly steep learning curve. Because dads tend to be goal-oriented, they will need to work extra-hard at being kind and patient.
- B. **A child naturally looks up to and wants to listen to his / her father's voice.** When a child no longer listens, it is because they have lost heart. They have been crushed by unrealistic expectations. It is not the child who has failed, it is the parent.
- C. **When things are working God's way, each person in the family is working just as hard as the others**—each resisting their natural tendencies and choosing another path.