

A Strong Foundation for the Christian Family

I teach our people to look to the Word of God for answers. If you look to people for answers you may be disappointed; that's why I want to look at God's Word concerning the Christian family.

To have a successful Christian family life, you have to put God's Word on in your mind. Colossians 3 contains a tremendous passage on the renewed mind. We begin in Colossians 3:12: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness [humility], longsuffering." Husbands and wives and children are to exhibit these qualities to one another.

Verse 13 says, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another...." This is one thing each of us has to learn from the accuracy of God's Word: in the Christian family there has to be ready forgiveness. Among the husband, wife, and children there has to be forgiveness, because sometimes the husband is going to fall short, at other times the wife or the children are going to make mistakes. Therefore, there has to be great forbearance and great forgiveness in a Christian family. "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*."

Verse 14: "And above all these things *put on* charity [the love of God in the renewed mind in manifestation], which is the bond of perfectness." The love of God in the renewed mind in manifestation is the bond or cohesiveness which holds things together perfectly.

Verses 15 and 16: "And let the peace *of* God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...." for each individual in that family, God must come first. If you're going to develop a Christian husband and wife relationship and have a Christian family, you have to keep the Word of God at the center of your family. Then you can make a true home.

Verse 17: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." In verse 15 it says to be thankful, and here it says that we should give thanks to God in everything we say and do. Thankfulness for all God has given you is a great key to successful family living.

It says in verse 18, "Wives, submit [subject] yourselves [by proper arrangement and deliberate decision] unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." Once we understand that God's way is the best way, we won't fight His doctrine. Here God tells us that wives should submit themselves to their own husbands—now this is no startling new revelation. He first unveiled this plan in the Garden of Eden when He made Eve as a companion for Adam.

Verse 19: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." When husbands love their wives, wives don't find it a stumbling block to be subject to their husbands.

Verse 20: "Children, obey your parents in [according to] all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." A Christian family is one in which God comes first; the man is the head of the family, the woman is what the Word says she is, and the children are what the Word says they are. Then

the children are to obey their parents. Children can only truly obey their parents if their parents are followers of Christ and walking according to the Word of God.

As Christian parents, you don't just have a baby and then let that child grow up wild. You're responsible for that child, to see that he grows up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Children have to be taught to obey. They don't like it any more than you did when you were a child, but in obedience lies the greatest freedom. If you let a little child grow up ruling the roost, running the whole show, by the time he's a teenager he's going to be miserable, and he's going to make everyone he comes into contact with miserable, including the woman he marries.

Christian families should be nurturing and training children in the admonition of the Lord from the time of their birth. Children in Christian families are instructed from infancy to put God first and to obey their parents. Then the children grow into adolescence with a knowledge of the Word of God, and they are equipped with God's Word to face life's challenges. That's why a child should be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and be taught to obey. If you start when the child is young, it won't be that difficult to teach him obedience.

For those who learn God's Word after they have children, the establishing of a Christian household can be a challenge. Let's say a child has grown up in a home where he has never had to obey. Then Dad and Mom go to a fellowship meeting, get born again, and learn how a Christian family is to function. Guess what? The child most likely isn't going to obey his parents right away. It may take time and effort to retrain the child; but as he learns God's Word and believes it, he'll see the benefits of obedience.

In teaching children obedience, sometimes spanking will be called for. I spanked all five of my children on the rear a couple of times—bless their hearts. Nothing wrong with that. You do it with love and to teach—but you never beat a child. Just thinking of that makes chills go up and down my spine.

Another thing about my children—I never forced any of them to attend a fellowship meeting, even if I was the teacher. I never used attendance at fellowship as a condition for privileges, such as using the car. There is nothing Christian about forcing your children to come to a fellowship so they can use the car. What a low estimate of a fellowship that has to be! My children came to fellowship because it was a part of their lives. They wanted to hear God's Word; they wanted to fellowship with like-minded believers.

Also, in disciplining your child, say what you mean and mean what you say. If a child is going to know from the time he is born that he is to obey his parents; he has to know that when his parents say something, they mean it. What happens so many times is that the child knows that when Mother says something, she really doesn't mean it. All he has to do is cry a little bit, mope a little bit, or lie down on the floor and kick his feet, and Mom will give in. If you mean what you say the first time and carry it out, the child knows you mean it the second time. To be this kind of disciplined parent, you have to say what you mean every single time.

In order to be good Christian parents, you must be disciplined on God's Word. A female's body may be ready to have a baby at fourteen or fifteen, but mentally and spiritually she's not ready to be a mother at fifteen—at least not in our culture. Some people aren't ready to be parents when they're fifty, because they haven't yet put the Word of God into their minds. You see, you have to give yourself time to put on the mind of Christ, so that you know from God's Word what kind of parent you should be. Then you're ready to start a Christian family.

Verse 21 says, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." This is instruction from the Word. A Christian father doesn't irritate or unnecessarily provoke his child. If he does, the child is going to be discouraged from living the Christian life and walking the Christian walk.

Titus speaks of responsibilities of men and women. Titus 2, verses 1 through 4: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine [right believing]: That the aged [older, more mature] men be sober [vigilant and sharp], grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged [older, more mature] women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers [slanderers] not given to much wind, teachers of good things: [In order] That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children." This is like the Christian grandmother's job.

Verse 5 continues the same admonition that older women are to teach younger women "to be discreet, chaste [holy], keepers at home...." "Keepers at home" means that wives are to be good housekeepers. I know Christian homes which are totally disorganized, total disarray. The husband and wife get up in the morning and crawl into the same unmade bed at night. You call that being a "keeper at home"? They may be Christian, but what is that wife showing in her life when she doesn't even get the bed made! The Word of God says that the wife is to be a good housekeeper. If you want the will of God in your life, the only way you can get it is to believe God's Word and obey it.

Verse 5 continues listing the duties of wives "...Obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed [not be spoke evil of]." The Word of God living in God's people won't be seen unless a Christian husband and wife put that Word right at the center of their family—that evil be not spoken of the Word of God.

God's will is that older, more mature women be examples to the younger women and that the older, more mature men be examples to the younger men.

Verse 6: "Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded." "Sober minded" means to be wise. The application of knowledge is wisdom. Young men must learn to be wise.

Verse 7 and 8: "In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine [right believing] *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

I Peter also tells us about the family relationship. I Peter 3:1 and 2 say, "Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any [husbands] obey not the word, the [the husbands]

also may without the word by won by the conversation [conduct] of the wives; While they [the husbands] behold your chaste [holy] conversation *coupled* with fear [in reverence, in awe, in respect].”

Verse 3: “Whose [wives’] adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.” Many fashionable women in Peter’s day spent too much time showing off their fancy hairdos, loading themselves down with jewelry, and modeling the last word in clothes. They were over-doing their interest in their outward appearances. God says that true adornment is not some outward thing- now it doesn’t say that God doesn’t want you beautiful or well dressed. He wants you to be attractive. The emphasis, however, is that God wants you to recognize that your adornment is an inside job. Your true beauty is your radiance of Christ in you, the hope of glory.

I know a person who, because of an automobile accident, had many scars on his face. He was embarrassed about those scars until he took a class on the accuracy of God’s Word. Then this Word of God began to live in him; and within six months after he took the class, you could meet that man anywhere, talk to him face-to-face, and never be aware of the scars. Why? Because the man so loved the Lord Jesus Christ that he lived the Word, and you just didn’t notice the scars. You’d see that love, that tenderness, that greatness, that compassion which lived in him. You see, beauty is basically what you have internally. If you have Christ in you, the hope of glory, and you look to God and His Word, you become what you look at; you begin to radiate. It shows in your smile; it shows in your walk; it shows in your talk.

Look at verse 4 in I Peter 3, “But *let it be* the hidden man [the inner man] of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price [value].” We are to be adorned with the Word of God, manifesting that inner man, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Verses 5 and 6: “For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord...” This word “lord” can also be used for God. Sara gave her obedience and trust to her husband. As God is the head of Christ, and Christ is the head of the Church, so is the husband the head, or the lord, of the wife.

Verse 6 continues: “...Whose [Sara’s] daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”

Verse 7: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* [your wives] according to knowledge [using your heads], giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel...”

“Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel” is used in the sense of the husband not making his wife do the hardest tasks, as if she were slave labor. The phrase “weaker vessel” has no derogatory meaning biblically. Women are not weaker vessels from many physical points of view. In some respects women have more physical strength than men. For instance, women have very strong hip areas for the carrying and delivery of babies. Now a man can do a lot of things, but he can’t have a baby. Some women I know are capable of outworking their men. They can

get up at 6:00 in the morning and still be going strong at 11:30 at night—taking care of the house, the husband, several children, as well as doing many other things. Then the next morning they get up at 6:00 and do the whole thing all over again. And they do it day after day.

In biblical culture the husband was supposed to let the wife feed the sheep and the cattle. He didn't send her to the field with the oxen to plow the ground. That was his job. Women may excel in endurance, but men should shoulder the heavy physical labor for which they are better fitted. By dwelling with his wife according to knowledge, the husband loves her, he gets to know his wife and her capabilities as he does his job and she does hers.

Verse 7: "...And as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." Life for a Christian husband and wife is grace. Life itself is divine favor, and the husband and wife get to share in this—they live with the great love of God in their lives. How thankful we can be that the Word of God sets before us truths and principles so that we can base our families on a solid foundation, so that we can live and enjoy life as a Christian family at the level God wants for His people.

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