

## HUSBANDS, WIVES, CHILDREN – THEIR DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS TO EACH OTHER

In light of the break-up of so many marriages in the contemporary church and the break-down of family relationships, it is prayerfully hoped that this study will be a word in season to remind husbands, wives and children of the duties and obligations they have to each other which must be observed for God's purposes to be fulfilled in their lives (CP Col 3:17-21, 24-25). To better understand God's purposes for husbands and wives and the marriage relationship in the first instance we need to go back to the order of creation (CP Gen 2:5-8, 15, 18-21, 23). This is the order of creation: man was made first, then woman. God made woman as man's helpmate – his counterpart – and to enable him to propagate the human race in the earth (CP Gen 1:26-28; 2:24; Mt 19:4-6; Mk 10:6-8; Eph 5:31). But the husband ranks first in the Divine order in the marriage relationship – he is the head of his wife and she must yield to his headship (CP Gen 3:16 with 1Cor 11:3, 5, 8-10; 14:34-35; Eph 5:22-24; Col 3:18; 1Ti 2:11-13; Tit 2:3-5; 1Pe 3:1-6). None of this though is teaching that the wife is lower in quality to her husband – she is only lower in rank (CP Eph 5:25-33).

The lesson we learn here is that the marriage bond between husband and wife illustrates the relationship that exists between Christ and His church. The clear teaching is that the supreme responsibility of Christian husbands in regard to their wives is to love them with the same unreserved, selfless, and sacrificial love Christ has for His church (CP 1Cor 13:4-7). Husbands and wives both must remember that love is a commandment, not an uncontrollable emotion. It means all that is included here. This is the love that all Christians are to manifest toward one another at all times, especially husbands to their wives: love that is long-suffering, patient, kind; never envious or jealous; never haughty or boastful or proud. It does not become irritated or angry. It keeps husbands and wives from criticising or contradicting each other. It keeps them from quarrelling in front of their children, which undermines the children's feeling of security. It creates a happy atmosphere in the home and rules out strife and separation. This is the love wherewith Christ loves the church and gave His life for it, and that is the standard of love Christian husbands must have for their wives (CP Col 3:19; 1Pe 3:7 with Ac 20:28).

Husbands must always be considerate of their wife's feelings and needs and show them love, courtesy and understanding, for wives generally are weaker than their husbands, both physically and emotionally, and husbands have to make allowances for this. But wives are not inferior to their husbands and must never be treated as such. In fact wives are more than their husbands' equal in bringing new physical life into the world (CP 1Ti 2:15). Also, wives share spiritual privileges with their husbands as equals in Christ, and are heirs together with them of the grace of everlasting life (CP Ga 3:28; 1Pe 3:7). If husbands do not regard their wives as Peter commands in 1Pe 3:7 their prayers will not be answered. Husbands must have harmonious relationships with their wives for their prayers to be answered (CP 1Pe 3:1-7). The words *submit*, *subjection* and *obedience* are all derived from the same Greek word **hupatasso**, which comes from a

military term that meant ranking or order. It carries with it the idea of voluntarily giving up or relinquishing rights. Thus, when a wife is submitted to her husband, she has voluntarily subordinated herself to him in response to his love for her. She has not given herself to be suppressed or oppressed by him.

This does not mean as some teach, that a wife only needs to be submitted to her husband on the basis that he loves her as Christ loves the church. If that were correct then these scriptures are meaningless (CP 1Pe 2:21 with 3:1-6). These scriptures apply to wives badly treated by their husbands the same as they apply to any other badly treated Christian. All should suffer the treatment they receive without complaint just as Christ did for our example. Eph 5:22 teaches that everything a wife does to, or for her husband, she does to, or for Christ (CP Eph 5:22). In submitting to the authority of their husbands, wives are submitting to the Lord's authority. The same principle applies in Eph 5:22 as in 5:21 (CP Eph 5:21). This should remove any reluctance by a wife to observe her husband's headship in the marriage relationship, even though he may not treat her according to scripture. Col 3:19 teaches that if a wife is not voluntarily submitted to her husband, he must not be bitter against her, but give it over to God (CP Col 3:18-19, 24). It should be noted here that God did not take woman from man's foot to be trampled on, nor from his head to be lorded over, but from his side to be equal with him, and under his arm near his heart, to be protected and loved by him.

Next we will examine the duties and obligations of children to their parents (CP Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20). This directive only applies to Christian children, because the children addressed are to be influenced by religious duty as well as natural affection – they are commanded to obey their parents as if obeying the Lord Himself. This directive is also one of the Ten Commandments, and is the first Commandment with a promise attached (CP Ex 20:12 with Lev 19:3). The promise is, "*that it may go well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth*" (CP De 5:16, 33; 11:8-9; Mt 15:4; Mk 7:10). To honour means to revere, respect, esteem and obey. If children want to be blessed with good health and enjoy a long life, they must honour and obey their parents. Even those who find it difficult to get along with their parents are still commanded to honour and obey them, ... *in all things* (CP Col 3:20). Under the Old Covenant children who smote or cursed their parents were put to death, leaving no posterity -descendants to carry on their name (CP Ex 21:15, 17; Lev 20:9; De 27:16; Pr 20:20; 30:11, 17).

While children are commanded to obey and honour their parents, fathers are also commanded not to provoke their children so as to make them indisposed toward parental obedience (CP Eph 6:4; Col 3:21). The fact that Paul only addressed fathers here and not both parents suggests that this is a fault with fathers more than mothers. The clear teaching is that notwithstanding the headship of fathers in Christian families, they cannot rule their children with rigid and domineering authority. Children have feelings and

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fathers must be sensitive to them when they discipline the children (CP Pr 25:28). The word *provoke* in Eph 6:4 means to enrage. In Col 3:21 it means to stimulate, stir up, in a bad sense, to irritate, cause to become discouraged. *Discouraged* means disheartened, dispirited, broken in spirit, despondent (CP Pr 15:4; 17:22; 18:14). In these passages of scripture Solomon observes that gentle words will turn away anger, but harsh words stir it up and breaks the spirit; a fiery-tempered man causes trouble, but one slow to anger averts it. These passages of scripture can all be applied to fathers provoking their children to anger and breaking their spirit, as well as to something else (CP Ro 15:13, 15). There are no joyful countenances among dejected and broken-spirited children who live under the constant threat of being treated harshly and provoked by their fathers. Christian fathers are not permitted to do anything that might drive their children to anger, despair and resentment. They must never favour one child over another. They should encourage as well as correct their children (CP Pr 12:25), and punish only open defiance and intentional wrongdoing. Christian fathers are to instruct their children with patience, and dedicate their lives in love to them with a heart of compassion, kindness, humility and gentleness (CP Pr 15:1; Col 3:12-14). Fathers must never punish their children in anger. Never punish them unjustly. Never punish them without explaining why.

To bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord as commanded in Eph 6:4 means that fathers have to systematically discipline, instruct and encourage their children to respect God's commands as the foundation of all life, Godliness and blessing (CP De 4:9-10; 6:1-2, 6-7; 11:18-21; Psa 78:1-7; Pr 13:24; 22:6). The word *chaseneth* in Pr 13:24 means to instruct, to educate, to direct. It refers to the activity directed toward the moral and spiritual nurture and training of a child to influence conscious will and action (CP Pr 3:11-12; 19:18). Two things are necessary for the proper upbringing of children: a right attitude and a right foundation. An atmosphere

of destructive criticism or condemnation in the home, sarcasm, intimidation, and fear destroys children's self-esteem. They lose heart and no sound teaching can take place in such an atmosphere. The positive alternative from Godly fathers conforming to scripture is an atmosphere rich in encouragement, tenderness, patience, listening affection and love (CP Pr 15:1). It is only in this atmosphere can the precious foundation of the nurture and admonition of the Lord be built into the lives of children (CP Pr 13:22).

Fathers must be the authority figures in the Christian home, but they can only exercise that authority in wisdom and love. Fathers and mothers should present a Godly example to their children. They should be united on all matters, including the disciplining of children when needed. Both parents must take every care to preserve the family unit. It is all too possible for them to become so engrossed in business affairs, social life, and even in their Christian service that the children suffer from lack of affection, companionship, instruction, and discipline. Children must be taught the discipline of work; the value of money and of accepting responsibility (CP Lam 3:27). Above all, both parents should avoid being ambitious for their children in a carnal worldly way, but should always present total consecration to the service of God, and complete surrender to the authority of His word as the most profitable way in which to spend their lives (CP Psa 119:9 with Mt 6:19-21, 24; 7:13-14, 21-27; Lu 16:13; 1Ti 6:5-12; Rev 3:14-22).

For other teaching concerning men and women, marriage and divorce, husbands, wives and children, see author's comments on Mt 5:31-32; 1Cor 7:3-6, 7:12-15, 11:3-16, 14:34-35; Ga 3:28; Eph 5:22-24, 5:25-32, 6:1-3, 6:4; 1Ti 2:8-15; Tit 2:3-5; 1Pe 3:1-6 and 3:7 in his book **A Question and Answer Study of the New Testament**, see also his comments on Pr 13:24, 19:18, and 23:15 in his study *Insight for living - a study on Proverb* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)** .