“Commands for the Christian Family”

Colossians 3:18-21

INTRODUCTION:

***Obey God, and see Him bless your home!**

4 Commands for a fulfilled, united, successful and peaceful family:

I. “Wives, Submit Yourselves” (v. 18)

II. “Husbands, Love Your Wives” (v. 19)

III. “Children, Obey Your Parents” (v. 20)

IV. “Fathers, Provoke Not Your Children” (v. 21)

CONCLUSION:

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INTRODUCTION:

We all have imaginations of what the perfect family should be.

Any society is only as strong as the families that make it up.

As the family goes, so goes the country.

To the degree a home is as God designed it to be, is the degree to which a family is blessed.

When families are not governed by God's principles, the society languishes and travails in pain, sorrow, and frustration.

Henry Ford and the Model T (No one knows more about the design than the designer; God knows all about marriage because He created marriage. And He knows how to fix broken marriages) In 1 Peter 3, God informs us as to HOW TO WIN THE HEART OF YOUR SPOUSE.

ILLUS: The great effort put into winning the heart of a boyfriend or girlfriend
(there are words of kindness; tokens of affection (flowers, notes); Expressions of grace (gifts); quality & quantity of time spent together; An eager willingness to overlook trivial differences; A desire to grant forgiveness when needed)

Sad to say, this effort diminishes or dies off after marriage.

If what I say today seems "out of date," offensive, contrary, and unbelievable-- it is because you have let the world brainwash you with its anti-family, anti-Bible, anti-God philosophies.

NOTE: The following injunctions are impossible to fulfill unless you are born again and have "put off" the old attitudes about living and have "put on" the new (3:8-13).

It is possible only after your life is ruled by Christ's peace (v. 15), indwelt by Christ's Word (v. 16), and submitted to Christ's authority (v. 17),

To be brief - the Spirit's fullness is the prerequisite (cp. Eph. 5:18ff).

In 4 brief sentences God unfolds the secret to a fulfilled, contented home.

The basic, foundational principles to family unity, happiness, and prosperity are found in Colossians 3:18-21.

***Follow God's secret (formula, prescription) to have the most "perfect" family possible in this life!**

4 Key Formulas for a fulfilled, united, and successful family:
(Note: All four must be present)

I. The Wife's SUBMISSION (v. 18)

All of life is structured around a "chain of responsibility" (cp. Mt. 8:10).

Three basic divinely established institutions to provide structure (order) and safety (protection) to society:

1) The Home (I Cor. 7:2ff; Eph. 5:22-6:4)

2) The Government (Rom. 13:2)

3) The Church (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24)

These institutions involve submission and authority.

"Submit" - hupotasso - to place yourself under someone's authority.

This word is a military term, which means to rank yourself under. To take your place under the headship and leadership of your husband (I Cor. 11:3).

Submission does not refer to the wife as being inferior in essence, but simply as have a different role or function. (EX: the Father is the Head of Christ [I Cor. 11:3], but in essence is not superior but equal [Phil. 2:6; Jn. 10:30]).

Submission is misunderstood today.
God ordained that Husbands lovingly serve their wives (by providing for them, protecting them, directing them). And wives are to let them. This is the essence of submission. Allow your husband to serve you in the role God gave him.

"Submit yourselves" - middle voice imperative. Meaning: Submission should be voluntary. Something the woman chooses to do herself. God never commands the husband to make his wife submit; forced submission is not submission.

To answer the question: How do I submit to my husband? - ask yourself this question, "How should the church submit to Christ?" (Eph. 5:22-24).

"As it is fit in the Lord" - "fit" = lit. to arrive up to; to come up to a higher level (the level Eve knew before the Fall); to reach a proper standard.

Submission is not degrading in the eyes of the Lord.

For a person who is "in the Lord," God has a higher dimension of living. Anything less than total and absolute submission is not fitting or proper for a Christian.

Submission should be a joy.

The only way for a believing wife to win an unsaved husband to Christ is by living a holy life and by obeying him (I Peter 3:1-6).

A rebellious wife is a witch! Reason: "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (I Sam. 15:23).

II. The Husband's LOVE (v. 19)

The word "love" is the Koine Greek word "agapao." This is a special love.

The love that husbands are to have toward their wives is:

1. A spiritual love - By this I mean it does not come naturally.

   It is a capacity that comes only from God. This love has its source only in God (I Jn. 4:7 - "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.")

   No unsaved man has the capacity (ability) to have such a love.

2. Unconditional love - The kind of love God expects the husband to have is not dependent upon the worthiness of the wife. This love, as ultimately exemplified by God, is a love that gives even when the recipient of that love is an unworthy, evil wretch (Rom. 5:8).

   There are "no strings attached" to agapa love. It's not, "I will love her if she . . . retains her youthful figure, cooks like Betty Crocker, cleans like the world's greatest custodian; hugs and kisses like she did on your honeymoon, etc. etc."

   NOTE: Your motive for loving your wife is obedience and love for God! Not the attitude changes it may bring in your spouse, nor for any other immediate reward you may be hoping for. if your motive is what you can get, then you will tend to love as long as you are getting the desired results. Your love will be fickle, on & off, conditioned by selfish motives.

3. Volitional love (a willing love) - a choice; a decision; an act of the will.

   This kind of love is possible even toward an enemy (Mt. 5:44), because it is not based upon a feeling that you conjure up about a person, but rather it is based upon a knowledge that a person (whoever it is) is made in the "image of God" and therefore is worthy of the respect, honor, dignity, and benevolence you show.

   "Love" - not a mere emotional feeling, but does not exclude feeling either. It means to feel for someone (to empathize) and thereby be motivated to respond to meet their needs.

4. Continual love - the present tense imperative emphasizes the constant year by year, day by day, minute by minute nature of the love. For someone to say, "I don't love her anymore" is to say "I do not obey God anymore."

5. Gracious love - it's a love that gives (Jn. 3:16; hence it is often translated "charity" - I Cor. 13); and forgives (I Pet. 4:8).

Basically, to answer the question "How should I love my wife?" -ask yourself another question: "How does Christ love His Church?" (Eph. 5:25-30).

You love your wife by:
Providing for her (financially, etc.)
Talking to her (communicating)
Listening to her
Protecting her (spiritually & physically)

"Be not bitter against them" - Do not allow yourself to become bitter.

Evidently the reason why God added this phrase, is because He knows that this is a tendency in marriages.

The word "bitter" is the opposite of being sweet (cp. Ja. 3:11-14). Often used of bitter water (Rev. 8:11). To have a prolonged bad, irritable, sharp aftertaste remain in your mouth. Metaphorically, it then refers to being repulsed by something. To have an aversion to something.

To be "bitter" in a relationship is to be resentful and unforgiving. Therefore, whenever you think of her a "bad taste" comes to your consciousness. Such bitterness results in evil speaking (Rom. 3:14); hatred (Eph. 4:31); and many destroyed relationships (Heb. 12:15).

How do I know when I am not bitter? Answer: When you can pray for the well-being and blessing of your spouse.

III. The Child's OBEDIENCE (v. 20)

If a modern (contemporary) Bible was written, Colossians 3:20 would say: "Parents, obey your children, for this will keep them happy and bring peace to the home."

Such obedience is to be:

1. Cheerful -

   "Obey" = hupokouo" - lit. to listen with a submissive heart. Hence, to hear what your parents say and do it.

   (Attitude is just as important as action)

2. Continual (present imperative)

   Young men, as long as you are under their roof, you are obligated to obey them; young ladies, as long as you are under your parents' authority (until you get married), you are obligated to obey them.

3. Respectful - "your parents"

   Respect their God-given position over you. Even if you are bigger than . . . smarter than . . . or stronger than. . . you are to obey them because they are your parents.

4. Total - "in all things" (KJV)

   Obedience is not to be partial, but total (God does not qualify the obedience). However, the only exception is if your parents ask you to sin (to directly violate a Scriptural principle - cp. Acts 4:19-20, 5:29).

NOTE: God did not say "obey for this is popular" (II Tim. 3:2) or "for this is easy" (indeed it is often difficult) or "for they are worthy" (many are not).

Rather, He said, "for this is well pleasing."

The reason for obedience is simple. It pleases God. It is right! (Eph. 6:1)

God commends the obedient, and condemns the disobedient. To be under the displeasure of God is a dreadful predicament.

A good life and a long life is promised to children who obey their parents (Eph. 6:2).

Parents: Do you want your children to please God? (and thereby be under His blessing?). Then expect nothing less than complete obedience from them. Your motive in expecting obedience should not be your own peace but their well-being.

Respect for parents is so serious that God told Moses: "He who strikes (physically disrespects) his father or his mother shall surely be put to death"; and "He who curses (verbal disrespect) his father or his mother shall surely be put to death" (Ex. 21:15, 17; cp. Lev. 20:9).

Obedience is good for you!

It will not only provide a better and longer life, but it will also:

1) Teach you patience (to learn to trust and wait on God)

2) Equip you with self-control

3) Get you ready for a career that will demand respect for authority

4) Get you ready for life, which will not always be "fair" or "just"

5) You will reap in your children what you sowed as a child

IV. The Father's ENCOURAGEMENT (v. 21)

"Provoke" - to push your children; or harshly irritate them; to stir them up in a bad sense

Cp. Eph. 6:4 - "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

"A child frequently irritated by over-severity or injustice, to which, nevertheless it must submit, acquires a spirit of sullen resignation, leading to despair." (Abbott, cited by Reinecker, p. 582).

"Discouraged" (from "a thumeo") which literally means to be without heat.

The word describes a child who has lost heart, his spirit has been broken, his youthful zeal, zest, spunk is gone. Rather than obeying cheerfully, because of harsh or improper discipline the child goes about his task in a listless, moody, sullen frame of mind" (Lightfoot).

Ways Parents provoke their children to anger:

1. Unbiblical discipline

    a. Harsh discipline (unloving attitude)

    b. Unbalanced discipline (need both - rod and reproof - nurture and admonition)

    c. Abusive discipline (uncontrolled or wrong mode and instrument)

2. Neglect (making them feel unwanted, a bother, not worthy of your time; so they turn to drugs, alcohol, immorality)

3. Favoritism (Ex: Isaac favored Esau over Jacob; Rebekah preferred Jacob over Esau)

4. Discouragement - "You never do anything right!" - A failure to commend and praise positive character.

    It takes seven praises to offset one criticism.

5. Unfaithful to promises - You build up their hopes (by promising something), then dash them (through neglect, etc.)

CONCLUSION:

You cannot withdraw blessings from your home until you deposit into it.

The Law of sowing and reaping applys (Galatians 6:7).

Whatever you invest into your relationship will determine what you get out of it.