

Are We Wise?

Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (Eph. 5:1-2)

In the previous chapter Paul tells us how Christians should NOT walk ... 4:17 “You must no longer walk as the Gentiles (or pagans) do” ...

... and Paul tells us the pattern of love which we should imitate is Christ’s love.

Today we are going to see in the last part of chapter 5 and the first part of chapter 6 what this love looks like inside the family unit.

... not only in our relationships with one another but also in our parenting, as well our livelihood ... those jobs we hold outside the family unit.

First Paul begins with that earthly relationship which has priority over all other relationships.

... The husband and wife.

1. Husbands and Wives Should Walk in Christlikeness

Let me put it this way ... a proper relationship with Jesus Christ is both necessary and instructive for a healthy loving marital relationship.

... Paul begins this topic by reminding us of the mutual submission that exists within the Trinity that should also exist between husbands and wives.

Jesus always does the will of the Father, the Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself but the son, and no one comes to Jesus Christ unless the Father draws them.

... and so, just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit orbit around each other in mutual submission as one God.

Husbands and wives become one in marriage and orbit around each other in mutual submission.

... and Paul is very clear that the relationship that exists between a husband and wife is to be reflective of the relationship that exists between Christ (the bridegroom) and the church (bride).

Now Paul is going to say more ... but you must remember that this starting point is the foundation upon all that Paul says next.

Consider what Paul says to wives.

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Look at the word submit ... it is the Greek word ὑποτάσσει which literally translated means “*under the charge of*” and this word is related to the word *respect* used in verse 32.

... this doesn't mean that a man shouldn't respect or honor his wife ... however, this is the command that the wife needs to hear for 2 reasons.

First, because a man needs to know, above all else, that his wife respects him ... certainly a husband wants his wife and family to love him ... but he **NEEDS** to know that he is respected.

Paul also writes “*For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the church ...*”

What does that mean?

Let me first tell you what it doesn't mean ... it doesn't mean that a wife is a second-class citizen in the home, and it doesn't mean the husband is the boss and she is the employee ...

It means, at the end of the day God will hold the husband accountable for the welfare of the home ...

... the husband is supposed to spiritually lead his home.

... Men, God expects you to walk close with God and be the spiritual covering of your home.

I pity the man whose wife has to drag and coerce to get him to church ...

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

In the same way that a man needs respect, and a wife needs to be reminded of that ... **a wife needs to be loved and the husband needs to be reminded of it.**

And Paul tells us the purpose of way and purpose of that love.

We are to love our wives as Christ loved the church ... how did Christ love the church ... He gave himself for her.

- To sanctify her
- To cleanse her so that her splendor will be revealed in all its glory
- We should love our wives as we love our own bodies ...

²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph. 5:21-33)

I can tell you that in a relationship like this ... even when our bodies are getting weaker ... our love is growing exponentially stronger.

2. Parents and Children Should Live WITH HONOR

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:1-4)

In the first 4 verses of chapter 6 Paul tells us there is something for children to do and something for parents to do.

... and here is what I really love about this first verse.

Paul expects that there are some children who will hear this verse and want to obey it ...

... Paul has an expectation that children will be saved and want to obey.

Here is the mistake we make too often

... we think that children will never do right unless they are forced ...

Paul says this is not the case.

He admonishes children (which everyone of us are ...or at some point have been) to obey their parents ...

... but then he quotes one of the 10 commandments “*honor their father and mother.*”

... but Paul also says, “obey in the Lord.”

NOW HOLD ON ... What Paul means is that children should **always honor** their parents and should obey their parents **when it is right.**

- Honor is **absolute**
- Obedience is **conditional**

Let me explain ...

No matter what age you are, or what age your parents are, you must always treat your parents with respect and honor

... your children will know how to honor you by watching how you honor your parents

Honor is **absolute**, you must always ...

But obedience is **conditional**.

When you become an adult, when you move out of their home, when you forsake your mother and father and “cleave” to your spouse.

... at that moment you have no biblical mandate to obey them **Obedience is conditional.**

My becoming a Baptist and resigning as pastor of King’s Chapel Church was against my parent’s will and wishes ...

... but I was not in their home, I was an adult with a wife and children

There is another way that obedience is **conditional**

What if you are a Christian child and your parents command you to violate the Word of God ...

Obedience is conditional... it is governed by situation and age.

Children in the home should obey their parents ... all children always should honor their parents.

This is what Children should do ...

But Paul also says there is something for parents to do.

Father’s do not provoke your children to anger...

It is important to note that the word for Father is ‘pater’—this is **father** not parents.

Paul (in the same way he gave specific commands to husbands and wives because that was a command they needed to hear) ...

... here Paul is giving a warning to fathers because fathers can tend to provoke their children to anger.

In ancient times children were property...

When a baby was born into a Roman family it was brought and laid before the father. If he picked it up that meant he was accepting the child into the family ... if he did not, that meant the child was rejected and could be sold, given away, or even killed.

Here, Paul is elevating the child from the status of property and saying to fathers ... you have a responsibility ...

... don't provoke your children to anger.

The word "anger" means **infuriate or frustrate** ...

There are two ways a father can infuriate or frustrate their children ...

... **too much** discipline ... or **not enough** discipline.

This command rules out:

- Excessive severe discipline
- Unreasonable harsh demands
- Gross insensitivity

This command also rules out:

- The absence of discipline
- No demands, no authority
- No accountability

When Paul says to **not provoke our children to anger**, he is saying "find the balance" ...

... the balance between nurture and concern coupled with loving discipline ...

... if we don't show our children loving discipline they will go into the world and be shocked to discover that not everyone is as compliant to their demands as their parents have been.

... if they don't receive nurture and concern, they might possibly grow up harsh and cruel to others.

Paul wrote to the Colossians "*Fathers provoke not your children to anger lest they be discouraged.*"

In other words, the opposite of provoking your children is to encourage your children!

But Paul also says in verse 4 that parents are to "**bring them up**" ...

... "**bringing them up**" means don't push them out too soon ...

... "**bringing them up**" also means getting them to the place where they are no longer dependent upon you.

... and let me add one other thing ... you must not refuse to ask your children to believe what you believe.

You have to say to your children, "this is who God is."

... whether they know it or not, whether they accept it or not ...

... at some point in their lives the one thing that is going to give them the strength they need to weather the storms is knowing and remembering where their parents stood on the things that mattered.

... where you ultimately put your deepest trust

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3. Employers and Employees Are Ethical

⁵ Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. (Eph. 6:5-8)

I want to begin this last point by looking at the word “bond servant” or slave ... because if we misunderstand this word, we will misunderstand this part of the text.

For Americans in the 21st century, when we hear the word “slave” it is impossible for us to think of anything, but the violent race based, cattle slavery that existed in Europe and America from the 17th through the 19th century.

Now the slavery of Paul’s day was also unjust, but it was not the same slavery that existed in America prior to the civil war.

First the slavery of Paul’s day was not race based.

Second, in most cases it only lasted up to the age of 30.

I quote, *“In Paul’s day, despite legal distinction between owners and slaves slavery did not denote a different social or economic class ...*

... the social status of the bond-servant, their lifestyle, even their education was tied to the status of their respective master ...

In many ways, masters and slaves, in Paul’s day, were more like bosses and employees than the “slaves and masters” of early American history.

This is important because we need to see that, culturally, Paul is speaking to employers and employees.

In v. 5 Paul says for employees to obey their employers as they would obey Christ.

... not to merely please (v. 6) their employers ... but because this is God’s will.

What we are to learn here from Paul is that employment is a divine calling ...

... employment is God's way of meeting our needs

In fact, the philosophy of all employment is found in Genesis 1-3

God's creating the earth was work ... we know this because God rested "from his work" on the 7th day.

In fact, the very nature of work is creative ... work is bringing order out of chaos.

- cleaning
- cooking
- accounting
- medicine
- sales
- building
- tearing down a dilapidated building to replace it with a good one.
- mechanic work
- HVAC work
- lawn care
- farming

... all good work is (at its very core) is creative ... bringing order out of chaos.

...and Paul says when you do it:

- Do it for Christ
- Do it because it is the will of God
- Do it (v. 8) knowing that, in the end, God will reward you for it.

Paul wants us to understand that our work (our employment) has eternal meaning and purpose ...

That means (as my daughter Melanie says) no job is beneath you

That means that everyone's work deserves our respect ...

Let's say you go to a restaurant, and you have a waiter ... you respect that person who is waiting on you ...

... you stop at the gas station to buy a coffee or bottle of water ... that person waiting on you (because of Christ) should receive your respect.

If you don't treat people who serve you with dignity, then you don't have a biblical view of work.

But Paul goes one step further when he says in verse 9:

Masters do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Eph. 6:9)

This verse is pretty straightforward.

Employers are to have the same attitude for their employees that their employees are to have for them.

There are some employers that are good and some that are bad ... but we need to see that the real boss, behind the physical employer, is Jesus.

Even if your pay isn't the best ... or if it is wonderful!

Even if your work conditions aren't the best ... or if they are the greatest!

Even if your retirement plan is great ... or non-existent!

Paul says work with reverence with a **sincere heart as you would for Christ.**

Whether you are boss or employee you are to perform your role to the best of your ability because the Lord Jesus Christ is watching, and he will reward you accordingly. (v. 8)

This is what it means to live out as husbands, wives, parents, children, employees, and employers **Who God Says We Are.**

You see, Jesus honored His father to the point of be separated from His father ... so that we might have the greatest love **of the greatest Father** that time, space, and eternity has ever known.

Jesus is the ultimate master became the ultimate servant by dying under the lash of sin's heavy whip so that we might know ultimate freedom.