

## 18. Learning to Walk with New Actions

In our last two topics, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to put off the old man and put on the new man. At the moment of salvation, we received a new nature which gave us new desires. Those new desires gave us a desire to put away the sins of the past and learn to live in a way that is pleasing to God. We saw that putting on the new man means to grow to spiritual maturity as we learn to yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit. As the Holy Spirit develops these new attitudes in our lives, we see that we will also want to learn to walk with new actions in our relationships with one another. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Then, we are given instructions about six different situations in which we are to submit to one another. These include: wives to husbands; husbands to wives; children to parents; parents to children; servants to masters; and masters to servants. We are given a shorter summary of submission in each of those relationships in the verses we will be studying today. In Colossians 3:18-19 we read, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” To “submit” means *to place your full potential at the disposal of another*. As Christians, we want to see how making our full potential available to one another in each of these relationships will make it possible for us to experience the peace and joy of the Lord in our lives.

First, we are told how wives show their submission to their husbands. The word that is translated “submitting” means *to willingly place yourself under someone or something*. In so doing, we will place our full potential at the disposal of another. Christ gave us the example and submitted Himself to the Father. Philippians 2:8 says, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.” Here, we see that Christ willingly gave His full potential to the Father by being obedient to the Father even though it meant death on the cross. The Father and Christ are equal but Christ willingly chose to place Himself under the will of the Father.

In the same way, husbands and wives are equal; but here, we see that God says that one of the new actions of a godly wife is to submit to her husband by placing her full potential under his leadership. The word that is translated “fitting” is also used in Philemon 1:8-9 where we read, “Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, *yet* for love's sake I rather appeal *to you*--being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Paul could have given Philemon a command but he chose to show his love for Philemon but appealing to him in love instead. In the same way, a submissive wife is showing her love to her husband.

Second, we are told how husbands are to be in submission to their wives. Husbands are to show their submission to their wives by loving them. The word that is used here for love is the same word that Christ used for love when He gave the new commandment in John 13:34-35 where we read, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for

one another.” One of the ways that husbands are commanded to show this love is by not being bitter against their wife. The word that is translated “to be bitter” means *to be angry or irritated*. Here, we see that husbands are to show their submission by not being angry or irritated at their wives.

Colossians 3:20-21 says, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Third, we are told how children are to be in submission to their parents. Here, we see that children are to show their submission by being obedient to their parents. The word that is translated “to obey” means *to be obedient to a command*. The word that is translated “well-pleasing” or “acceptable” is used in Romans 14:17-18 where we read, “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things *is* acceptable to God and approved by men.” As our children grow in the Lord, we as parents want to show our children how to do the things that demonstrate righteousness and cause our children to experience peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, we are told how parents are to be in submission to their children. Although this word is usually translated “fathers”, in verses like Hebrews 11:23, it is used to speak of the parents of Moses. We see that parents show their submission by not provoking their children. The word that is translated “provoke” means *to stir up or irritate*. The reason why parents are to submit to their children by not stirring them up or irritating them is due to the fact that such treatment will cause children to become discouraged. The word that is translated “discouraged” means to cause them to become broken in spirit. Proverbs 15:13, 17:22 and 18:14 all talk about the wounded or broken spirit. Proverbs 18:14 says, “The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?” Here, we see that a broken spirit is much worse than even severe sickness in the life of a child so loving parents will submit by avoiding stirring up or irritating.

Fifth, we are told how servants are to be in submission in to their masters. Colossians 3:22-25 says, “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.” The word that is used for servants here is the word that spoke of a person that was a bondservant or slave. In the time of the New Testament, about half of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves and had no rights. Here, we see that a Christian slave was to have a very different attitude than a slave that was not a Christian. Today, in most countries we would talk about employees instead of slaves but the same principles apply.

The word for “obey” is used for servants is the same word that was used for children in an earlier paragraph. We see that servants are to be obedient to the commands of their human masters. However, they are not to be obedient just when their master is watching in order to please him. Instead, they are to be obedient to their masters from a heart that does not have hypocrisy just as they would be obedient from the heart to please God. If a servant is working to please the Lord and not just a human master, that servant will choose to do the best job possible. 1 Corinthians

10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” It will change the inner attitude of any worker if that worker is working to please the Lord and not just a human master.

We are also given the reason why any of us who are working for someone else should work to please the Lord and not just the person for whom we are working. We see that the Lord will give us an eternal reward if we faithfully do our work to please the Lord and not just a human master. Galatians 6:7-9 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” If we are just working to please ourselves or to please a human master, we will receive any reward that we receive on this earth. In contrast, if we choose to work to please the Lord in all that we do we can look forward to receiving the reward that the Lord has planned for us. That is due to the fact that we are actually working to please the Lord whether our master notices or not.

At the same time, those people who choose to act sinfully instead of in obedience to their master should be prepared for the judgment that they will receive. As the verse in the previous paragraph says, God will not be mocked. If a person chooses to satisfy the evil desires of the flesh as he works that person can expect to receive the judgment that he deserves. God will not be mocked. God does not show partiality. The word that is translated “partiality” is also used in Romans 2:11 where we read, “For there is no partiality with God.” God does not play favorites. He rewards those who have a proper inner attitude and he judges those who have a sinful inner attitude.

Sixth, we are told how masters are to be in submission to their servants. Colossians 4:1 goes on to say, “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” Here, we see that masters are to do two things as a part of their submission to their servants. First, they are to give their servants what is just. The word that is translated “just” or “righteous” means *to treat others in the same way that God would treat them*. It is the word that is used in 1 John 1:9 where we read, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” It is right for God to forgive and cleanse us when we place our faith in Christ because Christ paid for all of our sins and we accepted His payment in our place and for our sins. Second, masters are also to treat their servants with fairness or equality.

We are also given the reason why masters should show their submission to their servants by these two things. All Christian masters need to remember that they also have a Master in heaven. The way that earthly masters treat their servants shows the way that they want the Lord to treat them when they stand before Him. As you help your physical and spiritual children learn to fully understand submission, they will learn to walk with new actions in whatever situation they are placed by the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by example what it means to walk with new actions.