

18. Learning to Submit in Other Relationships

In our last two topics, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the mutual submission that husbands and wives are to show to each other in their marriage relationship. We saw that a husband is to show submission to his wife by his tender love for her that models the love of Christ for the church. We saw that a wife shows her submission to her husband by her respect for him. In our topic today, we are going to see four other relationships where we are given special instructions about how to apply submission in our daily lives.

First, we see the instructions given to children about their submission to their parents. Ephesians 6:1-3 says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’” Here, we see that children show their submission to their parents by their obedience. The word that is translated “obey” means *to listen and then to take action by following the instructions that are given*. This means that the first thing a parent has to do to develop a submissive child is to teach that child how to really listen. James 1:19-20 says, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” The word that is translated “to hear” means *to listen so that there is understanding of what is said*. This means that parents choose to model what it means to listen so that there is understanding by the way that they listen to their children.

We also see why children are to obey their parents. The verse says that this is right. The word that is translated “right” means *just, righteous or right*. This word is used in Colossians 4:1 where we read, “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” In this verse, we see that the word is translated “just”. Masters or employers are to pay their employees fairly because of the fact that it is right to share. The word is also translated “just” 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.” Christ is just to forgive and cleanse us from our sins because of the fact that He paid the penalty for those sins and so it is right for Him to forgive us.

It is right for children to obey their parents because it is the only commandment that contains a promise. Exodus 20:12 says, “‘Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.’” Obedience is an action. Honor is an attitude. The word “honor” means *to place value on something*. In fact, this word is translated “value” in Matthew 27:9 where we read, “Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ‘And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced.’” Here, we see that those who wanted to condemn Christ placed a value of money that they would pay to the one who betrayed Christ. The leaders of Israel did not honor Christ because they gave a low value to his life. In contrast, children are told to place a high value on their parents. God told the people of Israel that the reward for honoring their parents would be long life in the land that the Lord was giving to them.

Second, we see the instructions given to fathers about their submission to their children. Ephesians

6:4 says, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” The word translated “fathers” can also include mothers as it does in Hebrews 11:23 where we read, “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.” In this verse, the word is translated “parents”. Parents are given one negative instruction and two positive instructions to show them how to be submissive to their children.

Parents are not to provoke their children to wrath. The word that is translated “provoke to wrath” means *to stir up, to exasperate or to arouse to wrath*. This happens when parents make unreasonable rules and demands that either discourage or stir up resentment and anger in the lives of their children. The only other place this word is used is in Romans 10:19 where we read, “But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: ‘I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.’” Here, we see that God said that the Jews would be moved to anger or wrath by the fact that God made salvation available to the Gentiles. This anger or wrath was revealed several times when Paul said that God had sent him to the Gentiles. However, God says that parents are not to stir up that kind of anger in their children.

Instead, parents are to bring up their children by training and admonition. The word “training” was translated “nurture” in our last topic. There, we saw that the word spoke of the tender care that a mother shows to a nursing baby. Parents show their submission by continuing to display tender love to their children as they grow. Parents also show their submission to their children by bringing them up in the admonition of the Lord. The word that is translated “admonition” means *instruction that includes a warning*. 1 Corinthians 10:9-11 says, “Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” We give admonition when we give children choices and warn them of the consequences of each choice.

Third, we see the instructions given to servants (employees) about their submission to their masters (employers). Ephesians 6:5-8 says, “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free.” Here, we see that servants are to be obedient with fear and trembling. This same phrase is used in Philippians 2:12 where we read, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Here, we see that fear and trembling speaks of respect for the authority of the Lord. Servants are to respect the authority of their masters.

Servants are also to serve their masters with an honest and open heart in the same way that they would serve Christ. They are not to just work hard when the master is watching because they are seeking the favor of their master. Instead, they are to recognize that Christ is their real master and

seek to work in such a way that they are doing the will of God from their hearts. Colossians 3:22 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.” Servants are to realize that they are serving the Lord and not just the master that they have on this earth.

Servants are to serve their masters with kindness in their hearts. That will happen when they realize that their work for their master is actually an opportunity to serve the Lord by the way that they work for their master. When we work to please the Lord instead of trying to please our master (employer), we see that the Lord is the One who will reward us. This promise is true both for those who are slaves working for a master and for those who are employees working for an employer. Colossians 3:23-24 says, “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.” When our attitude at work is an attitude of working to please the Lord, we can look to the Lord for our reward whether the employer rewards us or not.

Fourth, we see the instructions given to masters (employers) about their submission to their servants (employees). Ephesians 6:9 says, “And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.” Here, we see that masters show their submission to the Lord by treating their servants with the same respect and honor that a Christian servant is to show to them. Since the servant is to work for the master as he would work for Christ, the master is to treat the servant the same way that he would treat Christ if it was Christ that was his servant.

One of the ways that a master shows his submission to Christ is by giving up threatening his servants. The word translated “threatening” means *to be abusive, to be inconsiderate or to make threats*. This word was used to speak of Paul in Acts 9:1 where we read, “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest.” Here, we see that Saul was speaking about the evil that he wanted to do to the Christians. We also see how the early Christians responded to threats. Acts 4:29 says, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.” Instead of getting upset by threats, the early Christians just prayed that the Lord would give them boldness to speak the Word of God.

Another way a master shows submission to Christ is by treating his servants without partiality. Colossians 4:1 says, “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” Here, we see that a master shows submission by being just and fair. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand the principle of submission, they will be able to apply it in many situations. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand true submission.