

Week 8
November 28, 2011

How to Have a Happy Home

Let's review what we have learned from our study of Colossians, a book containing the plan and instruction of God for living a victorious Christian life in the peace of Christ. When we have a new life in Christ we are to consider dead or kill or not allow those sinful desires which ran rampant in our old life and he gave us quite a list; sexual immorality, impurity, lust and greed. Also we are not to lie. That seems obvious but at the same time its part of daily life for many people wouldn't you say that currently you never know who you can believe? I am sad to say that but its true. Be the person about whom others can say, "I know if he/she said it, it is true". We cannot stop others lying to us but we certainly can make the choice to be truthful ourselves.

Paul gave a list of virtues which he said should characterize the lives of the Colossian believers and should also describe us, they can describe us, by God's grace. That list includes a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Finally we are told to be forgiving and to bear with one another, to put on love and let the peace of Christ rule our hearts.

If you renew your mind daily and let that Word of Christ live in you and you live in it, you will be able to do all in the name of the LORD. Peace will rule in your heart. That is what God calls the "peace that passes all understanding". When you have peace in the midst of strife and suffering, wouldn't you say, that peace is not understandable by the world? Unbelievers are stressed by trials, they complain, are often bitter and angry.

All this leads us to today's lesson; how to have a happy and peaceful home. Many will say these instructions are old fashioned and don't work today. That is an opinion, do those who have that opinion have a peaceful home/

If your home and relationships are in chaos, if you are planning to divorce, have divorced; did you have peace in your home or arguing and bitterness? Breaking up families, break children's hearts and those heartbroken children often do terrible things out of their anguish and pain of loss. Would you be willing to try these old fashioned rules for a peaceful home?

Colossians 3:12, which we studied last week, told us that these are our individual responsibilities; Put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. If you were to do this how would the atmosphere in your home change?

If you say this is impossible, you are correct, without the love of Christ, the regeneration of your dead spirit, the daily renewing of your mind and the filling of the Holy Spirit it is impossible. If you have committed yourself to Christ, know that He is as committed to your sanctification, that is the putting on of humility, patience, kindness, gentleness, the ability to bear with another, to be able to forgive, He is as committed to conforming you to this image as He is to saving your soul. If you will follow the Apostle Paul's admonition to keep your mind on the things above, to put off or put to death the earthly/fleshly things lurking inside you such as immorality, impurity, lust and evil desires and greed, all these being your choice to turn away from, friends, Jesus will live His virtuous life in you.

All this is possible because we have been renewed and we can make the right choices because Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit living in us has made us free from slavery to sin. Do you know that the bible says before you received forgiveness of sin and were born again, freed from sin; before that you did not have a choice, you were a slave to sin. But now, with the Holy Spirit having made you alive again, you can say No to sin. You can have peace.

Colossians 3:18

Paul has counseled all believers to submit to authority by choice. Paul told wives they are to willingly follow their husband's leadership in Christ. He has told us that all people are equal in Galatians 3:28 so it's not a matter of equality; it is a principle of household relationships. A wise and Christ honoring wife will not undermine her husband's leadership. According to the bible the man is the spiritual head of the family. There should not be battles for power in this relationship. Our concept of submission must come from the Bible, demonstrated by the church to Christ. Submitting does not mean doormat; remember Christ submitted Himself to God. It is a principle of biblical living, it is commanded by God's word, and it is the way to peace in the home.

Ephesians 5:20-21 gives us the understanding that mutual submission is the key; the husband is to love his wife, of course, a loving husband will be one who is easily submitted to. Real spiritual leadership involves service, just as Christ served the disciples, even to the point of washing their feet, so the husband is to serve his wife. This means putting aside his own interests in order to care for his wife and family. A wise and Christ honoring husband will not abuse his leadership role. One sure sign that this man is not wise or Christ honoring is if he is always reminding his wife to submit.

Finally note that this mutual submitting has in mind the relationship between Christ and God, the church and Christ and is assures the proper functioning. There has to be one at the top who is finally responsible. In the home this is the husband. We are accountable for how we obey God in these commands; clearly submission is neither easy nor natural. I always think that whatever is commanded is something that is not human nature and so does not occur naturally but requires a regenerated heart and the filling of the Holy Spirit. If you are struggling with these commands ask God to help you obey.

Isn't it obvious that for a believer to marry an unbeliever, which we are commanded not to do, will make submission extremely difficult? In cases where one partner in a marriage has become a believer after marriage and is now "unequally yoked" as Paul says, then trusting in God to work in these situations is essential. Yes, a Christian wife is still required to submit unless it that would mean disobedience to God to do so. Consider what Peter said in this case in 1 Peter 3:1-2 and 7-8. A godly wife and mother can influence change in her family, which will have an eternal consequence for good.

We can conclude this by saying the marriage relationship is intended to be one of mutuality in the LORD. There is no reason to believe men and women have different value in importance. The best way for relationships to work is for those in the relationship to be committed to Christ first and then to each other mutually, to be forgiving and loving. Submission is rarely a problem in homes where the husband and wife are submitted to Christ and concerned for the happiness of their marriage partner. Women I recommend you review the biblical picture of the virtuous wife in Proverbs 31 beginning at verse 10. It will give you some ideas of how God sees us and an outline of practical suggestions. It is a picture of a strong and competent woman, obedient to God and eager to make a home for her family, it is far from the feminist ideal in fact you could say it is the exact opposite.

Please notice the husband is commanded to love his wife. Do you remember the definition of love given previously? It is the decision to do what is best for the other person even if it means personal sacrifice and Jesus Christ's love for us is the example.

Colossians 20-21

God's design for the family continues with instruction for children. Little children will be disobedient and test the parent's limits. Here is where training takes place, which will hopefully provide direction for a successful adult life. If a child does not learn to submit to his father, how will he submit to God, his heavenly Father? I know you can see that submission is learned and it is a choice. Children should be helped to understand that it pleases God for them to please their parents. Just as obedience is learned and becomes a habit so does disobedience. The person who makes a habit of disobedience is setting himself up for a lifetime of failure in relationships and employment.

In the same way fathers are to train and encourage their children, firm discipline with love is the key. Most of you know, parenting is not easy, it can be frustrating. It takes a lot of patience and praying to raise Christ-honoring children. Remember children will get their understanding of what God is like from what they see in their parents. That is very sobering.

If you have had harsh parents, and I suspect those of us who are older have been raised in a much harsher way than the younger people, you know how difficult it is to see God as loving, forgiving and patient.

Colossians 3:22-24

Slavery was legal, a significant part of Roman society and there were millions of slaves in the Roman Empire at the time of this writing. Slaves and slave owners could have become believers. It did not mean freedom from slavery; it did mean freedom from sin.

In our day this could be applied to employee/employer relationships. The employed are to do their work heartily, which means whole-heartedly. You know what that means, no slacking. Paul gets more specific and says to not just work hard when the boss is looking but work with the understanding that you as a believer are working for the LORD, He sees, He rewards your integrity.

Colossians 3:25

The bible tells us here that God judges without partiality. It's hard to imagine a judge who is fair. In the Old Testament we are told that God's judgment is not according to what He hears or what He sees, it's according to what He knows about us. Where there has been obedience there will be reward, where there has been wrongdoing, there will be punishment. Going back to the slave/master relationship and even to the employee/employer relationship; the harsh cruel master/employer or the lazy and untrustworthy employee or slave will be rewarded accordingly. It's a daunting idea to think this through but you can see it is your witness to those around you. Go back to verse 23 for a daily rule of thumb; do your work whole-heartedly as if you were working for the LORD. The NLT says, "Work willingly as if you were working for the LORD rather than for people".

Colossians 4:1

It seems like this verse belongs in the previous chapter. Let me reiterate; if you have authority over another person as their employer, or as in biblical times as a slave owner/master God expects you will be just and fair. Notice Paul did not say that slave owners who were believers should free their slaves but of course they could. In any case there would be an expectation that good treatment of employed is expected and there is accountability to God for these relationships.

It's reasonable to assume that these same slaves and masters, who came to faith in Christ, would meet together in the local church to worship God together and study the word, there was accountability, they were brothers and sisters in the LORD.

As I think back on what we have studied today it is clear that once we have been saved and have committed ourselves to Christ there is a lot of work to be done in putting off the old life of catering to the flesh and putting on the new life of seeking the things that are above. I think this is the practical living out of the verse in Philippians 1:6 "I am confident that He who has begun a good work in you will perfect or finish it until the day of Christ Jesus" combined with Philippians 2:12 "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out or carry out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God Who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure." We are saved by grace, not by works but then we work out the reality of that salvation daily in our lives by putting into practice all that Paul has instructed us to do in Chapter 3 of Colossians. On the one hand Christ has done the greatest work, on the other our work has just begun. However, if it is done in thankfulness and gratitude for all Christ has begun in us, it will be a life of excellence, maturing and joy, knowing we are bringing pleasure to the heart of our heavenly Father.