



How to Have a Happy Home

[3:18-21]

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“Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart” (3:18-21).

Words are not adequate to describe the woe-ful condition of our society. To say we are facing problems is an extreme understatement. Problems appear to be coming from every side.

Concerning problems with crime, it seems that “might makes right,” that whatever a person is able to do, he can do. Morality, apparently, makes no difference. “What I want to do when I want to do it” with no thought of the consequences seems to be the order of the day.

Closely connected with the crime problem is our war on drugs. We have officially declared war on drugs, whatever that means. People do not take drugs just because they are available. A weakness of the will of the people is involved. Those giving in to drugs do not have the determination to stand up to the temptation to take one puff, one pill, or one poke to make them “feel good.” Supposedly, with a dose they can escape reality. But reality has a way of coming back even more real than before, and the costs of this “feeling good” are seldom considered. A price has to be paid, an enormous price!

We are also seeing the disintegration of homes at an unprecedented rate. Marriage, seemingly,

has lost its staying power. Individuals decide that they no longer want to be married and call it quits. Others view their marriage vows as unimportant and do not hesitate to violate them at will.

While I do not have all the answers to these problems (or others that could be mentioned), Paul did address problems related to the home in Colossians 3:18-21. He did so by addressing four classes of people involved in the home. Before looking at each, consider God’s plan for marriage. It is stated clearly and succinctly in the New Testament:

And it was said, “Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of dismissal”; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Matthew 5:31, 32).

And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?” And He answered and said, “Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh’? Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate and divorce her?” He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matthew 19:3-9).

Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery (Mark 10:11, 12).

These passages can be summarized by saying that God demands one man for one woman for life. For this reason the marriage vows include "till death do us part." Regardless of circumstances, richer or poorer, sickness or health, better or worse, you promised to be faithful. That was your vow. That is what God demands of each of us.

Divorce is unobtainable except for the cause of adultery! Paul stated plainly that if divorce occurs for another reason, you are to remain unmarried or be reconciled to your spouse (1 Corinthians 7:11). Thus, marrying again when adultery was not the cause of divorce is a violation of Scripture. We are to work out our problems. We are to stay together and work for happiness.

THE WIFE (3:18)

Paul has outlined the way in which marital happiness is to be accomplished: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (3:18). This verse along with others which are similar are despised by the modern women's lib movement. It still is a needed verse.

Why Paul began his admonitions on the home by addressing wives, I do not know. He does include all in the home before he finishes.

**"The word
'submit' is a fighting word
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Wives are told to "be subject." The word "submit" is a fighting word in modern times. The idea of this word does not in any way indicate one person being inferior to another. The

husband and wife are equal in God's eyes: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). We are even told to be in submission to each other: "And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). The key to Christian living is to realize we are to help each other. Everything we do, everything we say, should be designed to help the other person go to heaven.

Someone must assume the responsibility. The buck stops somewhere, and God has decreed, "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Wives are told to be subject "to *your* husband." (Emphasis mine.) It is necessary in our social structure to emphasize the word "your."

For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear (1 Peter 3:5, 6).

Sarah is the perfect example of the attitude of submission. The outside world is shut out in the marriage vows. Regardless of what comes, the wife is to be submissive to her husband's leadership.

Paul continued by saying "as is fitting in the Lord." You are a Christian! Act like it! Live in such a way that others, even your husband, will know you belong to the Lord in all things. God alone comes first, but your husband should know that he comes high on your list of priorities!

THE HUSBAND (3:19)

Husbands have responsibilities too! It takes both! For example, one cannot quarrel! One cannot resolve problems! It takes both husband and wife working together.

"Husbands, love your wives," Paul says. Why should Paul tell wives to submit to their own husbands and husbands to love their wives? These are the most needed things. The word translated "love" is *agape*. *Agape* describes an act of the will, not a response of the emotions. It is a conscious decision. This love for the wife is a decision to love her during those times when she

is not so lovable, during the poorer times, the sick times, the worse times. It is the husband saying, "In spite of what happens, I will act toward you in a loving manner." Husbands, get your minds where they belong: Love your wives! Both commands, the one to the wives and the one to the husbands, would go a long way toward solving today's problems if they were implemented.

Husbands are told, "Do not be embittered against them." Things will not always go the way you want them to go. You will be frustrated at times. The NIV says, "Do not be harsh with them."

THE CHILDREN (3:20)

Each of us, regardless of who we are, needs to understand his place. Children, the offspring, are told to "obey." While the word translated "be subject to" is, at times, translated "obey," this word translated here "obey" is different from the word for "be subject to" used regarding wives. An element of respect and honor is in this word.

Why obey parents? "For this is well-pleasing to the Lord." God commanded it. Teenagers often ask, "Why?" It pleases the Lord. The greatest desire of all Christians is to please the Lord. Our one overriding consideration is to please the Lord. The greatest determining factor of all behavior is this: Is it pleasing to the Lord?

THE PARENTS (3:21)

Parenting is a difficult task! A fine line must be walked. We parents know that we are to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart" (3:21). Parents must not provoke their children to wrath or anger. It is an easy line to cross over. All parents have at one time or another crossed over that line. It never ceases to amaze me, as I look backward, how well my children turned out in spite of my stumbling efforts.

We are not to discourage them. But this attitude of encouraging is one that every Christian should have toward all. We are to be encouraging, not discouraging.

The ultimate responsibility of rearing children is the father's. If, and when, God calls

anyone into question about the family, it will be the father. What an awesome responsibility!

CONCLUSION

Paul's instructions regarding the home will resolve most of our "home problems" when applied. Here is the divine recipe for a happy home. Will you apply these instructions to your home?

On the Home

"The father who hasn't perceived that life is much like crossing a mine field had better prepare himself for some heavy casualties."

Gordon MacDonald,
Action Plan for Great Dads

"Someone has calculated that, in the average divorce, twelve persons are directly affected."

"Briefly, there is abundant evidence to prove that almost any two reasonably normal persons can make a success of marriage if (1) they know what to do, and (2) they do it. Even Dr. Kinsey, who approached the subject from a very different point of view . . . concluded unequivocally that the main factor in a successful marriage is the determination to succeed."

"Sociologists tell us that they very seldom see a case of disintegration in the personality of a child but that can be traced back to either a broken or unhappy home."

Being a Good Listener

1. A willingness to give another my attention.
2. An openness to perceive the other's views and values.
3. A readiness to suspend judgment or evaluation.
4. A patience to wait for the other's own expression of his or her own thoughts and feelings.
5. A genuineness of empathy that seeks to take the other's position for the moment, to see the world as the other sees it.
6. A commitment to work toward dialogue that enriches us both.

David Augsburger,
Caring Enough to Hear