

Let's face it families are under a great deal of stress today. Hectic schedules, financial pressures, competing wants and desires are constantly pressing in on marriages and on parents and children. Consciously or unconsciously family members are often pressed into a 'me-first' mentality which is harmful to family relationships.

Paul foreshadowed the outcome of a 'me-first' attitude when he wrote to Timothy. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5

<sup>1</sup> But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup> People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

Have nothing to do with such people?? But what are we to do if they happen to live in the same house? What if that list describes us??

Not only is Paul's list of terrible things happening in the world around us, but they are making their way into our family relationships- relationships between spouses and relationships between parents and children. The effects are devastating.

So what is the one lesson we can learn today about family relationships? Paul not only tells us how bad things can be; Paul offers us some advice about how husbands and wives and parents and children can better relate to one another.

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:4

<sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— <sup>3</sup> “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

This passage of scripture, and in particular the portion about wives submitting to their husbands, is often met with much objection as a result of people failing to read the passage in context. So I want to ask everyone to listen again to how this passage starts.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 5:21

More often than not when people read this passage about the relationship of husbands and wives they skip over verse 21 and start instead with verse 22, “Wives, submit to your husbands...” Starting with verse 22 is like making a cake without step one- turn on the oven!

The context of verse 22 and all that follows comes out of Paul’s admonition in verse 18 to be filled with the Spirit. In other words, people who are Spirit-led, Spirit-directed, passionate followers of Jesus will live in a spirit of submission to one another.

Submission is a term that often carries very negative connotations. Many have used the term to promote an unhealthy agenda for families. But I want to look at the term in light of how Jesus lived his life and how it applies to our family relationships.

The best way to understand how Jesus lived his life and thereby taught us how to live comes from a passage in Philippians 2:3-8. Paul begins with how we are to live and then uses the example of Jesus to explain why this lifestyle is possible.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

<sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!

Look at the words used about Jesus in this passage; from Philippians 2: [Jesus] “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” and “[Jesus] humbled himself...”

Now I want you to focus on verse 4: “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Isn’t that how Jesus lived? In Mark 10:45 Jesus himself said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” In Matthew 9:36 it says: “When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had **compassion** on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” And later in Matthew Jesus is said to have ‘had **compassion** on them and healed their sick.’ Do me a favor and remember that word ‘compassion.’

Jesus demonstrated that submission is about ‘looking out for the needs of others’ before our own needs; it is about compassion- a passion for others above self. What a contrast to that list in 2 Timothy where people put their own needs above the needs of others.

With that as the background let’s take a quick look at how that is lived out. And I want to start with husbands. Remember that in the first century women and children were possessions. Women especially were treated as second class citizens. As a result, Christian men had to learn a whole new way of relating to their wives.

So Paul says to men in verse 25: “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church.”

Well how did Christ love the church? We just caught a glimpse of it in what we read, but Paul tells us several other things in Ephesians 5:

First, Jesus gave himself up for her... So, husbands are called to sacrifice their life for their wives. That may not mean literally dying for your wife, men, but it does mean that your wife is worthy of you sacrificing your own needs and wants. What leads to all those negative things in 2 Timothy is an unwillingness to sacrifice on our part.

Second, husbands are to love their wives as their own body... Paul uses the images of food and physical nurture as a way of reminding husbands that they are called to nourish their wife and care for her physical needs. Jesus nourishes his church and provides for our physical needs. Husbands, we need to do the same for our spouse.

Then Paul goes all the way back to the beginning and draws the line from Genesis. “A man will leave his father and mother...” We call this the “leave and cleave” passage; but for husbands we can just update the language to “Grow up!” Your wife is not your mother! Grow up and get on with being a real man.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. Jesus looked out for the needs of others, he humbled himself, he had compassion for others; that men is what loving your wife is all about.

But Paul didn't only speak to husbands; he also had something to say to wives. 'Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.' So, what can wives learn about how to relate to their husbands from this illustration?

Sadly, Paul's illustration of the church submitting to Christ as the example that wives should follow isn't a good example in today's church. I would venture to say that the church-that's you and me- doesn't do the best job of demonstrating this relationship. We-the church- tend to be more independent and stubborn and often think we know better than Jesus. So don't take that example of how the church relates to Christ as the example wives are to follow.

Instead, let's think about how the church should relate to Jesus. Honor and respect are two words I believe are appropriate. And those are two words that I believe are fitting for wives to model with their husbands.

When I honor and respect Jesus it means that I want his words to be given the highest place in my life. When I honor and respect Jesus it means that I want to listen intently so that I can show my love for him by carrying out what he wants me to do.

When I think about how honor and respect come through in a husband and wife relationship I believe that wives have an amazing power to lift their husband's self-esteem. Peter even makes the point in 1 Peter 3:1 that a wife by her respect and honor for her husband may be able to win him over to the faith. What a beautiful picture of the power of a woman who honors and respects her husband.

Do you see how living out of a lifestyle modeled by Jesus and seeking to love others above self will enable us to avoid the list of problems found in 2 Timothy 3:1-5? If we stop the selfish type of me first love that destroys relationships; then we can practice a new way of loving our spouse and begin to see positive outcomes in our homes!

That brings us to the relationship of parent and child. Again, remember that verse 21, 'submit to one another out of reverence for Christ' is the overarching principle for all these relationships. And we said that these relationships should be marked by loving one another in such a way that we put the needs of others above our own.

The story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 may be a wonderful illustration of Paul's admonition to children and fathers in Ephesians 6 Children, obey your parents and Fathers, do not exasperate your children.

If you remember the story of the prodigal son, the son dishonored his father by placing his own needs above those of his father. The son, who wanted his share of the inheritance, was actually saying to his father, "I wish you were dead."

Doesn't sound like 'Honor your father and mother...' stuck; but it does sound like the prodigal in the end of the story learned that failing to do so carried a heavy personal price. (Let me just say that the actions of the elder brother do not necessarily mean that he honored his father either...but we will save that discussion for a later time.)

When the prodigal came to his senses in the pig pen I think it was a moment of clarity that demonstrated that his father had taught him well as a young child. (I know that as parents one of the things we struggle with the most is when our children reject the 'training and instruction of the Lord' that we instilled in them as children. But here is the reminder that I hold on to; at some point in time all that teaching eventually reemerges in their life. Until then, our job is to practice the patience of the Prodigal's father and be ready to act likewise.)

Do you remember the word I asked you remember earlier? [Compassion] Jesus had compassion on people because he put their needs above his own. Now look at Luke 15:20 "But while he [the prodigal] was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with **compassion** for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

The father had compassion. He placed the needs of his son above his own needs and ran to embrace him. The father of the prodigal knew that what was most important was the unconditional love he needed to give his son.

All morning long we've contrasted two passages of scripture: 2 Timothy 3 and Philippians 2. One paints a picture of selfishness while the other demonstrates what it means to love by placing the needs of others above our own.

If family really matters, and if we want to have families that stand strong in this 'me-first' world then we need to choose to live like Jesus, to love like Jesus and to continually put the needs of others above our own as we submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

## Issues Facing Families

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

Ephesians 5:21-6:4

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

## How Jesus Lived

Philippians 2:3-8

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Mark 10:45 “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 9:36 “When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had **compassion** on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

Matthew 14:14 Jesus is said to have ‘had **compassion** on them and healed their sick.’

Submission is ‘looking out for the needs of others’ before our own needs.

## Husbands

Love your wife as Christ loved the church v. 25

1. Jesus gave himself.
2. Jesus nourishes his church
3. Husbands need to \_\_\_\_\_ !

## Wives

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.  
v. 24

Honor and Respect

## **Parents and Children**

Children, obey your parents

Fathers, do not exasperate your children.

### The Prodigal Son - Luke 15

“But while he [the prodigal] was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with **compassion** for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” Luke 15:20