

Christ In The Home – Children & Parents

Colossians 3:20-21

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Let's read Colossians 3:18-21, as we've done every time. Paul says to wives, verse 18, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." Again, that repeated phrase, "in the Lord." This is describing a Christian home where the Lord is central. Then, he spoke to husbands, verse 19, "Husbands,"—you are to—"love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Beginning in verse 20 tonight, our text, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. 21 Fathers,"—or parents—"provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

I heard of an old Chinese proverb that says, "One generation plants the trees, and another gets the shade." I love that. If you're a family today, you're planting trees for your children, for your children's children, and even the next generation for them to enjoy the blessings and the shade. We want to plant Christian homes. Amen? We want to plant God-fearing homes, homes that are based upon God's design in His Word. Charles Erdman said, "The Christian home constitutes one of the richest gifts of Christ to the world." I love that. The Christian home constitutes one of the richest gifts of Christ to the world. What a blessing they are to this world.

If Christ is in your home we discovered, real quick peek at it with me, in verse 15 that we need to have, " . . . the peace of Christ rule in your hearts," and in our homes; and in verse 16, we need to have, " . . . the word of Christ dwell in you richly." So, His peace in our hearts, His Word dwelling in our hearts and in our home, and thirdly, we saw in verse 17, that everything we do, we should do for His name and for His glory. So, we want His peace and His Word and His name to be in our hearts, in our homes, and His name to be glorified. When that happens, we have the result, verse 18, we have, "Wives,"—who—"submit,"—themselves to the husband,—"as it is fit in the Lord." Then, verse 19, we have, "husbands,"—who love their wives,—and be not bitter against them." And, we've been turning to Ephesians 5 and looking at the parallel passage that adds a little more richness and depth as well.

Tonight, we also discover two more things that in this Christ-centered home where the peace of Christ rules and the Word of Christ dwells and the name of Christ is glorified, we find out that we have children that obey their parents. What a novel thought. Think about that—children obey their parents? We also have parents who do not provoke their children to wrath but, we're going to see in Ephesians, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We see today that sadly around us the demise of the family. I've lived long enough now to watch the continual degeneration, deterioration of our nation. It just continues to deteriorate. The farther we drift from the Bible, the farther we drift from God's Word, the more we deteriorate. What a sad day we live in. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Paul describes the characteristics of the end of time in the last days. There's two features there among the list that I wanted to mention. Paul says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come,"—savage, dangerous, dark days—"For men shall be,"—two things—" . . . disobedient to parents,"—and

without family love. That's two of the signs that we're living at the end of time: disobedient to parents and that it will also be without a family love. In the King James translation it reads, "Without natural affection," but it literally means without a love of family.

Do you know that right now globally and nationally in America there is a decline of people getting married and the decline of people who are married having children. The world is not repopulating right now, and it's a sign of the end of times.

Let's look at the individual exhortations and commands in this text. The first is in verse 20, God's Word to children. Let's read it. "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." At the end of 18, it's " . . . in the Lord," now it's, " . . . unto the Lord." I want to note a couple quick and simple observations before we unpack the text. There were children in these Christian homes, so he's speaking to the homes, to the families, to the parents, to the mothers and fathers, and then he speaks to the children. There were children in these homes.

As I said, today we see a decline in people wanting to have children, a lot of different reasons—children are expensive, children cramp your style, and people don't want to raise children in this dark, difficult, dangerous time—but this Christian home, these homes had children. I realize that there are some who are married and want children and for many different reasons are unable to have children, so God's grace is sufficient for you, His strength is made perfect in your weakness. God makes up for that by encouraging you or maybe you do adoption, maybe you do foster parenting, maybe you get involved in ministry and serving others or teaching children in the Sunday school. There are many different ways that you can invest your time and your talents, but they, as a general rule, got married with all purpose and design and intent that as the fruit of that union it would produce children.

And, by the way, before you have children, you get married. You think, Why would I have to say that? Pretty obviously, right? God's design is for the husband and the wife to, " . . . leave father and mother, and shall cleave to,"—one another, be glued together—"and they twain shall be one,"—and out of the union, God brings children. So, that's important to understand.

Write down Psalm 127:3-4. It says children are a gift of the Lord. Blessed are the children is the fruit of thy womb, and they're a heritage from the Lord. Do you know that if you have children, they are rewards and gifts from God. You're saying, "Oh, I wanna believe that. Oh, I wanna believe that. Please help me to believe that." It's the Word of God. They're not punishment. God isn't punishing you, "God, why me? Why did You give me these crazy kids." I know sometimes you want to pull your hair out and you feel like that, but they are gifts from God.

They're also, and I don't have time to cover all facets of parenting, loaned to you by God for a short time period. They belong to God. They are your children, but they're loaned to you. You're a steward over them. God says, "I'm going to entrust these children to you to train them," as we're going to see, "in the fear and admonition of the Lord." You only have a very small window. When they're young, and you're busy, it seems like it will never end or you'll never get

out of diapers—it's diaper after diaper. But, it's a very small window of opportunity that you have that God has entrusted you with these precious gifts. The Bible says that they're like arrows, “. . . in the hand of a mighty man . . . happy is the man that hath his quiver full.” I love that. So, children are a gift, remind yourself. Also, write down Genesis 1:28 where God told Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful, and multiply,” right? I think that still applies to us today.

Notice the word “children” in verse 20. Let's unpack this verse. This word in the Greek is actually referring to underage, dependent children. When he says, “Children, obey your parents,” he's not talking about a 35-year-old child that's living in the basement and mom's still doing his laundry, baking him pizza, folding his underwear for him. What is the age, I don't know, but they are dependent, young children. That's what it's referring to in verse 20.

Note the command, and it is a command, which means that it is actually an imperative. It's not a suggestion that, “Children, obey your parents in all things.” It's what's called an imperative. This is not optional. Children are to be obedient to their parents. It's important for children to learn to respect and obey parental authority—yes, I said authority—at a young age. This is where they're learning to be respecting authority, which brings them out into society learning to respect authority. One of the reasons why we have such a high ratio of juvenile delinquents and rebellion among youth is they never learned respect for authority in the home. So, parental rule is the first circle of authority in God's moral government of this world.

There are three features about this command I want you to see. First, a child must obey continuously. In the Greek, when it says, “Children, obey your parents,” it's in what's called the present tense, so it's constantly, continually, habitually keep obeying your parents. It's not just when you feel like it, it's not when you just think it's a wonderful thing...have you ever noticed if you say, “Kids, get in the car we're going to Disneyland.” BOOM! They're in the car. They jump in, put their seatbelts on. If they know they're going to Disneyland, they're in the car the night before. But if you say, “Time to clean your room,” they space out. They don't listen (right?) or obey. They're to be obedient constantly, and we're going to see in all areas. This obedience is to be ongoing and continue.

A little information about the word itself, “obey.” The word “obey” means to hearken and to hear under. Some believe that in its etymology it meant to hearken and to obey, so the idea behind this word “obey” is literally to hear with the purpose of obeying. Sometimes when you're trying to talk to your young children, especially they're going somewhere else mentally or they're looking somewhere else, you have to get eye contact and make sure that they hear you, but it has the idea of to hear under, so the idea of hearing under the authority of the parents with the purpose and the intention and the desire to obey. It also conveys to do it with the right attitude. It's telling children to listen, to be obedient, and to do it with the right attitude. We're going to see it is actually as unto the Lord. It is, “. . . pleasing unto the Lord.”

Notice, secondly, that a child's obedience must be toward both parents. It says in verse 20, “Children, obey your parents,” not just obey your dad, not just obey your mom. Sometimes kids play that, “Dad said I didn't have to do it,” or “Mom said I don't have to do it,” or “I'm gonna tell

Dad what you told me not to do,” and they try to pit mom and dad against each other, but it’s both parents. Now, that concept is derived from what’s called the Ten Commandments. Have you ever heard of the Ten Commandments? Not the ten suggestions. Do you know what commandment number five is? Honor your father and mother. Both of them are in there, “Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” That’s Ephesians 6:2-3. So, we are to obey continually, we’re to obey both parents, we’re to listen carefully, and with an attitude and action children are to be obedient.

The importance of a biological father and mother in the home cannot be underestimated. I know that this is perhaps a sensitive issue for some because it really touches right where you live, but the ideal design by the design of God is for a biological father and a biological mother to be raising these children. Now, it doesn’t mean stepparents can’t be wonderful parents and do an amazing job. I’ve seen some amazing, amazing adopted kids in homes and just have a blessed relationship, but God’s design is for the biological parents, father and mother both, to be leading the home and to be directing the affairs of the home. It’s so very important. So, the importance of both parents living in harmony together in the home, and verse 17, desiring the name of the Lord be glorified. Peek back at verse 17, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

Notice, thirdly, about the child’s obedience. The child’s obedience extends to all things, verse 20, “ . . . in all things.” This means every aspect of life. Paul is assuming this is a Christian home and that the parents will not ask the kids to do anything that’s immoral or illegal or unethical, but when a general rule they are to be obedient in all areas of their relationship to their parents. Parents should not ask children to do anything contrary to God’s Word, and there could be a time when that would happen, and we must obey God rather than man, right? We’re to be obedient to God no matter what. Even Jesus was subject to His parents. Think about that. Jesus was God in flesh, and in His home He was obedient to His father and His mother. When Joseph said, “Jesus, get a broom and sweep the carpenter’s shop,” He got a broom and He swept the carpenter’s shop. He learned submission in the home.

Fourthly, the reason for this command, this is so important, verse 20 says, “ . . . for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” This always is the motive. It has to be focused on Christ. Christ controls and guides and motivates our home. Our marriages, it’s pleasing to the Lord when a wife submits to her husband; it’s pleasing to the Lord when a husband loves his wife; it’s pleasing to the Lord when children obey their parents; it’s pleasing to the Lord when parents don’t provoke their children but bring them up in nurture, admonition, and love; so it’s pleasing to the Lord. It’s so very important. That’s a key ingredient here. Christian children should want to please God.

Remember when Jesus was baptized and the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and God the Father spoke from heaven about Jesus, God the Son. What did the Father say? “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Some translations have, “in whom my soul delights.” Jesus was pleasing the Father, and He did everything to

please His Father, including obeying His father on earth.

It also, a little footnote here, brings blessing. The reasons are: 1) it's pleasing to God; 2) it brings blessings. We won't turn there quite yet, but write down Ephesians 6:2-3. It says there, "(which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." So, as a general rule, it doesn't mean that all obedient children will have long, blessed lives. We live in a fallen, sinful world and tragedies do happen; but more so than not, if you are an obedient child, guess what you'll have? A long, blessed, prosperous life. You, like me, could probably testify to scars physically that you have (for me, I have scars physically) and scars sometimes emotionally because you weren't obedient to your parents when you were young. There's still pain, there's still sorrow, there's still hurt you carry because you did not obey your parents when you were young. This isn't just for the Lord, this is for you. The benefit to you as a child is tremendous, "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

In Bible days if you cursed your parents or disobeyed them, you were actually taken outside the city and you were stoned to death—pretty hardcore. They didn't really have juvenile delinquency. They were just put to death. So, if you want to live long upon the earth, children, obey your parents. That's God's Word to children. (You might want to watch that section of this teaching online with your kids sometime.)

Now, God's Word to parents, verse 21, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." It's amazing to me how much rich teaching and information is packed in verses 18-21. From verses 18-21 you have all this rich Christian teaching on the home. Now, note again, God's commands are reciprocal—if a wife is to submit to her husband, then the husband is to love his wife; if children are to obey their parents, then parents are not to provoke their children. It also notes that this command to parents is elevating to children.

You know in the Roman world when a baby was born they would actually lay the baby on the ground on a blanket in front of the father. The father could choose to pick it up and accept it or turn away, and it would be sold as a slave or put to death. That happened quite often, they would just walk away and not accept their child. Children were just not respected in the ancient world. Again, loving children, respecting children, protecting children, valuing children is a Judeo-Christian concept. The reason why we're losing that in America is because we're losing our Judeo-Christian foundation of living. Our culture is deteriorating. It's so very simple, we need to get back to the Bible, the Word of God. In the ancient Roman world, kids just...it was unheard of that parents would treat their children this way.

Notice the word "Fathers," in verse 21. Is Paul singling out fathers? I think the answer is yes and no. The word, and it's really important for you to catch this, is used in Hebrews 11:23 for both the father and the mother. It also conveys the idea of the father's the male and the mother's the female. I don't just say that, it's conveyed in the word that's used or translated in Hebrews 11:23 where it says that Moses was hidden by his parents. It's talking about his mother and his father. It's the same Greek word that's used here in Colossians, so the reason

why perhaps they translated it “fathers,” is because I do believe that fathers are to be the leaders in helping to train, rear, and take care of the children, not maybe some of the domestic duties that wives do, but they are to be engaged, connected, and involved in training, rearing, loving, disciplining, leading, guiding, protecting the home.

One of the big problems in our culture today is absentee fathers, that our government will actually support a woman to have children without a husband, and it's detrimental to our culture. When they have a strong father figure, and he's leading the home as he should, loving his wife as he should...by the way, a husband loving his wife as Christ loved the church and the wife submitting to her husband is a model for your children. You're modeling for your children what marriage is to be, what a home is to be. Many of us perhaps grew up in a home where that wasn't modeled, so we need the Holy Spirit's help to have a godly home to model for our children. The idea of headship and submission and respect is so very important.

The word “fathers” is not just talking about the dads, it's talking about the parents; so both parents, these words are for you. Notice it's a command in verse 21, “Fathers provoke not your children to anger,” now it's in the negative. This is what you're not to do. We're going to look at what you are to do, but as Christian parents you're not to provoke your children to anger. The word “provoke” means to stir them up, to anger them, to aggravate them. The word can be used in a good sense and in a bad sense. You know the Scriptures say provoke one another to love and good works, right? Same word. It doesn't just say provoke each other, provoke one another to love and good works. But this is the negative sense. This is the negative context, don't provoke your children. Do not be continually exasperating your children, one translation has.

The idea of provoking, “. . . your children to anger,” the word “anger” means to provoke them or exasperate them or embittering them—to make them bitter and sour, to break their spirits. We don't want to do that. We want children to be obedient, but we don't want to break their spirit. Do not continually exasperate your children. Paul is forbidding every action of provoking your children. He wants parents to be considerate of their children. Some translations have stop nagging your kids. Don't cause them to lose heart or exasperate them. This can happen quite often in a Christian home because you have these high standards and you want your kids to be obedient so you become overly strict, overly domineering, overly controlling, and you break their spirits and you cause them to be losing heart and exasperated and they also become angry.

Write down Ephesians 6:4. It says, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath,”—which is an outburst of anger, which earlier in Colossians we are to lay aside the works of the flesh, one of them being wrath. Parents can do great harm to their children, and God is warning us. I have seen it many, many, many times parents with good intentions but they become too strict, too overbearing, too legalistic, too domineering, and they don't parent in love and they exasperate their children and it ends up they become rebellious and leave home and it's a tragedy.

What are some of the ways that parents exasperate their children? When I say that, again remember, this is what not to do, okay? This isn't, "Oh, I gotta write these down. I gotta know how to exasperate my kids." This is what you're not to do, and this is just John Miller's list. It could be quite longer. First, overstrictness, overly strict. Someone said that raising children is like holding a wet bar of soap—if you squeeze too tight, SPOOOT! they're gone; if you hold them too loose, SHWEEET! they slip out; so it's a really delicate balance.

You know, when God gives you children, He doesn't give you experimental models for a while where you get to test it out, learn what to do, what not to do, and then you throw them away and get the real ones. In a way, it kind of reminds me of being a grandfather that you are a little bit more knowledgeable, a little bit more mellow, a little bit more accepting of your grandchildren and you see in your children kind of the same youthful frustration and overstrictness sometimes that maybe you exhibited in your children, so just chill out, mom and dad. Don't be overly strict. Be careful. Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer, had a very strict father and he said for many years it was hard for him to relate to God as his Father in heaven because of his father's overstrictness.

The second thing I wrote down was be careful not to exasperate your children by being overly protective. You never let them do anything. You just wrap them in bubble wrap, you know. They can't ever ride a bike, they can't ever go outside, they might get struck by lightning, and you're just overprotective. Again, that could breed resentment and anger.

The third is criticism and fault-finding and setting unrealistic goals. Every child is different—different abilities, different grades in school, different talents, different gifts. If you have multiple children, you know each one is different, each one is unique. Be careful not to compare them with each other and be overly restrictive and overly showing fault-finding and critical.

The fourth, I have showing favoritism. Remember Jacob favored Joseph, and what problems that brought into their family, right? So, you need to love all your children equally, not just the obedient, compliant ones. You love the rebellious ones, you love the difficult ones, and you show them all equal love and affection and attention. Again, it's important if you have multiple kids to be able to allot special times one-on-one with them.

I have three daughters, and before my son was born, even after my son was born, I would do little daddy-daughter dates with my girls. I would pick one out and say, "Let's go get donuts," just as simple as daddy and daughter getting in the car going to get donuts. They always got the ones with the little pink sprinkles on them, which I would never pick for my daughter. Those are the ones she wanted. I can still see my oldest daughter, Sarah, sitting across the table with a pink donut with her little pigtails sticking out, kicking her feet with a big smile on her face, I'm with dad at Winchell's Donut shop getting donuts. That's just such a precious memory, and they still remember that to this day. I adopted the same practice with my granddaughters, so all my granddaughters love donuts. They learned it from grandpa. It's important to give them individual attention and to not be fault-finding.

The fifth point I have is we can exasperate them by neglect. A good example of that is David and Absalom. I believe that Absalom rebelled against his father, David, because he felt neglected by his dad. He was too busy running the things of the kingdom.

The sixth is not showing affection. This is not revolutionary. This is not some new information, but parents must show their children affection. Again, I really believe with all my heart that you have to break the cycle. If you did not have a father, or even a mother which is more rare, but a father especially, that showed you affection in a godly, wholesome way, break the cycle. Show your kids affection.

I'll never forget having a father in my office years ago, tears running down his face and he said, "My dad never hugged me, never told me he loved me, never showed me any affection, and now I'm doing the same with my kids," and it was just tearing him up. We prayed together that God would give him the ability to break that cycle and to show affection and love to his children. I don't believe that our kids are ever too old or too young to be able to show them affection. It's so very important. John Newton, again the great man who wrote "Amazing Grace" said, "I know that my father loved me, but he did not seem to wish me to see it." That's really sad.

I wrote down the seventh, that we can exasperate our kids through divorce. Divorce is detrimental and devastating to children, and we need to remember that when we're considering that situation.

Hypocrisy is the eighth, being hypocrites in the home. If there's inconsistency, if you claim to be Christians, you go to church, but you're not really living the Christian life, then that's going to exasperate your children.

Now, God gives them reasons for this command as well. Go back with me to verse 21 and let's wrap this up. He says do this, " . . . lest they be discouraged." So, don't exasperate your kids and do this, " . . . lest they be discouraged." The word "discouraged" means lose heart or become disheartened. They lose confidence and a determination in life. It's so very important.

I want you to turn in your Bibles and we'll wrap this up to Ephesians 6:4 where Paul gives us the remedy for not provoking your children. In Colossians, we just read, is negative. There's no positive there, " . . . lest they be discouraged." Ephesians fills this in with the positive steps that you are to take as a parent to raise your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Let's read Ephesians 6:4. He says, "And, ye fathers,"—you parents—"provoke not your children to wrath,"—here it is—"but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That's one of the fullest, clearest, most instructional teachings in the New Testament for parents that are Christians in the home today, " . . . bring them up." The remedy for exasperating them is the positive command.

You're to do three things, moms and dads, write them down. First, love them tenderly. I already told you that you can exasperate them by not showing them affection. Again, it's so important

for dads to be affectionate. There's nothing unmanly or unmasculine about showing affection to your children. So, we're to bring them up tenderly, Ephesians 4:6.

The word "bring them up," is the same Greek phrase used in Ephesians 5:29 where it says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might . . . nourisheth and cherisheth . . . the church." That means to warm with body heat, same Greek phrase is here used as "bring them up." It means to warm with body heat. So, hug your kids, kiss your kids, tell them that you love them. Listen to them. Take time to spend with them, and important, especially for fathers with their daughters, and all their kids as well.

Notice secondly, discipline them consistently. Here's step one, love them tenderly, but at the same time, discipline them consistently. Today, we feel like if you really love your kids, you never discipline them. Have you met parents like that where they say, "I don't spank my kids, I love them." The Bible says, if you love them, you'll discipline them often. It's part of your love. It's part of your responsibility. There's gotta be that velvet steel in the home. This is why it's so important for a father to take the lead in all these areas. It's so important. So, we are to discipline them constantly.

This is the word found in Ephesians 6 for "nurture." The actual word "nurture" means to train by discipline. It means that you don't just smack them, you don't just swat them, you don't just hit them, you are disciplining them in a way that's instructive. You're doing it to train them, to teach them. It's so very important.

Write down Proverbs 29:17, "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." Write down Proverbs 13:24, "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly." It's so very important. Now, when you do discipline them, never do it in anger, never do it unjustly, never do it without explanation for the reasons. You can't just hit your kid and expect them to know why they're being punished. Again, it's sad, but parents who use spanking or corporal punishment in the home, and not all kids need that, are in danger of being arrested and thrown into jail for that today. But it needs to be done properly and in love with the purpose of instruction and training them and nurturing them. It's so very important. Discipline them constantly.

Notice also, thirdly, instruct them wisely. Here's the three positive commands: love them tenderly, discipline them consistently, and a lot of times I'm convinced of this, both from my own experience and observation even as a grandfather today, a lot of times parents don't discipline their kids because they're just too lazy. It's a lot of work. You have to actually stop watching the game, get off the couch, and deal with your child. How many times have you been in a public place and you're thinking, You should spank those children, and if you don't, you should give me the permission to do it. You may see the pastor go to jail if that happened. They're just too lazy. It is a lot of work to be parents, that's why it's good to have kids when you're young, when you have the ability to get off the couch, when you can still move, when you can still catch them.

We have a little three-year-old grandson that loves the beach but just...he's taken after his

grandpa. The minute you set him down, SWOOSH! he takes off to the ocean. He can't swim yet. He just wants to go right into the water, and if it wasn't for his dad there to run after him, he'd be gone. If grandpa took him to the beach, he'd come back without him. It's like, I can't catch him, he's too fast for me! So, it's a lot of work, and sometimes parents are just lazy and they don't want to get off the couch and discipline their children. But it's with the idea of instructing them, and there's the phrase in Ephesians 6:4, "... admonition of the Lord."

So, bring them up in the nurture, which is to show affection, and the word "admonition" is the key word there. It means instruction or teaching, "... of the Lord." Parents teach your children about God. Teach them the Bible. Read them the Scriptures. Teach them Bible stories. Talk to them about the Lord. Take them to church, be involved in a church. If you have children in your home underage, the church should be a vital part of your life. Don't get so involved in sports and other activities, which are fine and wonderful, they can be healthy and good, but the priority should be church, and dad should be the leader. He should be the one getting his Bible, getting his wife's hand, getting the children ready, and getting off to church leading them to worship God. Let them see God in your life. It's so very, very important.

So, you love them tenderly, you discipline them consistently, and you train them and teach them about God. Remember Joshua said, "... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Amen?