

Text: Colossians 3:18-4:1

Title: House Rules, Part 1

Truth: Christianity guides life's most private relationships; in YOUR life too.

Date/Location: Sunday December 27, 2015 at FBC

Introduction

We approach the start of the New Year which we call 2016. This is not a very significant changeover on the calendar in the sense that there are other New Year demarcations that are more significant.

1. For instance, the Jewish Rosh Hashanah (head of the year) happens anywhere from September 5 to October 5, 163 days after Passover. It is said to be the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve. It is the first month of the "civil calendar."
2. The Jewish religious calendar begins with Nisan, in which occurs the important Passover holiday in the spring of our year. See Exodus 12:2.

I mention this about the year because people in the world often make resolutions for the New Year. We could do the same thing, but whether it is January 1 or December 27 matters nothing in comparison to whether you follow God's directives for the Christian life. Start a new year of obedience to God today!

There is little better place to start than in your home and family relationships. After telling the Christian that he is dead to sin and alive to God, Paul instructs him regarding the character traits he must cultivate in the Christian life and church.

I. Wives: Submit

A. If you are not married, this does not directly apply to you. If you were engaged but never actually married, this does not apply to you. If you are not married because of death of a spouse or divorce, then this also does not apply. It can't apply because you don't have a husband to submit to! Even so, you can learn from the passage in preparation for marriage, or to examine yourself to see if you did what you should in a prior marriage, or to learn what it means to submit in other relationships that you have.

B. Submit.

1. The meaning of the word... It is used of Jesus submitting to His parents (Luke 2:51); of the demons being subject to the apostles so as to be cast out (Luke 10:17, 20); it is used of the unbeliever *not* submitting to God's law (Romans 8:7) and of the Jew *not* submitting to God's righteousness (Rom. 10:3); of the requirement to be subject to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1, 5; 1 Peter 2:13); the spirit of the prophet being subject to the prophet, not wild or out of order (1 Cor. 14:32); of Christ being subject to the Father (1 Cor. 15:27-28); the submission enjoined by Paul upon those who are under the Christian service of certain devoted saints (1 Cor. 16:16); the subjection of all things under Christ (Eph. 1:22); of mutual submission in the home and church,

detailed in the following verses (Eph. 5:21); the church is under the authority of Christ (Eph. 5:24); *everything* is under the authority of Christ (Phil. 3:21); slaves are under the authority of their masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18). Even the earth itself has been put under the authority of humankind (Hebrews 2:8). The believer is in subjection to God the Father (Heb. 12:9, James 4:7). The angels and principalities are under Christ's authority (1 Peter 3:22). Finally, younger people are to submit to their elders (1 Peter 5:5).

2. The frequency of this idea in Scripture *with respect to the wife* is noteworthy. Ephesians 5:22-24 conveys the idea, using the word "subject" twice. This passage in Colossians concisely teaches the same idea. Titus 2:5 describes the wife's role in the marriage the same way. 1 Peter 3:1 and 5 ditto. 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11 don't use this word to address a wife specifically, but rather to instruct women generally in the church.
 3. If you are to have a *Christian* marriage, you may not omit the word submit or its idea from your public marriage promise, even though the idea is culturally unacceptable in our post-feminist-movement era.
 4. The breakdown of the marriage relationship started in Eden and continues unabated to the present moment. Note the origin of it in Gen. 3:16, and correlate that passage with same words "desire" and "rule" in Gen. 4:7.
 5. Submission is something the wife does to herself in relation to her husband (not to all men). She "places herself under" the authority of her husband. She is not worth less. It is just that her God-given assignment in the home is different than her husband's. She submits herself in action and attitude.
- C. Fitting in the Lord. Unsubmissive behavior is plainly outside the bounds of propriety for a Christian woman. It is not even a question or debatable point. It is *ugly*, no matter how physically attractive the wife is (like Prov. 11:22). But quiet Christianity lived out by a wife is *beautiful*, no matter what her physical appearance is (1 Peter 3:3-5). Submission is a timeless principle that crosses boundaries of the centuries, language, and culture. In a matriarchal society, one that has completely turned the roles of men and women upside down, this must be preached and Christians in that society need to eschew the sinful ways of their culture. I believe that American culture is fast becoming a matriarchal society and so this message very necessary today.
- D. How do I know what unsubmissive behavior is? For me, it is a bit easier to see than to define in words. But to keep things objective, compare your behavior to the Bible. Ask your husband if he thinks you are being submissive. (At least if you ask, it shows you have concern for your Biblical responsibilities.) Ask a trusted, mature, and Christian outside observer/advisor to give his or her read on the matter. Consider: if you are bucking your husband's word; doing things behind his back; yelling at him; criticizing him in front of the children; making important decisions without consulting with him (on *his* definition of *important*), then you are not following Scripture and are walking in sin. How then do you expect the

blessing of God on your marriage, family, children, and home life with that kind of conduct? If you are trying to control the home by controlling the schedule, spending, sex, emotional manipulation, silent treatment, threats of divorce or suicide, or other things, you are sinning before God.

- E. Exceptions? Yes, if a husband commands you to do sin or prohibits you to do something God commands. No, if a husband is churlish, slow, uneducated, or not as spiritually mature as he should be.
- F. Is there help for a wife who has a mean husband? Yes: she can talk to him respectfully about it; she can live a model Christian life; she can reprove him biblically; she can carefully seek advice from other mature godly women or her pastor and his wife; enlist the church's help even up to the point of church discipline; and she can involve the law to stop a husband's illegal behavior.

II. Husbands: Love and Do Not Be Bitter

- A. If you are not married, this does not directly apply to you. That is true whether you lost a spouse due to death or divorce (though that should not have happened). It cannot apply because you do not have a wife to love or be bitter toward. But everyone can still learn from what the Scripture says.
- B. Love.
 - 1. Wives are to subject themselves, but husbands must not treat them as subjects!
 - 2. Love includes natural human affection, care, nurture, and intimacy.
 - 3. Love is the powerful verb “agapáō” which is, in short, God’s kind of love, Christ’s kind of love, toward us (John 3:16, 2 Cor. 13:11, Gal. 2:20, 1 John 4:8, 4:11, 4:16). The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave His life for her (Ephesians 5:25).
 - 4. This love seeks the absolute best for the wife. This does not mean that he buys her everything she asks for, in the most expensive stores. It means “best” in God’s eyes, best for her sanctification, best for her final judgment before the Judgement Seat of Christ, best for their family.
 - 5. Selfishness is OUT (1 Cor. 13:4-7), sacrifice is IN (John 15:13)! Harshness is OUT, kindness is IN! Fighting fire with fire is OUT, quenching fire with love is IN! Yelling is OUT, soft answers are IN! Love works hard to avoid making a difficult situation even more difficult. Face it—our marriages are too often near or on the rocks, so to speak, and we can easily make it worse. It takes a lot of self-restraint to make it better.
 - 6. This idea is emphasized in one other key passage of Scripture in which the apostle Paul spends a considerable number of verses to instruct husbands on the matter (Ephesians 5:25-33). This portion of Scripture adds the metric that the husband is to love his wife *as himself*. That makes the standard clear, and makes a good baseline to evaluate yourself against, husband.

7. The husband must be willing to physically protect his wife with his life; but more difficult yet is not to die for his wife, but to *live* for her in a way that follows Scripture!
8. Are there exceptions? No. Take a look at the book of Hosea and see how God loved wayward Israel. That's the love we're talking about.

C. Do not be bitter.

1. Bitterness is used of a sour feeling in the stomach (Revelation 10:9-10) or of a bad taste (like the wormwood of Revelation 8:11). In the latter case, the bitterness is basically poison (perhaps it didn't even taste bad?). In English, "bitterness" is defined as anger or disappointment because you perceive yourself to be treated poorly. It is like the word resentment. It gets close to hatred. It certainly is an opposite of love. Bitterness is OUT, forgiveness is IN!
2. You say, "I'm loving my wife, but it doesn't seem to be working!" And then you get upset about it. Could we call this "upsetness" by the word "bitterness"? Don't sugar coat your feelings to avoid the issue. Don't deceive yourself, or try to deceive others, or try to deceive God. It won't work!
3. Since there is a command here not to be bitter, we can surmise that God knows this sin will be a tendency of all sinful husbands, so he has to push back against it. And, lo and behold, our surmising turns out to be correct. Many a husband has feelings of bitterness toward his wife for a variety of reasons. Cut it out! Fight against those feelings by God's word and with the Holy Spirit's help.

- D. Notice that husbands are not told to submit to their wives. They are to be loving and gentle, but they cannot avoid the delegated leadership role and its responsibilities. An objection may be raised here that Ephesians 5:21 says "submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God." This, it could be argued, says that we all must submit to each other. There are two problems with this understanding. One is that it confuses God-ordained leadership roles: masters cannot submit to servants, and parents cannot submit to children *by definition*. Otherwise it would be an upside-down world. Likewise, husbands cannot properly submit to wives. Second, this objection does not consider the interpretation that Ephesians 5:21 gives the general command, which 5:22-6:9 then fleshes out and defines. Read it this way: submit to one another, and here's how: wives..., husbands..., children..., servants..., masters....

Conclusion

It is time to make some changes and apply and actualize this in your life.

MAP