

CHRIST AND YOUR FAMILY – PROVERBS 6:20

This morning I want to talk to you about “CHRIST AND YOUR FAMILY”. We are going to look at some Key Characteristics of, a Christian Husband who leads, a wife who submits, a child who obeys, and the discipline necessary to fulfill those roles in a God honoring way.

Quote from an article.

Mischa Elman, one of the greatest violinists of the twentieth century, was walking through the streets of New York City one afternoon when a tourist approached him. “Excuse me, sir,” the stranger began, “could you tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?” Elman sighed deeply and replied, “Practice, practice, practice.”

Whether in the concert hall, the playing field or the classroom, the steadiness of practice is crucial for realized potential. It is an even more critical issue when it comes to living the spiritual life. We achieve great things by training ourselves. Through proper training, we form proper habits; we can intentionally choose those habits that are desirable for the formation of character. Habits and practice seem obvious, ordinary, pedestrian; there aren’t many books that deal with this **positively**. But without proper habits, we will never build forward momentum as we strain toward the goal of the high calling of Christ. This momentum is built through a steady obedience – as Eugene Peterson calls it, “a long obedience in the same direction.”

Enthusiasm does not make up for preparation. Exuberance doesn’t translate into a single point on the scoreboard. Seven days of hurrah and whoop-de-do will never compensate for lack of **discipline**, conditioning, practice, coaching, experience and character. Those are the things that will sustain you, whether it’s in the locker room or the board room. We need more than passion. We need **self-discipline**.

In First Corinthians, the Apostle Paul uses “running a race” to make his point about the importance of discipline needed to win a physical race, and more importantly the race of a Christian life.

Discipline Definition: training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character. An activity or experience that provides mental or physical training.

Please open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 9:24,

The Apostle Paul writes...

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

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Living the Christian life has never been, nor is promised to be easy. There is pain involved, there is discipline involved. If we are running to win an imperishable wreath we will suffer hardship. Much of the hardship will come from our own internal battle with sin and rebellion. You and I are our main problem. My heart is the problem. When Paul writes about discipline, he understands that we are not prone to govern ourselves well--we are prone to wander.

We are likely to look for the easiest path to comfort, even if that means a path of disobedience. It takes no effort to love ourselves, or the things of the world. It is the trajectory of every human apart from the work of Christ in a heart. It is the prodigal son thinking, "I know what God says, I know what my mother and father say, but I know better. I need to find out for myself. I want to do it my way".

Christian husbands and wives also make choices that contradict what God has already determined as truth, and go their own way, often all the while talking about how much they love God and believe His Word.

It is an Adam and Eve mentality. They understood what God commanded; they wanted more; they wanted it their way; and we know how that worked out.

Too often, instead of facing and living through the pain and sometimes loneliness of obeying Christ, we compromise. We convince ourselves that we are the one who will dodge the bullet. We are the one who will disobey and thrive. We think, "If God really knew how hard it was to obey in this circumstance, he would not require it of me".

As individuals we have a heart problem, as families, multiply that problem times X family members. When we Christians do not discipline ourselves to come under the authority of God's Word, we bring eventual heartache to our lives, and sorrow to our family. We reap what we sow. Our decisions negatively affect those closest to us. Most importantly, we dishonor God.

As I read Paul's words in verse 27 where he writes "But I discipline my body and make it my slave", I am well aware of the battle that rages in this body, and my great need for discipline and self-control.

Here are some Questions we should be asking:

Am I willing to strive to live life with my family according to Gods revealed truth? Am I *really*?

Will I submit my will to the will of God? Will I bow my knee to what he says about Himself, about me, and about my family? Will I go deep in study to learn about God?

Is the Bible true? If it is true, will I live according to what it says?

Will I apply God's truth to my life when it hurts? Will I continue to run the race with a cramp? When I am lonely? When I am bored? When I am sick? When I am tired? When no one seems to care about me? When my family does not understand? Etc. etc.

The Apostle Paul applied this truth to his own life, because like the runner, he disciplined himself, he ran the race for the imperishable wreath. Remember, he was ship wrecked, stoned, beaten, imprisoned, often cold and hungry. If he was looking for a reason to quit the race, he had several great ones to choose from. Do we have the same mindset? Do we *really*?

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The Holy Spirit is always working in the Christian. He is ready to empower us to change, to conform us into the image of Christ. There are two rails of the railroad track. Both are necessary. I do not “let go and let God”. God is the author and finisher of my faith, true, but at the same time, “I am to discipline myself for the purpose of godliness”.

A strong Christ-centered family comes at a high cost. It is not promised, and the opportunity is easily squandered. It starts with the husband and wife committing to submit to Christ in all areas of life. They will not do it perfectly, but their desire and effort will be strong. It will take center stage to everything else--to their children, extended family, friends, work, entertainment, etc. etc.

The discipline needed to accomplish this is enough to cause many of us to think that the cost is too high. The discipline needed to run the race is too hard. I cannot get there from here. There are too many obstacles. Most, even those who confess that the Bible is God’s Word, without error, are at the same time unwilling to come under its authority in all of life. It is just more convenient to pick and choose what I am willing to change, and just do that.

Brothers and sisters, the Christian does not have the option to pick and choose, but must desire the path of discipline in an effort to obey God’s word. Of course, there is a price to pay for obedience. It often comes at the cost of temporal comfort.

Again, our text today is Proverbs 6:20 – “My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.”

This verse is not isolated. Here are some additional verses from Proverbs on the same topic. This applies to you too daughters.

1:8 – “Hear, my son, your fathers instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.

3:1 – My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments.

4:1 – Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, and give attention that you may gain understanding.

These Proverbs, and there are many others, are clear. **“Kids, listen to the counsel of your parents.”**

Will you discipline yourselves to obey God’s Word in this area?

Why is it that so many children, who profess Christ, make it a lifestyle choice to reject the authority of their parents? Could it be a lack of humble discipline?

CHRIST AND YOUR FAMILY : The Roles

As I teach through some key Characteristics of the different roles in the family, PLEASE think primarily about your role. If you fixate on what others are doing or not doing, you will lose sight of what the Lord might be trying to teach you. We are all flawed sinners growing in Christ day by day. No Christian in this room has arrived, but we need to continue to grow in Christ-likeness through applying God’s Word with discipline and self-control, even when it hurts, or especially when it hurts.

Our mind set should be to “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4) Discipline brings trials, be ready.

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The Husbands Role: Please open your Bibles to Ephesians 5

Christian Husband - You are the God ordained leader of your wife and kids. The buck stops with you. If your wife is leading your family, much trouble will follow. She is your helper and one to regard as an equal in Christ but not an equal in family leadership. This does not mean that she is less intelligent than you are. Often our wives are more intelligent. It does not mean that she is a less effective or capable leader.

What it means is that if we are to be faithful to God's Word, we will believe what the Scripture teaches and ask God to help us be disciplined in leading or learning to lead our wives and kids. He has declared that we are to lead.

Men, if our homes are out of order or in disarray, our lack of leadership is likely the primary cause.

Three characteristics of a Husband Who Leads from Ephesians 5:

Please look at Ephesians chapter 5 verse 22.

First Characteristic of a Husband Who Leads:

1. **He leads in such a way that it makes it easy for his wife to submit.**

Eph 5:22-24 – Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands have a tendency to grab hold of these verses and use them inappropriately, for selfish gain. I would like us to think rightly about them.

V22, "Wives submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord."

Jesus makes it easy for your Christian wife to submit to Him. It does not mean that she will, but He is not an obstacle to her submission.

You might ask how does Christ make it easy?

Before the creation of the world, He chose her to be His own. While she was a sinner, He died for her, saved her, and filled her with the Holy Spirit. He gave her spiritual gifts. He is in heaven now preparing a place for her. He is always caring for your wife and never taking from her. What woman would not want to submit to that type of leadership?

Husbands, make submitting to your leadership easy. Do not lord it over your wife, but lead as a loving servant. Most wives are anxious to follow and submit to Christ-like leadership. A husband who loves Christ, has the glory of God and his wife's best spiritual interest in mind, who engages with her from a position of love while expending time, energy, and resources on her, will surely

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win her heart and her submission. **Men, everything we do in marriage needs to be for God's glory and our wife's good. Our needs are irrelevant.**

When you became a Christian, you committed to lay down your life, to pick up your cross, and to follow Christ, Luke 9:23. Whether you know it or not, practice it or not, you gave "all rights" of self-gain up for Christ's sake. In serving my wife through loving leadership, I am proving that my life is laid down, and that I am an obedient follower of Christ. This has to be my mindset, whether or not she is submitting to my leadership. Humble, disciplined obedience is the only path to this type of leadership.

Some Questions to think about men. Leaders will answer these with a yes and bear fruit according to their answer.

Q-Do I see my wife as more important than myself?

Q- Do I lead my wife to Christ? Reading Scripture, Bible study, praying.

Q- Do I initiate church attendance? For her and the kids.

Q- Does my wife feel emotionally safe with me? Am I a disciplined peaceful man?

Q- Does she feel I have her back with the kids? Am I taking the heat?

Q- Can she trust me with her emotions? Do I comfort her when she is hurting? I Pet 3:7

Q- Do I help her laugh? Do I find ways to break the tension of life?

First Characteristic – He leads in such a way that it makes it easy for his wife to submit.

Second characteristic of a Husband who Leads:

2. **He leads by loving his wife as Christ loves the church: EPH 5:25**

V25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, 27 that He might present to himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself."

See v25 – "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

Christ never fails to love his church and takes nothing from His church. He is always in the giving position. If you want to be like Christ, treat your wife like Christ treats his church. We are to be serving, protecting, loving, giving, and if need be even dying for our wives, with no expectation of self-gain.

We should desire to present our wives to God having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. V 27 - God does all of the saving and sanctifying, but our

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disciplined leadership places her in a position where she has a better view of Christ. We can set the table.

Second Characteristic – He leads by loving his wife as Christ loves the church

Third Characteristic of a Husband who Leads:

3. **He leads by Living with his wife in an understanding way**

I Peter 3:7, “You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”

Men, we are never loving and honoring God MORE than we are loving and honoring our wives by listening to and understanding them. If I ever talk to you about my love for God while at the same time I am not displaying love and understanding to my wife, not just in public, but also in the privacy of my home, I am lying. The end of this verse tells me that my prayers will be hindered. God will have no part in my hypocrisy.

I have failed here, and so have you. We must keep returning to this verse and learn to apply it. It is good to remind ourselves this morning of the importance of understanding our wives.

Understand your wife by being a student of your wife. (PHD)

Q- Do I understand my wife’s likes and dislikes? Do I care?

Q- Do I understand what makes her feel loved and cared for?

Q- Am I willing to accommodate her out of love and understanding?

Q- Do I understand that I am to carry the heavy stuff? Our wives are the weaker vessels.

Q- Do I understand that I am to weep when she weeps and laugh when she laughs? I have had to learn to laugh less and weep more, but we Beale’s love to laugh.

Q- Do I understand that my wife needs me to lead our kids spiritually? Can my wife depend on me to step in and show leadership?

Q- Do I understand that my wife has more words than I do, and that as a loving husband I must make time to hear them? (Women have 20,000 words a day with gusts up to 30,000.)

Third Characteristic – He leads by living with his wife in an understanding way.

Husband Summary: Three Characteristics for the Husband who leads

1. **He leads in such a way that it makes it easy for his wife to submit**
2. **He leads by loving his wife as Christ loves the church**
3. **He leads by living with his wife in an understanding way**

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The Wife's Role:

Please look again at Ephesians 5:22 – “Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 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.”

Wives, you can see that we husbands have a lofty and difficult calling from God, to lead you in a Christ honoring and understanding way. It is equally difficult for you to come up under our leadership. Giving in to sinful laziness has caused too many husbands not to lead their wives, and has caused too many wives to want to take over leadership of their marriage, and their family. You may be leading now because you feel your husband is not stepping up. You will find multiple reasons to usurp leadership from your husband, but none will come from the Bible.

Wives, your sinful tendencies, fueled by the culture, are battling to convince you not to allow yourself to be led by your husband, while God's word is pleading with you to submit. Even when a man leads consistently, you will be tempted to grab for leadership in your family. From the day Eve took the lead, wives have lined up to follow.

You might be asking, ladies - *if my husband will not lead, how will we progress as a couple and a family? I have to step in for us to move forward.*

Remember that you will not find that principle in the Bible. Once again, if you humble yourself, godly discipline will constrain you from getting ahead of what God is doing. God will not honor what He forbids. He forbids wives to lead their husbands and families. There is much to do in your home, but leadership of the home is not included.

“Six things submission is not” by John Piper

1. Submission is not agreeing on everything
2. Submission does not mean leaving your brain on the altar
3. Submission does not mean you do not try to influence your husband
4. Submission is not putting the will of the husband before the will of Christ
5. Submission does not mean getting all her spiritual strength through her husband
6. Submission does not mean living or acting in fear

John Piper defines submission like this: Submission is the defined calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband's leadership, and so help to carry it through according to her gifts.

Please open your Bible to I Peter 3:1 to get a view of what a wife's biblical submission looks like.

1In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the Word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. ³Your adornment must not be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; ⁴but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. ⁵For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; ⁶Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling Him Lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

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Four Characteristics of a Submissive Wife from 1 Peter:

1. V1 – **She submits to her believing or unbelieving husband.** Why? She might win the unbelieving husband to Christ without a word. Your good behavior is enough. Submit, short of following him into sin. Your godly behavior will most likely have great impact on your believing husband whether he is obedient or not.
2. V2 – **She displays her submission by her chaste and respectful behavior.**
 - Chaste – without unnecessary ornamentation; simple or restrained.
 - Respectful – synonyms – reverent, dutiful, polite, well mannered, civil, courteous, gracious. Do these words characterize your attitude toward your husband? Have you trained yourself through discipline to respond in a God honoring way?
3. V4 – **She displays her submission by her gentle and quiet spirit.**
 - **Gentle** – Mild in temperament or behavior, kind, tender.
 - **Quiet** – Greek word *hisuchios*, which depicts a person who knows how to calm himself and to maintain a state of peace and tranquility. Instead of speaking up out of anger or frustration this person speaks in a way that they will not regret later.

V4b- This is precious in the sight of God
4. V6 – **A submissive wife does not live in fear.**
 - V6 says that “Sarah obeyed Abraham, but without being frightened by any fear.”
 - You should not fear your husband emotionally or physically. If this is happening in your marriage please bring it to the elders and we will get involved. If your husband will not protect you, we will help.

Wives, be submissive and allow the Lord His rightful place in your husband’s heart. You cannot change a heart, but you can set the table for God to work. Till the ground, and water the soil by displaying these four characteristics.

Wife’s Summary: Four Characteristics of a Submissive Wife

1. **She submits to her believing or unbelieving husband**
2. **She displays her submission by her Chaste and respectful behavior**
3. **She displays her submission by her gentle and quiet spirit.**
4. **A Submissive wife does not live in fear.**

The Children’s Role:

Young people. It is true that the family is God’s design. The ideal family is a mother, father and children, where dad leads and mom is his helper. This is not always the case, and you may find yourself in a different family make up, maybe with a single parent, or grandparents raising you. You might be a foster child. Whatever your family looks like, you can learn from the principles we will talk about.

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As we already learned, husbands are commanded by God to lead, wives are commanded to submit to his leadership, and now we learn that children are commanded to come up under the authority of their parents.

Look at Proverbs 6:20 again: **“My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.”**

No, your fathers and mothers are not perfect. They are sinners just like you. They will not always make the right parenting decisions. They will not always have the right attitude when helping you see your sin. They do not live lives of perfection, yet, they are given authority by God to train you, by the God who knows their failures. It is no accident that you were born to your parents. The Bible declares that God knew you before you were in your mother’s womb.

Please turn to Philippians Chapter 2 verse 3

³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Five Characteristics of an Obedient Child from Philippians 2:

1. V-3, They are not selfish or conceited. (What’s mine is mine and what’s yours is mine)
2. V-3, They see others as more important than themselves. (Receive guidance)
3. V-4, They look out for the interests of others. (Care about your parents’ and siblings’ interests)
4. V-5-7 They are serving others. (Be eager to serve at home)
5. V-8, They are learning to be humble by becoming obedient. (Obedience will bring humility)

Children, the question you should be asking is; *will I submit to God’s authority by submitting to my parents’ authority?* I can tell you this--you are not obeying God when you are not obeying your parents. It will take discipline and self-control to live out this truth, to live in humility and obey when you disagree with their decisions. Unless your parents are asking you to sin, God is commanding you to obey them. I know that “command” is a strong word, but it is exactly what God is revealing through this and many other Proverbs, “my son, keep your father’s commandment.” There is wisdom here. Your parents have far more experience with the pitfalls of life. God knows this and is protecting you through their experience and wisdom.

When Christian parents decide out of rebellion, or lack of knowledge, to live their way instead of God’s, they put their families at risk, and their ability to reflect Jesus Christ to the world will be compromised. Parents, this does not mean that our God honoring marriages and consistent biblical parenting will guarantee the right response from our spouse or children, but it will certainly honor Christ and put them in the best possible position to see Him. What I mean by the “best possible position; is that we can give our family members an example of what a Bible-centered Christian life looks like, as we pray for God to do His work in their heart. We never want to be an obstacle.

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Children, if you are Christ's, you have a responsibility to be instruments of Christ in your families, regardless of your parent's example. No one in Christ gets off the hook. Yes, it is easier when your parents are honoring God in your home, but that is just not the reality of every family. How you respond when things are not just right will be the gauge of your love for Christ. Will you be an example of an obedient, disciplined Christian regardless?

At the end of the day, a Christian stands alone before Jesus, responsible for his own life choices. Regardless of how others act in his family. He is responsible before God to discipline himself for the purpose of godliness. He can be conformed to the image of Christ regardless of his family difficulties.

Lastly and in closing, the family is a blessing from God for His glory, for the good of the individual, for the good of others, and for the sanctifying work of the Spirit that happens as we grow in Christ. Jesus Christ loves His church and He loves families. He is able to do amazing things in the hearts of his people when they come up under His authority, and trust His Word for all of life's answers. I want to encourage us today to evaluate our lives, and our families, against scripture, and ask:

In Christ and for Christ, 1. Husbands, are we leading our wives and children? 2. Wives, are you submitting to your husbands? 3. Children, are you obeying your parents? 4. Are we all **disciplining** ourselves in an effort to be obedient to run the race before us?