

## **THE CHORES AND CHALLENGES OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN HOME**

**Today's Text: Col. 3: 18-4: 6**

### **Extracts:**

***Wives, submit to your own husbands, as it is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. ...Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving [Col. 3: 18-22; 4: 1-2]***

*Kim, a 22-year-old college student, spoke recently with **The Bert Show**, a morning radio programme based in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, about her predicament.<sup>1</sup> Her grandparents had left her an inheritance of US\$90,000 for her college education. However, with one year left to complete her first degree, she had run out of funds. She needed help to cover her remaining \$20,000 tuition balance. In the talk show, she blamed her parents, alleging that they should have taught her about budgeting, adding, "They never sat me down [to have] a real serious talk about it." She had squandered the money on clothes, pocket expenses and a trip to Europe. Her parents had advised her to get a bank loan, that there was nothing else they could do for her.*

*Failure, they say, is an orphan. Who do you blame in Kim's situation? Is it possible that her parents did not advise her? What if they did but Kim did not heed their advice? Any of us can find ourselves in similar circumstances as we strive to raise our own children as parents or grow up as children in our parents' home. What should be the responsibilities of spouses, parents, and children, among others in a true Christian home? Is ultimate success our doing or God's grace? In today's Bible story, Paul has addressed our concerns in his letter to the Colossian church. He has opened our eyes to the chores and challenges of a true Christian family that, I believe, we all are striving to be. Let us read on.*

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<sup>1</sup> Story is based on the following sources: Mandi Woodruff, "22-year-old student blows her \$90,000 college fund and blames her parents," *Yahoo Finance*, Thurs, July 16, 2015; <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/a-college-student-blows-inheritance-berth-show-205833329.html> and "The Bert Show," WWWQ from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WWWQ>

## 1. Background: What you should do is what you may not want to do!

We are familiar with the story of Samuel, the prophet and first judge in Israel. His mother, Hannah, one of the two wives of Elkanah, was barren. She prayed that if God should give her a son, she would lend him to the LORD. Her prayer was answered and, when Samuel was weaned, Hannah handed him over to the priest, Eli, who raised him along with his own children in the house of God at Shiloh. We are told that *Eli's two sons were so evil that they "lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting." Their father tried to correct them but "they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them." Samuel, on the other hand, "grew in stature and in favour, both with the LORD and men" [1 Sam. 2: 22-26].*

In due course, Samuel became such a respected prophet that God would not let any of his words fall to the ground [1 Sam. 3: 19]. He raised his own family and had two sons, Joel and Abijah, whom he made judges in Beersheba. However, when he became old, the people came to him and said, "Look, *you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways.* Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." Samuel's sons were known to have "turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes and perverted justice" [1 Sam. 8: 1-5].

The word of God says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" [Prov. 22: 6]. In the foregoing story, Eli the priest was the one that raised both his two sons and Samuel. While his own children turned out evil, his servant, Samuel, turned out good. On the other hand, disciplined Samuel wound up with wayward children. Why did Eli fail with his own children but succeed with his servant? How can we explain it that Samuel's own children turned out to be perverts? Perhaps there is much more to family life in a Christian/believer's home than meets the eye!

Paul's letter to the Colossians gives us a good lead to getting the answers to our puzzling questions. In a typical home, especially an African home, we can find a man and his wife, their children and their domestic staff, such as cook/steward, drivers, gardeners and so on. Interestingly, Paul's letter has something to say about all of such members of a typical Christian home. Let us pay attention to his admonitions as follows:

### a) *Wives to submit to their husbands?*

Paul writes, "Wives, *submit* to your own husbands, *as is fitting in the Lord*" [Col. 3: 18]. The critical words here are to submit as is fitting in the Lord. Automatically, a wife is not under any spiritual obligation to submit to her husband in areas that will lead to disobeying God. Even so, what does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband?

Any man who wants to be honest with himself will agree that it is the wife that “rules” his house, in that she is the one who frets about orderliness and perfection. There is the story of a reporter who gathered together a group of married men and wanted to know those who controlled their wives and those who were controlled by their wives. The group controlled by their wives stretched all the way. On the other line, however, only one man stood there. Curious, the reporter asked him, “Tell us how you control your wife?” Looking bemused, the man replied, “I don’t know. She asked me to stay here!”

It was Eve who gave the forbidden fruit to her husband, Adam, and he ate [Gen. 3: 6]. It was Sarah (then known as Sarai) who gave her Egyptian maidservant, Hagar, to Abraham (Abram) to be his wife and he slept with her without asking questions [Gen. 16: 1-4]. So, because the wife is already the “boss” of the home, submission becomes a major challenge for the Christian wife. Some men misinterpret submission in the Scriptures to think they can behave like the lord of the manor and control their wives as their house maids. They think they can throw their advantages around, especially, of position and material wealth. Some wives, on the other hand, who happen to be well educated or well-placed then resent such treatment and the outcome may be alienation or divorce.

Perhaps, the submission that Paul is talking about can best be illustrated as follows: ***the husband is not the boss but the bus; his wife is the bus driver! The bus only goes where the driver leads it. Nevertheless, the bus may have a route that it must take, akin to what Paul has called, “as is fitting to the Lord.” As long as the wife steers her husband and household along the path of God’s plan and salvation, she is in charge as well as submitted.*** That may not be comfortable for a wayward husband, just as a bus with an engine problem will not respond to its driver’s cues! Her husband is her head as Christ is the head of the church. When she submits to her husband as hereby illustrated, she has submitted to the Lord, “the head of the church and ...the Saviour of the body” [Eph. 5: 22-23].

b) *Husbands to love and not to be bitter toward their wives?*

Paul writes, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them” [Col. 3: 19]. Here, the challenge for the husband is to be patient and perseverant, having sworn an oath on the wedding day to have and to hold her, in sickness and in health; for better for worse; till death do they part. ***To continue with the bus analogy, the husband must remain fit and drivable whenever the bus driver turns on the ignition key!***

If a husband and wife were already in love before they got married, why should Paul instruct the man to love his wife? It is because love is a life-

long requirement. Love suffers long. It rejoices in the truth; it bears all things, hopes all things and endures all things. Love never fails [1 Cor. 13: 4-8]. Therefore, love can only be developed in a relationship. What we call love before marriage is actually lust or infatuation. It fades at the very first challenge. *Marriage begins after the wedding!* That is why, we are told that Isaac “took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death” [Gen. 24: 67]. Love as used here does not denote “had sexual relations” with her. The Old Testament would use “knew his wife” to describe love-making between a husband and wife [Gen. 4: 1]. His wife becomes for the rest of his life his only lover, best friend and soul-mate.<sup>2</sup>

A husband should focus on being the husband of the redeemed church, preparing the bride (family church) for her Bridegroom (Christ) [Rev. 19: 6-9]. Like Hosea, you will not see your wife’s weak points but her virtues [Hosea 3: 1-3]. You will not hear her rough words but the Satan behind them [Matt. 16: 23-24], trying to steer up discord in your home. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you [Phil.]!

- c) *Children to obey their parents in all things and parents not to provoke their children?*

Paul writes, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” [Col. 3; 20-21]. In the Ten Commandments, children are enjoined to honour their parents so that they may live long [Ex. 20: 12].

To obey their parents in all things suggests all those things that please God. Unfortunately, children, especially in their adolescent age, tend to be rebellious and cannot wait to get out of their parents’ control. Especially in this age of almost unrestricted online access, children are more likely to pay attention to the devil-controlled “parents” in cyberspace than their biological parents. On the other hand, some parents are control-freaks who leave their children no room for initiative or learning from experience. Even so, can parents really force children to ALWAYS do what is right by God? Does truth-telling not always provoke resentment in most of us? There are challenges!

- d) *Servants to obey in all things and Masters to treat servants as family?*

Paul adds, “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God” [Col. 3: 22]. In return, masters are to give their bondservants “what

<sup>2</sup> “Is your marriage an ordeal or an ideal?” *Weekly Bible Lesson Series*, Vol. 14 No. 23: 21 July 2013; [www.bibleresourcecentre.com](http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com) ; pp 4-5.

is just and fair, knowing that [they] have a Master in heaven” [Col. 4: 1]. Remarkably, many households do not regard or treat their domestic staff as part of their family. They look down on them, give them inferior food and attention and treat them condescendingly. But we know that those who have treated such people as family wound up gaining a great deal. For example, because Naaman’s wife treated her Jewish housemaid well, she was the one who suggested sending her leprous husband to the prophet Elisha in Samaria, Israel, where he was healed [2 Kgs 5: 1-19].

In general, *the Christian home is the beginning of church. The aggregation of true Christian homes makes the church of God on earth. Therefore, whatever we do to the least of God’s brethren, we do unto Him.* But how can we cope with such tedious chores and challenges?

## 2. But look at the bright side of it!

By human standards, Eli the priest and Samuel the prophet raised children that were wayward and perverted. Does that then mean that they had failed? It may not be so, otherwise most of us will be scared because of our comparatively worse records. So, let us look at the bright side of the matter:

### a) *It is only by God’s grace you can do it!*

Somewhere, Paul said, writing to the Corinthian church, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase” [1 Cor. 3: 6]. With respect to your family, *your responsibility stops in telling the truth, showing good example and offering corrections or encouragement where applicable. How things turn out are beyond your control. So, it is only by God’s grace that you can run your family home.* All that is required of you is to do what is fitting before the Lord and what is well pleasing to God [Col. 3: 18, 20].

How can we explain it that a good king like Hezekiah was succeeded by an evil son, Manasseh, who raised up altars for Baal and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them [2 Kgs 21; 1-3]? We can understand that Amon that succeeded his father, Manasseh, was evil like his father [vv. 19-20]. But Josiah who succeeded his father, Amon, at the tender age of eight years [2 Kgs 22: 1] left such a record that “before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor after him did any arise like him” [2 Kgs 23: 25]. Only the grace of God can do that, not human will or skill.

### b) *Accountability to God therefore lies with each individual member*

Paul writes, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality” [Col. 3: 23-25].

***That suggests that every member of the family is individually accountable to God for what s(he) does or does not do.***

Take, for example, what God told Ezekiel in respect of his prophetic ministry among the people of Judah. He was a watchman. Period. His job was to warn the wicked from his wicked ways. Here is the clincher: “If you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul” [Ezek. 3: 19]. So, let each member face God for the consequences of his/her response to your part of the bargain.

c) *So stick with your chores!*

That makes each member’s work easier. Stick to your chores! Provide when and where you are required to do so. Advise and counsel. Forgive and forget when offended. Be long suffering. Treat your domestic staff as if they were your children or siblings. Show good examples all the time. Be faithful to your spouse. Pray together and share the word of God together every day at a convenient time, but preferably in the morning. ***Do ALL that God expects you to do so that Satan does not have any room to cause disaffection. Leave God to give the increase.***

***In sum, prayer, vigilance and thanksgiving should be your watch words [Col. 4: 2]. With such, the wife has no problem submitting; her husband has no problem loving and tolerating all things; the children have no problem obeying in all things because their parents will not provoke or discourage them; and the domestic staff will see themselves as an integral part of that family. In practice, that is the household of God. That is the true Christian home. That is Paul’s message for us today.***

### 3. Conclusion: Build your home on the Rock!

Jesus concluded His Sermon on the Mount by differentiating between the wise man and the foolish man. Both of them faced the same circumstances-rainstorm and floods. But the wise man’s house survived because it was built on the rock of hearing and obeying the word of God. The foolish man’s house built on the sandy foundation of worldly principles and wisdom fell [Matt. 7: 24-27]. The lesson for us is to build our Christian homes on Christ the Rock of all ages.

There will always be challenges, but stick to your chores. All is well.