

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:18 - 4:1

God's plan for human relationships is not without order and forethought neither; is it arbitrary, harsh or unreasonable. There is an order and an objective to everything God wills for our lives. This is vividly illustrated in the order and structure of the home. In a sense, the foundation for all human relationships is found in the home.

■ Lord Houghton used this analogy, "The Christian home is the Master's workshop where the processes of character molding are silently, lovingly, faithfully, and successfully carried on." (Rowell, 62)

What we are in the home will determine, to a great extent, what we will be when we are dealing with outside relationships. In our text we will be looking at several *exhortations* for the Christian home as well as for Christian relationships in general. As we begin our examination of this passage it is important to remember that Paul is only dealing with relationships in the Christian realm.

With that in mind, Paul begins with:

I. WIVES BE SUBMITTED (v.18).

A. Godly submission is a choice.

B. God's plan is for the Christian husband to lead the wife.

II. HUSBANDS BE LOVING (v. 19).

A. A husband's first priority should be to love his wife.

A Husband's love that is expressed properly will set the tone for the entire household.

B. A husband's goal should be to be loving and kind to his wife at all times.

Of course some men, like the man in the story I heard, have fallen short of the goal.

■ As the story goes, "A man was convicted by a sermon that he had failed to show proper love and appreciation to his wife. He hurried home and burst into the kitchen with a speech of belated gratitude to his faithful wife standing at the sink. She stood transfixed, stared at him in utter bewilderment, then finally managed to say: "Well this is too much. This morning I broke one of my best dishes, I've had a splitting headache all day, and now you've come home drunk!"

III. CHILDREN BE OBEDIENT (v. 20).

A. Obedience is God's method of teaching.

B. Obedience is the path that will lead to blessing.

IV. FATHERS BE REASONABLE (v. 21).

A. Do not demand more than a child can produce.

■ Someone said, “Rearing kids is like holding a wet bar of soap -- too firm a grasp and it shoots from your hand, too loose a grasp and it slides away. A gentle but firm grasp keeps it in your control.” (Hewett, 191)

B. Unreasonable demands can wear a child down and break his/her spirit.

V. **SERVANTS BE SINCERE (vv. 22-25).**

A. Christian character stands out in unjust situations.

Paul does not condone or condemn slavery; he simply teaches that if this is your situation, or whatever your situation, live a life that will glorify God.

B. Do what you do for God’s glory and leave the rewards in His hands.

This is the bottom line in life. God is keeping the records. He is not fooled by man’s schemes nor does He forget the righteous. The key is to do the will of God.

■ Abraham Lincoln said, “I do the very best I know how -- the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won’t amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, then angels swearing I was right would make no difference.”

(Hewett, 56)

VI. **MASTERS BE JUST (4:1).**

A. Position in life gives no one the right to be unfair.

B. Treat others as your Master in heaven treats you.

CONCLUSION

Relationships with others can be difficult at times. And at other times they can be very beneficial. One thing is for sure; we've all got to deal with people.

■ John Maxwell writes, “ The basis of life is people and how they relate to each other. Our success, fulfillment, and happiness depends upon our ability to relate effectively.” (19)

It's certain that we cannot escape dealing with other people nor should we try. God has given us the tools and the guidelines for successful relationships through His word. In addition, He has empowered us through His Spirit that we will be able to glorify His name in all that we do.

The *exhortations* found in our text clearly show us that productive Christian relationships are a choice. We must make the choice today to do whatever it takes to please the Lord.

References

Hewett, James S. (Ed.). (1988). *Illustrations Unlimited*. Wheaton, ILL: Tyndale House.

Maxwell, John C. (1989). *Be a People Person*. Wheaton, ILL: Victor Books.

Rowell, Edward K. (Ed.). (1996). *Quotes and Idea Starters for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.