



“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Psalm 127:1).

Filling Your Role in the Family

Central Truth: Each member has a role to fill in family relations.

/L120. Date: September 1994. **Text:** Ephesians 5:22-28; 6:1-4.

Topic: Family.

The governing principle of living together in the home is as simply A-B-C. The rule is, “Always Be Christian.” In other words, follow the Bible in your home life.

In 1 Peter 3:8-12, there are ten principles to follow in the home. (1) Harmony is based on being of “one mind.” (2) Sympathy is expressed in compassion. (3) Affection is shown as you “love as brethren.” (4) Empathy is present in pity. (5) Respect is manifest through courtesy. (6) Goodwill is evident when you do not return evil for evil, but blessings. (7) Kindness is seen in harmony. (8) Purity will cause you to “eschew evil” and do good. (9) Calmness will cause you to seek and pursue peace. (10) Spirituality is evident because the Lord looks upon every person in the household. There is the description of relationships in a truly Christian home.

God has assigned a role for each family member. The husband is the head of the home. The wife is the heart of the home. The children are the hope of the home. Notice how each is to fill his role according to Bible principles.

The Role of the Husband

The husband is to assume the headship of the home. He is not

usurping authority when he does so. He is obeying the Bible which says, "*The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church*" (Ephesians 5:23). The husband's headship is based on two things, according to 1 Timothy 2:12-14. (1) Man was created before woman. (2) Woman surrendered her authority when she was deceived in the temptation which brought sin and death to the human race.

The husband is the head, not because he desires it or demands it, but because God ordained it. For him to fail to fill that role is to sin against God's ordained plan.

The husband is to love his wife. He is to love her as Christ loves the church. Ephesians 5:25-29 pictures the love of Christ for the church as sacrificial ("*gave himself for it*"), redemptive ("*that he might sanctify and cleanse it*"), affectionate ("*that he might present it to himself*"), sacred ("*holy and without blemish*"), helpful ("*nourisheth and cherisheth it*"), and intimate ("*as their own bodies*"). What a challenge to the best in a man!

I cannot match the love of my Lord, but I can reflect it toward the wife He has given to me. That is one part of my role as a husband.

The husband is to honor his wife (1 Peter 3:7). The emphasis on "women's liberation" has caused men to honor women less than before. God calls on the man to show deference to the woman, since she is physically the weaker of the two.

The male honors the female by opening the door for her, removing his hat in her presence, guarding his language in her hearing, offering her his chair when she enters the room, and otherwise showing that he respects her. The husband honors his wife by such courtesies, kind speech, affection other than sexual; showing interest in her concerns, asking for her thoughts in decisions affecting the family, and recognizing her as his equal before God.

The husband who honors his wife will not treat her harshly. Neither will he let bitter resentment toward her spoil their relationship (Colossians 3:19). Self-giving love will mark his spirit in every relationship with her.

The husband will sanctify his wife (1 Corinthians 7:14). He will separate her and keep her from harmful influences in the world about her. He will expose her to spiritual things by his spiritual leadership of the family. She and the children will be blessed because a Christian man leads their family. Hosea separated his unfaithful wife, Gomer, from her sins. The good husband will protect his wife so she will have no desire or occasion to go into sin.

The Role of the Wife

Modern advocates of women's liberation often speak of the Bible as if it keeps women in bondage. Not so. No influence in human history has elevated womanhood as much as the teachings of the Bible. What does the Bible actually say about the role of the wife in her home?

The wife is to submit to her husband. The Bible leaves no question at that point. She is to be submissive to her husband in everything, just as the church is submissive to Christ (Ephesians 5:22, 24). It is her Christian duty to submit to her husband because the Lord commands it (Colossians 3:18). The wife is to submit to her husband, even if he is not a Christian, for by her submissive spirit she may lead him to Christ (1 Peter 3:1).

Notice that the wife is to submit herself. God does not instruct the husband to make his wife submit. She is responsible to God for whether or not she submits, and she will account to Him.

The wife is to love her husband (Titus 2:4). She is to be affectionate along with her submission, treating both husband and children lovingly. The love that God requires is more than passion; it is commitment to the welfare of the other person. It is the self-sacrificing of personal interests. It is the same kind of love to the husband which God requires the husband to exercise to his wife (Ephesians 5:25). Blessed is the marriage where both husband and wife relate to the other with God's kind of love.

The wife is to obey her husband (1 Peter 3:6). There is a difference between submission and obedience. Submission refers to the attitude, the spirit, of the wife. Obedience refers to her actions which reflect her spirit. The wife who is truly submissive has no problem with obedience. There is no reference here to a master-servant relationship. Ephesians 5:21 reads, *"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."* Each partner submits to the other; but when final decisions are made, the husband is the responsible party and the wife follows his lead. The wife is to reverence her husband (Ephesians 5:33). *Reverence* is a strong term. It means to respect deeply, to honor, to defer, and to adore as something sacred. Is that asking too much of a wife? No. She looks upon her husband as God's gift to her. She looks to him as her leader and spiritual head. She respects his judgment. She is not fearful of following him as she yields to his leadership. She would not "trade" him for any other man in the world. She is uniquely and divinely his, and he is her own. Blessed is the husband whose wife holds him in reverence.

The Role of the Children

Children are to obey their parents. God's command is very clear.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1). There need be no quibbling over what it means for a child to obey his parents. It means to recognize their authority and submit to it. It means to respect their persons and yield to them.

A major factor in juvenile delinquency is the lack of respect for and submission to authority. Somewhere each person must learn to respect authority. It will be learned in the home, the public school, or in a penal institution of the state. It is much better when a child is taught submission to duly constituted authority under the guidance of loving parents. So, parents, teach your child to obey. Send him out into society as a well-disciplined and self-disciplined person. No one loves a child who is in rebellion against his parents.

Children are to honor their parents. *“Honour thy father and mother”* (Ephesians 6:2). One can obey a parent without honoring that parent. A child may close the door upon the instruction of the parent. That is obedience. But the child may slam the door with expressions of anger. That is not honor. The child is to give equal honor to father and mother by showing great respect and esteem toward each of them. He will think himself fortunate to have them for his parents. He never speaks of them in slang terms. He always thinks highly of them. He submits to them willingly and seeks their approval. He is what the Bible calls “a proper child.” He never gets too old to show honor to both his father and his mother.

The Role of the Parents

The parents are to love their child sincerely. Older women are to teach younger women to love their children (Titus 2:4). The child is never looked upon as a biological accident. He is a heritage of the Lord. From the moment of conception to eternity, he is the union of the lives of his father and mother. His life is the breath of God within him (Genesis 2:7). Love will provide the necessities of life that the child may grow in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52).

The parents are to discipline their child consistently. Study “L122” will deal with the subject, *Children in the Home*. Discipline will be dealt with there in greater detail. Let it suffice here to point out the divine command that the parent discipline the child. God promises, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). Again God promises, *“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul”* (Proverbs 29:17). Discipline must start early. It must be consistent. It may take the forms of

withdrawing privileges, requiring unpleasant duties, or corporal punishment. But discipline is essential to a maturing child.

The parents are to control the child constantly. Pastors are required to “rule well” their own families. They are setting an example for the rest of the church families to follow. Parental control is necessary until a child is mature enough to assume self-control.

A wife might substitute secret manipulation for a quiet spirit. She might depend on external appearance to substitute for inner beauty of spirit. She might be content in learning what is right rather than doing what is right. A husband might substitute providing a livelihood for sharing his life. He might demand his way instead of leading his family. He might ignore his wife rather than honoring her. One parent might shift responsibility for training the child to the other parent. That neglectful parent might even blame society for the way the child develops. The child might substitute external obedience for a spirit of respect. He might practice obedience only when the parents can see him. Each might fail in that way, but to do so is to sin against God who orders each role in the family.

Questions for Discussion

1. How do you define family?
2. Why did God set the institution of family in human society?
3. What is meant by saying that the husband is the “head” of the wife?
4. How can a husband show that he honors his wife?
5. Why does God require a wife to submit to her husband?
6. How does his love make her submission easy?
7. What is the twofold role of children toward their parents?
8. How is discipline of children a sign of love?
9. What is the solution to family problems in society today?
10. How can you make your home better fit the biblical ideal?