

God Gives Us Families To Teach Us About Life (Part 2)

Jeremiah 29:11 states: **“I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.’”** Isn’t it comforting and encouraging knowing that God has a plan for your life and for the lives of your children and spouse?

You see, God does not expect us to come up with plans and visions all on our own. He wants to give us a plan – His perfect plan. The truth is that any plan or vision we create on our own is going to fall short. It will absolutely pale in comparison to the one God wants to give us.

The exciting part is that God’s plan is the one that will help us to fulfill our life’s purpose. Perhaps one of the most beautiful aspects of parenting, and even marriage, is to witness the ones we love the most reach their potential through God’s plan for their lives. However, we must keep in mind that in order to help our family and ourselves members claim this vision and plan God has for us, we must depend on Him and Him alone. In other words, we cannot build this vision on our own strength.

Too often, we want to be in control of things. We believe we know what is best for our future and for the future of our spouse and children. But God’s word tells us **“unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain”** (Psalm 127:1). Our own plans and ideas about what is best just do not cut it. It is all in vain unless we let our very capable God of the Universe, Immanuel, King of Kings, build our vision and lay out the blueprints for our future.

You can find comfort and peace knowing that depending on Him will give your vision true, eternal purpose. Cling to Proverbs 3:5-6 [RSV]: **5. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. 6. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.**

One way that God can make straight our paths is by our following His ways when it comes to raising our children. Parents need to teach their children obedience. The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 6:1-3, **1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3. “that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the Earth.”**

Parents must not be hard to please, severe and overly harsh toward their children. Nurturing and training children is the most important job anyone could have. Fathers, in particular, are implored to raise their children correctly. **“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”** (Ephesians 6:1 [RSV]).

The entire future of the church and the world on every level rests upon the shoulders of our upcoming generations. Parents owe it to their children, to God and to society to take this responsibility seriously and to raise their children to become responsible adults.

Too many parents leave the task of raising their children to schools, society, baby sitters, grandparents or other relatives, the church and day care. I am not talking about parents who have to work. I am referring to those who neglect their own duties of parenthood and pass off their responsibility to others.

Parents must display sympathy, encouragement, discipline and tough love when needed, but they **never** should be abusive. That is never acceptable. Parents should not discourage, brow beat, or break their children's spirit. Children with broken and discouraged spirits do not become productive or responsible citizens. Parents must not be faultfinders or continual complainers. This, too, destroys a child's desire to do good as it creates a defeatist attitude.

Since fathers are to be head of the household they are to be extra cautious of their responsibilities and accountability.

Chapter 3 of the *Book of Colossians* begins with Paul revealing the way in which Christians can honor Jesus and show reverence toward God. He pointed out negative human characteristics that Christians must **put off** regarding their sinful nature and fleshy desires and emotions that control those in the world.

Paul goes through an extensive list of negative practices and attitudes common to man. He also focused on positive attributes needed in order to be pleasing in the sight of God. These positive attributes are at the foundation of positive Christian character, the type of character traits all Christians should develop. Paul also refers to these as the fruit of the Spirit, and Peter refers to them as the Christian virtues.

The fruit of the Spirit Paul writes of in Galatians 5:22-23 and the Christian virtues listed by Peter in 2 Peter 1:5-8 are also ways in which family relationships must be developed and strengthened. This is important because the family is the first place Satan attacks. He has been doing so since way back in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. Therefore, family units must also receive encouragement, strengthening and rebuke when needed.

Husbands' and wives' duties and expectations are different in God's sight, as can be seen in Colossians 3:18-19 [RSV]. **18. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.** The word translated "harsh" in this verse in the RSV is better translated in the ASV as "bitter." Bitterness and not being able to forgive destroy relationships, even Christian relationships. Therefore, according to the word of God, husbands are **not** to be embittered against their wives. They

should be as willing to forgive their wives as the Lord is willing to forgive them of their own trespasses. In the same manner and in the same measure that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, husbands are to love their wives.

Paul begins in verse 18 with the wife's responsibility toward the husband. ***"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."*** 1 Peter 3:1-2 [RSV] makes a similar statement: ***1. Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2. when they see your reverent and chaste behavior.***

There are many individuals in today's society who are "uncomfortable" with what God has ordained in regards to the roles He has given for men and women. Some men want to abrogate their responsibility to be the head of the household and to be the spiritual head of the family, while some women seek to usurp the authority that God has ordained to be the purview of men. Some want to be given concrete reasons and explanations as to why women are to be subject to their husbands, and why men should be the spiritual leaders of their homes. Here is the reason God has given us: ***11. Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. 12. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. 13. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14. and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.*** (1 Timothy 2:11-14) So there it is, there is your answer: Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Eve was deceived. People may wish to quibble over this answer, and believe it is not a good enough explanation, but the fact remains that this is the pattern God has ordained. It is fitting for those in Christ to observe His desire for order in the church and at home, and to take issue with this is to find oneself in the same untenable in which Job found himself just before God spoke to him out of the whirlwind. ***4. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the Earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5. Who determined its measurements – surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6. On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, 7. when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?***

8. "Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth from the womb; 9. when I made clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, 10. and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, 11. and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?" (Job 38:4-11 [RSV]) Sometimes, we just need to take things by faith. God said it. I believe it. That settles it.

A husband's and wife's unity and harmony with one another is fashioned in the likeness of Christ and the church, which is His Bride, as seen in Ephesians 5:22-23 [RSV]: ***22. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. 23. For***

the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior.

Love is to be the glue that binds the marriage together as godly homes are established. Love is to be the driving force behind all that we do in the church. Love was the reason why Jesus came to the Earth in the first place: ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”*** (John 3:16 [RSV]). And because God loves, we are to love each other as well: ***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another”*** (John 13:34 [RSV]).

Wives are to be subject to their husbands not because the husband is her master; she is to be obedient because her heart has found peace with Christ and she is in Christ. She loves the Lord, and seeks to do all she can to be pleasing to Him. As in all things she does, love for Christ and love for her husband and family will be the driving forces and motivating factors behind all that she does.

Even with this in mind we are to remember the principal involved in Acts 5:29, ***“We must obey God rather than men.”*** In family relationships where both the husband and the wife are seeking the will of God this issue will **not** become a problem.

Unfortunately, in relationships where the husband is carnal, worldly, selfish and unreasonable it requires grace on the part of the wife to submit to such a man. This is why Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7:13-17 [RSV], ***13. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. 14. For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. 15. But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace. 16. Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife? 17. Only, let everyone lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.***

A woman submitting to a husband is **not** a point of displaying the inferiority of the wife. Instead, it displays authority and responsibility in the home and church, according to the will of God. ***33. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 34. the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. 35. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*** (1 Corinthians 14:33-35)

To be subject to the husband is a **voluntary action** on the part of the woman. It is **not** to be a forced action imposed by the husband. This is voluntary submission, and it comes from a military term meaning **willingly** lining up under the authority of another. Just as the Lord does not force anyone to be in subjection to Him, neither does the husband force a wife to be in subjection to him. He has no biblical authority to do so. A woman is subject to her husband because she loves and respects him. But even more so, she subjects herself to her husband because she loves her Savior and she seeks to do His will in every aspect of her life.

The wife is to be a helper suitable or fit for the husband. The husband and wife relationship is a check and balance system within the home. The design of the wife to be a helper suitable for her husband once again originated way back in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:18 [RSV]: ***“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”***

Any home functioning efficiently results from both the husband and the wife working together desiring to accomplish the will of God and producing harmony, not chaos. Godly family relationships are a balance of everyone doing the will of God.

In considering the roles of husband wives for godly homes, let us turn again to see what the Apostle Paul said in reference to the role of husbands in Colossians 3:19 [RSV]. Paul now directs his attention toward Christian husbands because, according to God, this is **not** an issue with only one side. ***“Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”*** This command hardly seems to justify a husband treating his wife cruelly, now does it? In fact, for a husband to treat his wife cruelly would be in contradiction to this command. The husband, who accepts his place as the spiritual head of the family, and expecting his wife to submit to him, must also realize the issue of responsibility and accountability in his role as husband and father.

Husbands must love and cherish their wives, promote their good, their happiness and their welfare as the man takes his place as head of the family. The love a husband holds for his wife should be so powerful, and so all encompassing, that it is likened to the type of love that Christ has for His Bride, the church. A husband should be willing to die for his wife, just as Christ was willing to die for His Bride. Paul writes, ***25. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26. that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27. that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*** (Ephesians 5:25-27 [RSV])

A husband is to cherish his wife as a weaker vessel, according to the Apostle Peter. So important an issue is this with God that to not do so will jeopardize

one's prayer life. ***"Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered"*** (1 Peter 3:7 [RSV]).

Some would argue that the reference to woman as the ***"weaker vessel"*** in 1 Peter is out of touch with our modern worldview. Today, women chair corporations, run governments and are more educated than at any other time in history. I know firsthand that there are many women who are mighty vessels of perseverance. I can look at my wife, who has overcome certain obstacles in her life, and see a beautiful vessel of faith and encouragement. If anything, these women are *not* weak, and neither was Peter teaching that women were weak.

This verse is not teaching that women are weaker. It is teaching that the husband is to treat his wife with honor and understanding. He does so because he and his wife are ***"joint-heirs of the grace of life."*** The husband and wife are equally yoked, which means they are of equal worth and value in the eyes of God. Yet, a woman is a weaker vessel in the sense that she is like a fine, porcelain vase, which is of great value, yet it must be handled gently and with honor. As it is written in this verse, a husband must be understanding and give honor to his wife so that his ***"prayers be not hindered."*** The husband is to be the solid foundation on which she rests. As we saw earlier from the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, the husband is to love his wife ***"as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her."***

The husband is to love, nourish and provide for his wife as he would his own body, again in replication of what Christ has done for His Bride, which is the church (Ephesians 5:28-30).

A man and woman being together for life as husband and wife is God's plan for the foundation of the family and society, and it has been so from the beginning of time. ***"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"*** (Ephesians 5:31 [RSV]). One can conclude that since the Gospel plan of salvation was designed even before the world and universe had been created, so, too, was it conceived in the mind of God even before creation that marriage was something to be honored, and part of His eternal plan as well. ***3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4. even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.*** (Ephesians 1:3-4 [RSV]) We can make this conclusion due to what Paul writes about the mystery of the relationship between Christ and the church as being to that of the relationship of a husband and wife. ***32. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; 33. however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*** (Ephesians 5:32-33 [RSV])