

LESSON 11

RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATIONSHIPS

In his discussion of domestic relationships in 3:18—4:1, Paul presented instructions and brief explanations to various groups. He addressed three groups that were to be submissive: wives (3:18), children (3:20), and slaves (3:22–25). Three other groups were given responsibilities to those under their care: husbands were told to “love” their wives (3:19); fathers were instructed, “Do not exasperate your children” (3:21); and masters were commanded to “grant . . . justice and fairness” to their slaves (4:1).

1. How does each of the relationships mentioned in 3:18—4:1 involve a twofold responsibility?
2. How is Jesus the perfect pattern for behavior in each of these relationships?
3. How is the word translated “submit” used in the New Testament?

WIVES TO HUSBANDS (3:18)

Women are to be subject to their husbands “in everything” (Eph. 5:24).

4. What does Paul’s inclusion of the phrase “fitting in the Lord” remind wives about their relationship to their husbands?

HUSBANDS TO WIVES (3:19)

The submissive role of the wife is made easier if she has a compassionate and loving husband who will not be an overbearing tyrant. The actions of husbands toward their wives are to be controlled by love.

5. What should a husband do to get his wife to submit to him?

CHILDREN TO PARENTS (3:20)

Paul said that children are to “be obedient to [their] parents [γονεῖς, goneis] in all things.”

6. How are the commands given to children and slaves different from that given to the wife?
7. What benefits are there for children who obey their parents?

FATHERS TO CHILDREN (3:21)

While children are to be obedient, the father is not to be so demanding and unreasonable that he frustrates his children.

8. What should parents teach their children, beyond avoidance of naughty behavior?

SLAVES TO MASTERS (3:22–25)

As property, slaves had no rights. They had to serve their owners according to their every whim and demand. Some masters were overbearing, while others treated slaves with respect. Regardless of how he was treated by his owner, the Christian slave was instructed to obey (from *ὑπακου/ω, ηυπακουῶ*) his master in everything that was right.

9. What does the phrase translated “masters on earth” in 3:22 literally mean?
10. How is the discussion of a slave-master relationship relevant today?
11. What does the term translated “external service” in verse 22 literally mean?
12. Are serving simply to obey a command and trying to please men sinful practices?
13. How should we understand the word translated “fearing” in verse 22 when used in reference to God?
14. What “reward” does Paul promise that slaves would inherit in verse 24?
15. What two reasons does Paul give in verses 24 and 25 for giving our sincere and diligent service?
16. Does God treat everyone exactly the same (see v. 25)?

MASTERS TO SLAVES (4:1)

Christian masters were to be concerned for slaves and show them **justice and fairness**. These two words, joined with “and,” mean that masters were to be considerate of their slaves and do what was right and reasonable in dealing with them. Paul may have been saying that masters were to treat slaves as equals, as fellow human beings. This was a revolutionary concept. Certainly, it was not a common practice to treat a slave as having equal rights with freemen, or to treat slaves as the masters themselves would like to be treated. Nevertheless, this cardinal teaching of Jesus—to treat others as one wants to be treated (Mt. 7:12)—applied to masters also.

17. Why did Paul not specifically command masters to free their slaves?