

Servants and Masters

A number of verses in this section refer to slaves rather than servants. Generally the teaching regarding one of them is also very much applicable to the other.

Servants should be obedient, submissive and respectful

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in every respect, not only when they are watching – like those who are strictly people-pleasers – but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord. [COLOSSIANS 3:22](#)

Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. [1 PETER 2:18](#) ESV

Servants should be trustworthy and faithful

They [slaves] should not steal from them but should show their masters they can be fully trusted so that in everything they do they will make the teaching of God our Savior attractive. [TITUS 2:10](#) NCV™

And he [a servant] who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’
[MATTHEW 25:20–21](#) ESV

Masters must treat servants justly

Masters, treat your slaves with justice and fairness, because you know that you also have a master in heaven. [COLOSSIANS 4:1](#)

Masters must not withhold servants’ wages

You must not withhold the wages of the hired laborer overnight until morning. [LEVITICUS 19:13B](#)

Remember the persecuted

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I. Family Relationships

The Bible contains discerning insights and directions regarding relationships with those who are closest to us. As such these teachings are among the ones which are the most often applicable to our lives.

Prologue: Issues regarding Marriage

Unmarried people can be fully devoted to the Lord

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] I would like you to be free from worry. *An unmarried man concerns himself with the Lord's work, because he is trying to please the Lord.* ³³*But a married man concerns himself with worldly matters, because he wants to please his wife;* ³⁴*and so he is pulled in two directions. An unmarried woman or a virgin concerns herself with the Lord's work, because she wants to be dedicated both in body and spirit; but a married woman concerns herself with worldly matters, because she wants to please her husband.* ³⁵I am saying this because I want to help you. *I am not trying to put restrictions on you. Instead, I want you to do what is right and proper, and to give yourselves completely to the Lord's service without any reservation.* 1 CORINTHIANS 7:32–35 GNT

Do not marry outside of God's people

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Do not become partners with those who do not believe, for what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship does light have with darkness?* ¹⁵*And what agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share in common with an unbeliever?* 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14–15

A person should have only one spouse

An elder must be *blameless, the husband of one wife*, with faithful children who cannot be charged with dissipation or rebellion. TITUS 1:6

Remarriage and adultery

[JESUS:] And I say to you: *whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.* MATTHEW 19:9 ESV

Authorities' Duties to Citizens

Authorities should act and rule according to God's ways

[MOSES, GIVING INSTRUCTIONS FOR A KING:] *When he sits on his royal throne he must make a copy of this law on a scroll given to him by the Levitical priests.* ¹⁹*It must be with him constantly and he must read it as long as he lives, so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and observe all the words of this law and these statutes and carry them out.* DEUTERONOMY 17:18–19

And he [King Hezekiah] *did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.* 2 KINGS 18:3 ESV

Authorities should rule as servants of God and their people

[PAUL:] Would you like to be unafraid of those in authority? Then do what is good, and they will praise you, ⁴*because they are God's servants working for your own good.* ROMANS 13:3B–4A GNT

[Elders, to King Rehoboam], *"If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever."* 1 KINGS 12:7B ESV

Authorities should rule wisely

[GOD, TO ISRAEL:] I will give you leaders who will be faithful to me. *They will lead you with knowledge and insight.* JEREMIAH 3:15

Authorities should rule justly

[THE QUEEN OF SHEBA, TO KING SOLOMON:] Because of your God's love for Israel and his lasting commitment to them, *he made you king over them so you could make just and right decisions.* 2 CHRONICLES 9:8B

Authorities should defend the needy

[INSTRUCTIONS TO A KING:] *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; defend the rights of all those who have nothing. Speak up and judge fairly, and defend the rights of the poor and needy."* PROVERBS 31:8–9 NCV™

II. Civil Relationships

In addition to relationships with family members, the Bible looks at other relationships which have a marked effect on our lives. In doing so, it gives wise and challenging teaching regarding relationships between citizens and governing authorities, and between employees and employers.

Citizens' Duties to Authorities

Citizens should submit to and obey the governing authorities

[PAUL, INSTRUCTING TITUS WHAT TO TEACH BELIEVERS:] Remind them *to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work.* [TITUS 3:1](#)

As with the command "be subject to", the command to "be obedient" is also given in regard to "rulers and authorities".

For authorities are established by God and punish wrongdoers

Every person should obey the government in power. No government would exist if it hadn't been established by God. The governments which exist have been put in place by God. ²Therefore, whoever resists the government opposes what God has established. Those who resist will bring punishment on themselves. ³People who do what is right don't have to be afraid of the government. But people who do what is wrong should be afraid of it. [ROMANS 13:1-3A GW](#)

But citizens should defy commands that conflict with God's will

Nebuchadnezzar spoke up and said: 'Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego! He sent his angel to deliver his servants who trusted in him. *They disobeyed the king's command and were willing to risk their lives in order not to serve or worship any god except their own God.* [DANIEL 3:28 ISV](#)

The chief priest questioned them. ²⁸*He said, "We gave you strict orders not to mention Jesus' name when you teach. Yet, you've filled Jerusalem with your teachings. You want to take revenge on us for putting that man to death."* ²⁹*Peter and the other apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than people.* [ACTS 5:27B-29 GW](#)

Spouses

A husband and wife should be as one

The LORD God used the rib from the man to make a woman, and then he brought the woman to the man. ²³And the man said, "Now, *this is someone whose bones came from my bones, whose body came from my body. I will call her 'woman,' because she was taken out of man.*" ²⁴*So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.* [GENESIS 2:22-24 NCV™](#)

Just as originally the man and the woman were of the one body (vv. 22-23), so a husband and wife will be united as "one body" (v. 24). The term "one body" appears to encompass a oneness in spirit, and is signified and expressed through sexual bonding.

Husbands should love their wives

Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her ... [EPHESIANS 5:25](#)

This calls for a love that is ever persistent and is all surpassing, even to the point of sacrificing one's life.

Wives should submit to their husbands

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. [EPHESIANS 5:22-24 ESV](#)

Such submission should be voluntary and willing. The corresponding authority of the husband is not about control and should only be practiced in a Christ-like manner and in love, which should characterize all he does in relating to his wife.

Do not commit adultery

You shall not commit adultery. [EXODUS 20:14](#)

Avoid divorce

So they [husband and wife] are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. [MATTHEW 19:6](#)

Parents' Duties to Children

Parents should love their children

[PAUL, SPEAKING OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH:] In this way they [older women] will train the younger women to love their husbands, *to love their children, ...* [TITUS 2:4](#)

Parents should care for their children

[PAUL, TO THE THESSALONIAN BELIEVERS:] But we were gentle when we were with you, *like a mother taking care of her children.* [1 THESSALONIANS 2:7](#) GNT

[MOSES, SPEAKING TO THE ISRAELITES OF GOD'S CARE:] You saw how *he brought you safely all the way to this place, just as a father would carry his son.* [DEUTERONOMY 1:31B](#) GNT

Parents should discipline their children

Discipline your children while they are young enough to learn. If you don't, you are helping them to destroy themselves. [PROVERBS 19:18](#) GNT

Besides this, *we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them.* [HEBREWS 12:9A](#) ESV

Parents should teach their children about God and his deeds, inspiring them to trust and obey God

We will tell the next generation about the LORD's praiseworthy acts, about his strength and the amazing things he has done. ⁵*He established a rule in Jacob; he set up a law in Israel. He commanded our ancestors to make his deeds known to their descendants,* ⁶*so that the next generation, children yet to be born, might know about them. They will grow up and tell their descendants about them.* ⁷*Then they will place their confidence in God. They will not forget the works of God, and they will obey his commands.* [PSALMS 78:4B-7](#)

This speaks of parents telling their children of God's deeds and power (v. 4) and subsequently of his commands (vv. 5-6). Verse 7 then concludes that in light of God's wonderful deeds for them, the children would trust God and obey his commands.

Children's Duties to Parents

Children are to honor their parents

"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment accompanied by a promise, namely, ³*that it may go well with you and that you will live a long time on the earth.* [EPHESIANS 6:2-3](#)

Children are to obey their parents

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. [COLOSSIANS 3:20](#) ESV

Children should heed their parents' teaching

[A WISE FATHER, TO HIS SON:] *My son, keep your father's commands, and don't forget your mother's teaching.* ²¹*Keep their words in mind forever as though you had them tied around your neck.* ²²*They will guide you when you walk. They will guard you when you sleep. They will speak to you when you are awake.* ²³*These commands are like a lamp; this teaching is like a light. And the correction that comes from them will help you have life.* [PROVERBS 6:20-23](#) NCV™

"They will guard you when you sleep" (v. 22) speaks of the security or protection that living by such teaching provides.

Children are to help their parents

But if a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn to fulfill their duty toward their own household and so repay their parents what is owed them. For this is what pleases God. [1 TIMOTHY 5:4](#)

Remember the persecuted