

“Church & Gender” Study Guide

Lesson 10: Household Codes

Outline

1. Household Codes
 - a. Colossians 3:18-4:1
 - b. Ephesians 5:21-6:9
 - c. 1 Timothy 6:1-2* (Just servants)
 - d. Titus 2:1-10* (generational commands)
 - e. 1 Peter 2:18-3:7
2. Common Features
 - a. All to be mutually subject to each other.
 - b. Wife subject to her husband.
 - c. Husband love and honor his wife.
 - d. Children obey parents.
 - e. Parents do not provoke evil.
 - f. Slaves honor and obey masters.
 - g. Masters treat slaves justly and fairly.
3. General Perspective
 - a. COMPLEMENTARIAN: These codes are given by the Spirit to the church for all of time. They represent God’s will for the family and society.
 - b. *Some may say this less strongly due to master/servant rules.
 - c. EGALITARIAN: These codes reflect first century values. They are attempts to help Christians live in Roman society, but they do not affirm the values of Roman society. Today’s Christian “household codes” would reflect modern society.
4. Ephesians
 - a. EPHESIANS 5:17-21,
 - i. “be filled with the Spirit”
 - ii. “addressing one another”
 - iii. “singing”
 - iv. “making melody”
 - v. “giving thanks”
 - vi. “submitting”
 1. Husbands & Wives
 2. Parents & Children
 3. Masters & Servants
 - b. EPHESIANS 5:22-24
 - i. Women addressed directly instead of through husbands (v. 22-24).
 - ii. Wives specifically told to submit to their husbands, but recall that everyone in this context is being told to submit in some way.
 - iii. Husbands said to be “head” of wife.

- iv. COMPLEMENTARIAN: This reflects the headship established in Adam in Creation. “Head” is an unavoidably hierarchal term. Men are to be moral and spiritual leaders of the family.
 - v. EGALITARIAN: The sense of “head” employed here is more like “head waters” or “fountain head.” “Head” means source, not leader. It is not a hierarchal term.
- c. EPHESIANS 5:25-30
- i. Husbands warned at length (v. 25-33).
 - ii. Husbands given sacrificial, selfless description.
 - iii. Mistreatment of wife is compared to self-harm.
 - iv. EPHESIANS 5:33 (BEN’S TRANSLATION) “However, let each one of you love his wife as himself in order that the wife may respect her husband.”
- d. Compare to 1 PETER 3:1-7
- i. Wives warned at length (v. 1-6).
 - ii. Sarah used as example.
 - iii. Husbands strongly warned about abusive behavior.

Discussion Questions

1. Is there a lot of difference in how Egalitarians and Complementarians view the household codes? What are the main points of distinction?
2. What should Christians make of the codes pertaining to slavery? If they have passed away, should the other household codes go with them? If they have not passed away, what do they mean today?
3. How have you seen household codes misused? In what way are they helpful today?