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Household Tables in the Pastoral Epistles and Elsewhere in the New Testament

The New Testament letters contains several *Haustafeln* (“household tables”), a literary form that was common in the Greco-Roman world. Here are three of the best-known examples. See also 1 Timothy 2:8–15; 5:1–2; 6:1–2; Titus 2:1–10. Also see two letters by early Christian leaders that are not found in the New Testament: *1 Clement* 1:3; 21:6–9; Polycarp, *To the Philippians* 4:1–6:2).

Ephesians 5:21–6:9

5:21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. **24** Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, **26** in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, **27** so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. **28** In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, **30** because we are members of his body. **31** “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” **32** This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. **33** Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

6:1 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** “so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

4 And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in

singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; **6** not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. **7** Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, **8** knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free.

9 And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality.

Colossians 3:18–4:1

3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. **19** Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. **21** Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. **22** Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord.

23 Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, **24** since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. **25** For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. **4:1** Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

1 Peter 3:1–7

3:1 Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, **2** when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. **3** Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; **4** rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight. **5** It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands. **6** Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you.

7 Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life—so that nothing may hinder your prayers.