

# The Christian Household

Deuteronomy 5:6-10, 7:6-9

What is a Christian household? We live in a time when God wants us to relearn the basics, not because He is pedantic but because we have forgotten. What is a man, what is a woman, what is a marriage, what is a family—these foundational questions are answered by the Lord so that we can know who we are (identity) and what we are doing (mission). All of the Bible is applicable to all of God’s people because we are united in Christ as brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, and sons and daughters. Therefore whether you are young or old, married or single, parents or not, this entire series on the Christian Household is yours.

## Summary of the Text

The Decalogue is grace prefaced by grace: “I am the Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Deut. 5:6). Pharaoh thought he was divine and could enslave and kill the Israelites, but they belong to Yahweh so He delivered them and gave this law of liberty. The first command is to have no other gods before Him (v. 7). In the second, He doesn’t want any physical representations of Himself from anywhere in the three-story universe of heaven, the earth, or the waters under the earth (v. 8). Images must not be bowed down before or served because God is jealous God who visits iniquity to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him, but shows mercy to thousands to those who love and keep His commandments (vv. 9-10). In Deuteronomy 7, He says Israel is a holy and chosen people, a special treasure above all peoples in the earth, but not because they are bigger or better (vv. 6-7). Rather, it’s because He chose to love them and would keep the oath He made to their fathers, which is why He redeemed them from bondage (vv. 8). We learn in verse nine what the “thousands” in 5:10 refers to: He keeps covenant and steadfast mercy to thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments (v. 9).

## Covenant God

God is covenant-keeping God, and this means that He makes good on His great and precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4; Dt. 7:9). The word covenant occurs over 300 times in Scripture because it describes the way God relates to us. There’s the law of the covenant, the book of the covenant, the blood of the covenant, and the old covenant and the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31ff.). A biblical covenant is a solemn bond, sovereignly administered, with blessings for obedience and chastisement for disobedience. Like Israelite slaves in Egypt, God redeems us from slavery to sin out of His sheer grace: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest any should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). Note the similarity to Deuteronomy 7:6. Just like Israel couldn’t boast in themselves, so individuals and families in Christ can’t either. It’s all of grace. We come into relationship with Christ through His mercy and, critically, we *stay* in that relationship by mercy, believing His promises to bless us to a thousand generations (cf. Gal. 3:3). Covenant-keeping is promise-believing, which is why God keeps mercy with those love Him—we need that mercy to cover our sins. Mercy is de-merited favor, that is, blessing which is not only undeserved but given instead of the negative consequence which was deserved. Being in covenant with God leaves no room for presumption, the idea that because God offers mercy for our sins, we can do whatever we want—sin so that grace will abound. No, He visits iniquity upon those who hate Him. We must walk by faith and seek His mercy. We must abide in Christ like a branch in a tree and bear much fruit (Jn. 15:4).

## Households of Grace

Consider the way God designed households. Jesus says that God made us male and female, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” (Matt. 19:5; Gen. 1:28;

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2:24). Because we are made male or female, we know whom to partner with in marriage, and in that union we are to be fruitful and multiply, fill and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28). Our covenant-keeping God brings us as individuals into the covenant of grace with Him. He gives us the covenant of marriage, the one-flesh union of husband and wife where people are made: “Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring (Mal. 2:15). And He tells Christian parents to trust and worship Him, putting away all idols, because He will bless them to a thousand generations or visit iniquity to two or three. The gospel comes to families. The Lord made a covenant with Abram promising “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). And at Pentecost, Peter tells everyone to repent and be baptized, “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). This includes all of God’s promises which flow from the fundamental one to be God to you and your children (Gen. 17:7). Like Abraham, we are to *believe* not just for us but for countless people to come.

## Covenantal Thinking

Not only are we to believe God’s promises, we get to live in light of them. You can tell an apple tree by the apples, and you can see someone’s faith by their obedience (Jms. 2:18). God establishes families and then blesses the roles we play within them. A husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23). So what does a head do? He loves her as Christ does, which is efficaciously (Eph. 5:25-27). He brings his children up in the Lord (Eph. 6:4). What does she do? She follows and respects him (Eph. 5:24). She runs the house, flourishes, and from there blesses those outside of it (Prov. 31). Parents treat their children as holy, set apart for God’s use (1 Cor. 7:14). Children obey their parents and live long on the earth (Eph. 6:1-2). Brothers and sisters honor and encourage rather than tear one another down (Heb. 10:24). These are not traditional values; these are explosive, world-changing, biblical values. God puts us into households in particular roles to bless us; we bless the others in our family; and then we bless the church and the world. We live in individualistic times so covenantal thinking is foreign to us. The Latin word for covenant is *foedus*, from which we get federal. Our federal government is supposed to be responsible, bound, and accountable. As the covenant head of his family, Job offers sacrifices for each of his adult children in case they sinned (Job 1:4-5). Individualists can’t understand why since the sins aren’t his, or they make the opposite error and conclude the kids aren’t responsible because Job sacrificed. But that’s not how it works. As individuals the kids are 100% responsible for their sins as Job is for his, but he’s also 100% as their father to pray for and guide them. The faithfulness of each party highlights the responsibility of the other. Rightly understood, this humbles us, makes us take responsibility for what God has entrusted to us, and causes us to abound with love for one another. This is the death of accusing and blameshifting, and the source of strength and unity.

## Covenantal Life

What is covenantal life like in the Christian home? God brings us into His home, the “household of faith” (Gal: 6:10) so we can imitate Him in our little households. We trust God (faith), confess our sins (restoring fellowship), and therefore walk in the joy of our salvation. In our homes as we trust God we are able to trust one another. The isn’t sin-denying, but rather grace-discerning. Because we have fellowship with Him, we have it with one another, and we build loyalty. And the joy of the Lord causes us to delight in one another, which means we have fun together. The gospel lived at home is sweet in every way (Ps. 34:8).