

# Table of Household Responsibilities

by Martin Luther

**C**ertain passages of Scripture for various holy orders and positions, admonishing them about their obligations and responsibilities.

## To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers

Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive. 1 Tim. 3:2-4

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 1 Tim. 3:6

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. Tit. 1:9

## What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors

The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. 1 Cor. 9:14

One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. Gal. 6:6-7

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching. For the

over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Heb. 13:17



## Of Civil Government

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Rom. 13:1-4

## Of Citizens

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. Matt. 22:21

It is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour. Rom. 13:5-7

Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The labourer deserves his wages." 1 Tim. 5:17-18

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 1 Thess. 5:12-13

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Saviour. 1 Tim. 2:1–3

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good. Tit. 3:1

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 1 Pet. 2:13–14

### To Husbands

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. 1 Pet. 3:7

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Col. 3:19

### To Wives

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Eph. 5:22

They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. 1 Pet. 3:5–6

### To Parents

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Eph. 6:4

### To Children

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honour your father and your mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Eph. 6:1–3

### To Workers of All Kinds

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. Eph. 6:5–8

### To Employers and Supervisors

Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with Him. Eph. 6:9

### To Youth

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. 1 Pet. 5:5–6

### To Widows

The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. 1 Tim. 5:5–6

### To Everyone

The commandments ... are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Rom. 13:9

I urge ... that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. 1 Tim. 2:1

Let each his lesson learn with care,  
And all the household well shall fare.

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# Table of Duties

by Edward G. Kettner

The Christian life is a life lived in community. Each person has a number of “callings,” or “vocations,” in which they are placed, and which carry with them duties and obligations toward one another. We have these duties and obligations both in the Church and in society. As Luther moves forward in the Catechism, he outlines the shape of the Christian life in the context of these vocations in what, in German, he refers to as the *Haustafel*, literally translated as “house table,” and commonly referred to in English as the “Table of Duties.” Luther looks at the various relationships Christians have in their daily lives and notes significant Bible passages describing those mutual relationships and how they complement each other.

## Contemporary understanding

In our egalitarian society it is tempting to resent some of the instructions in this table which in certain estates carry with them ideas of subordination and even obedience. Yet, if society and the Church are to be properly ordered under God, we should expect this, and even embrace it. It is interesting that the Book of Concord never instructs us on how to preserve and grasp our own rights, but rather speaks of our obligation to preserve the rights of others. Because we remain sinners even as we are the redeemed children of God, we need instruction and admonition.

Often, when Paul presents the Good News which is the Gospel

of salvation, he follows it with a “therefore.” This “therefore” is not to be understood as a “but,” as in: “You are saved, but now you had better be doing these things to remain in God’s good graces.” Rather, Paul talks about the shape of the Christian life, what the life of a child of God looks like as Christians live out their vocations in Church and world. In Christ we have been raised from



death to life, and Paul then goes on to describe what that life looks like.

## First things first

Luther begins with the Church, noting what is expected of those holding the Office of Public Ministry, and then noting what the hearers owe their pastors. Pastors, as called servants of Christ, are expected to be faithful to God’s Word in their preaching and teaching for only such preaching and teaching will bring people out of spiritual death to life and maintain them in the life to which God has raised them. The called ministers and teachers are to demonstrate a proper character and demeanour that they might be

examples to the flock. The people of God in turn are to support their pastors and teachers. Faithful pastors and teachers are to receive their livelihood through their ministry and are to be respected by those they teach and care for. When both pastors and people faithfully carry out their duties, both teachers and hearers will live and serve joyfully.

## Civic authorities

From there the table goes on to note the nature of civil government and of citizenship. Government receives its authority from God, and those who resist the authorities resist what God has appointed. Citizens are to be subject to the governing authorities. Even words like “submissive” and “obedient” are used. We should note that in our age many nations, including Canada, give citizens the right to elect their own leaders and to petition and protest if they have grievances.

For this we are thankful. Yet we must also note that even when we disagree with certain actions of the government, we remain subject to it for the sake of peace and order.

## Family

As Luther talks about the family, he looks at the mutual relationships first between husbands and wives and then between parents and children. The relationship between husband and wife is complementary, not egalitarian. The Scriptures noted here make it clear that husbands and wives are joint heirs of grace, and that each is to treat the other with respect. Even as wives are instructed to be submissive to their husbands,

this is to be seen as something that happens willingly not as a result of force, recognizing that husbands are to love their wives and act in ways that have their best interests at heart. Children are rightly called upon to obey their parents whom God has placed over them. Yet parents also have the duty to love their children and not to provoke them to anger. Children are to be disciplined when necessary, but they are to be encouraged rather than stifled to the point of discouragement.

### At work

He then looks at the duties of workers and those of employers and supervisors. The Ephesians' passages cited here generally speak of a master-servant relationship. While employer and employee do not have precisely the same type of relationship, there remain principles that apply to that relationship as well. Workers are to remain faithful in their vocations, and serve with good will, not trying to subvert the authority of their supervisors. Employers are to treat their employees with good will as well, not in an abusive or threatening manner. These duties should particularly be carried out by Christians to serve as an example to the world around them as to how respectful relationships create a beneficial work environment.

### Specifics

To youth he notes the words in 1 Peter 5:5-6 that they should behave and act with respect and humility in whatever tasks they undertake or are given to them.

To widows he points to St. Paul's words that encourage them to devote their lives to prayer and not to be self-indulgent. This does not mean one must live one's life in seclusion, but rather emphasizes that out of the misfortune of widowhood may come opportunities for service to the Kingdom.

### Et al

Finally, to everyone he points to Romans and 1 Timothy, directing all Christians to "love your neighbour as yourself," and to bring prayers and supplications before God for all people. This we do in our general prayers during public worship and is something we are called to do in our private prayers as well.

### In conclusion

At the end, Luther concludes with the adage, "Let each his lesson learn with care, And all the household well shall fare."

That final statement sums things up nicely. These rules and instructions are given not merely to command obedience for the sake of obedience, but because they show us how life ordered in such a manner serves peace and unity. It reminds us that God desires us to live in peace with one another not clamouring for "personal autonomy" or for the assertion of our own rights over other people, but that we all live serve others and to help them live happy and productive lives.

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# Indigenous people and the Christian faith: A new way forward

by Bill Anderson

**S**o, I'm a white dude. Ironic, I know, given the title of the article. I really struggled with the appropriateness of me writing this piece. One indigenous friend said it was “okay” to do so but he did chuckle at the irony of it all. So, you're still stuck with the white dude (again!).

Two of my favourite places in the world are Tofino, B. C. and Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in southern Alberta. I have visited them many times. Both sites have been the home to indigenous people for millennia—longer than ancient Egypt. I remember a wonderful experience with a young indigenous guy on the wharf of Tofino. He was talking with some tourists and was saying how much joy he had being an indigenous person—relishing the most beautiful creation around him as his home!

*Dances with Wolves* in 1990 also made a huge impact on me. It made me think how beautiful indigenous culture is and how we Europeans messed it up. Later in the '90s, while doing my doctorate at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, I remember vividly standing at the cloister looking at a poster for a North American indigenous art exhibit being held there. I remember feeling so guilty, and so a part of the problem that I thought I should just stay in my ancestral homeland of Scotland. But without sounding like a psychological rationalization, my blond hair and blue eyes betray the fact that I'm really the product of 9<sup>th</sup> century Viking raids into Scotland. Genesis 10, the so-called “Table of Nations” which provides the background for the nation of Israel, also makes the point that none of us are of pure genetic or ethnic uniformity. We are all migrants of mixed genetics and ethnicity—and that's a good thing! This includes the fact that American (North, Central and South) indigenous people are from other geographical and ethnic backgrounds themselves. However, this in no way mitigates the inherent right of first peoples to this land. I also realized there's no “going back” and that we are all stuck with a complex situation. This is a point my indigenous student will make later when I discuss his MA thesis.

Colonialism is a complex matrix of inter-related ideas such as philosophy, politics and economics frequently embedded in law e.g. the Indian Act. At the core of colonialism, in my view, is pride. It is a veritable “Tower of Babel”. It's the arrogance and pretentiousness that one culture is superior to another—and therefore presumptively asserts its dominance over other people groups—while stealing their land and resources. This was often possible based on some form of technological advantage e.g. gun power. One should note, however, that Charles Mann in his book *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*, has in recent years challenged this notion of technological superiority (firearm targeting was not very accurate during this period!) Mann further argues that European colonization had more to do with the “perfect storm” of circumstances—including plague and famine—which allowed Europeans to prevail over and against overwhelming population odds. In other words: There was no “superiority” involved but simply opportunity. Colonialism goes hand-in-hand with imperialism (sometimes these terms are used inter-changeably). My definition of imperialism is both simple yet essential: “Imperialism is killing other people and stealing their stuff.”

While I understand that some scholars like the African biblical scholar Musa Dube at Botswana University just view the Bible as colonizing, I view the problem as arising from the hermeneutics (interpretive strategies) applied to biblical texts e.g. colonial readings of biblical texts. This perspective can only entangle us in the past and provide no real way forward.

Postcolonialism is a theoretical perspective which “unmasks” and seeks to dismantle colonial power structures. I was first exposed to postcolonial readings of biblical texts at Glasgow University. Specifically, I was exposed to South African biblical scholars who employed postcolonial readings of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah to overthrow and deal with apartheid. In 1994, I was the secretary for the conference on “The