

Christ In The Home – Wives

Colossians 3:18

Pastor John Miller

I'm going to read the whole passage, the Scripture that we're going to study for the next four weeks, and then I'm going to come back to verse 18. Follow closely with me in your Bible.

Paul says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily..."—or "with all your heart"—"...as to the Lord and not unto men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive a reward of the inheritance; for you are serving the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will receive for the wrong which he had done, and there is no respect of persons. Masters, give your bondservants what is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."

A story is told of a seven-year-old girl, who had for the first time seen the movie Cinderella. She was testing her neighbor's knowledge of the story. The neighbor was anxious to impress the little girl with her knowledge of the story of Cinderella and said, "I know what happened at the end."

"What?" said the little girl.

The neighbor said, "Well, Cinderella and the prince lived happily ever after."

The little girl, with a frown on her face, said, "Oh, no they didn't. They got married."

There is no doubt that marriage has fallen on hard times. Happily married couples are an oddity in our culture today. It wasn't that long ago that even the Supreme Court of the United States changed the definition of marriage, and now we have so-called "same sex" marriage. I think we're floundering as a culture, wanting to know what marriage actually is and how to define it. What does it mean to be a married person? What is the pattern or design? What is marriage really all about? Many are abandoning the institution of marriage and not getting married at all.

I think marriage is the divine institution created by God, and God has given us the divine design in His Word as to what makes a blessed and happy and fruitful and successful marriage.

But I want to ask the question, why is marriage so difficult today? I believe the answer is one little word—sin. The theologians call it "the fall of man" back in the book of beginnings, the book of Genesis. God made the man and God made the woman, and He brought them together and the two became one. It wasn't long afterward—we know the story—that Satan tempted Eve

and she ate of the fruit. She gave unto her husband, and he ate. This is what's called "the Fall"; man fell into sin.

The Bible is clear: It teaches that everyone born out of Adam after the Fall was under that curse. Because of the curse and because of the Fall, we live in a sinful, selfish world and have a hard time relating to one another, because of our emptiness and our alienation. So a person gets married, and they're empty and they're alienated, and it affects their marriage relationship. But there is hope for us in Jesus Christ; that we can be forgiven, that we can have the power of His Spirit fill our hearts and fill our lives.

In the context of Colossians 3, Paul has already told us to put off the old man with his deeds—that's the old, sinful lifestyle with its patterns—and put on the new man, which is the new nature created in the image of Jesus Christ. If we do that, we saw that three things will happen. In verse 15, we saw that "the peace of Christ" will "rule in our hearts." In verse 16, we saw that the "Word of Christ" will be dwelling in us "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." We'll be singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord. In verse 17, "the name of Christ" will be glorified. We looked at those: the peace of Christ, the Word of Christ and the name of Christ.

But I want you to note that the result of that is in verse 18: Wives will be subject to their husbands; in verse 19, husbands will love their wives; in verse 20, children will obey their parents—think about that. What an awesome thought. Obedient children. In our culture today, it's like I never heard of such a thing—and fathers, verse 21, will not provoke their children to anger. Paul says in the parallel passage of Ephesians 6:4 that they'll "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Then in verse 22, "Bondservants..."—or "employees"—will "...obey..." their masters or employers. Employers, in Colossians 4:1, will give unto their employees that which is "just" and right and equal. The point being that Jesus changes everything. When Jesus comes into our hearts and into our homes, it changes everything.

I'm just warming you up to verse 18.

There are four things that Jesus brings into our marriages. He brings His presence, He brings His power, He brings His purpose and He brings His pattern. In verse 17, notice the reference to "the Lord Jesus." It says, "...do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Again, in verse 18, "as is fitting in the Lord." In verse 20, it says, "...for this is well pleasing to the Lord." And in verse 23, "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men." Verse 24, "...knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." Then jump down to chapter 4, verse 1, where it says, in closing, "...knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." That "Master" is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

So when you become a Christian, there is a new presence in your marriage. Marriage is not just two; it's three. And the Bible says that a three-fold cord is not easily broken. So Jesus needs to be the center of your marriage relationship.

He brings His power. Ephesians 5:18 says, "...be filled with the Holy Spirit." Then Paul goes right in that parallel passage to speak about wives submitting to your husband and husbands loving your wife.

Thirdly, Jesus brings a new purpose to our marriages. In Colossians 3:17, we "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." The purpose of your marriage—and this is kind of foundational for you married folk—is to glorify Jesus. Your marriage is to bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ. So you have purpose.

And we have a new pattern, fourthly. In Ephesians 5:24, he says "...as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." And in verse 25, he says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." Until Christ came into the world, we didn't have this pattern. Now we have the pattern; as the church is subject to Christ, so the wife is subject to her husband, and as the Lord gave Himself for the church, so the husband gives himself in sacrificial love to his wife.

So if we, as Christians, are going to change the world, I believe we have to start by changing our homes. That starts with our marriages. Marriage is the foundation of the home, and the home is the foundation of society.

Paul first speaks to the wives, in verse 18. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." I confess I've been preaching a long time, and anytime I preach to just wives in one verse on submission, I do so with a little bit of fear and trepidation. I have my car running back stage if I have to make a fast exit after church. Whenever I officiate at a wedding, we get unbelievers attending and non-Christian family members. I read from Ephesians 5:22 where it says, "Wives, submit to your own husbands." If looks could kill, I would have been dead a thousand times over. You can see the hair stand up on the back of their necks.

"Did that preacher just say, 'Submit'? He used the 's' word. I can't believe that! What cave did he just crawl out of?!"

People literally cannot believe that I would say that. I didn't say it. I read it. It's called "the Bible." Don't shoot me. I'm just the errand boy. I'm just reading the Bible. You read the Bible and they freak out. Well, it's in the Bible and I want to make sure you see it right there, in Colossians 3:18. It's in the Scriptures. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."

I want you to notice in one, simple statement, one verse, verse 18, he deals with the wives; in one verse, verse 19, he deals with the husbands; in one verse, verse 20, he deals with the children; and in one verse, verse 21, he deals with the fathers. So Paul isn't messing around here; he minimizes his words and gets right to the point. He's talking about basic, essential, foundational truths.

I want to point out a few things. Marriage is a wife and a husband. Look at verse 18. "Wives, submit yourselves to your own..."—what?—"...husbands." Now I realize today, those who

promote same-sex marriage, define any sex as playing the role of a wife or husband. If two men get married, sometimes they'll say that this one's the wife or this one's the husband. They convolute the passage here. So I want to be clear here that a wife is a female, and a husband is a male. If you don't believe me, believe what Jesus said in Matthew 19:4-5. Jesus said, "... He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two...'—male and female—"...shall become one flesh." Marriage is between one man and one woman.

You can redefine it, tear it apart, change it—do whatever you want. I see these government-paid-for adds on TV "love is love," and I'm thinking, You have no idea what God's love is all about. You can't change the definition of marriage, and you can't change the definition of love. God's love is pure and holy and righteous. So I wanted to make that clear.

I've preached from this text many, many times, but it never really stood out to me that he made clear that it's a wife and a husband, as he addressed married couples. And Paul was writing to the Roman-Greek culture that was completely perverted. Christianity brought new standards into the marriage relationship as never before known. So Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 19:4-5 that it's a male and a female.

Now what is God's word to the wives? Basically, it is to "submit yourselves to your own husbands," verse 18. The word "submit" there means to be submissive in the Greek. I want to share some things that are very, very important. Paul says, "be submissive" or "submit yourselves."

This is not a very popular subject today. It's misunderstood, I believe, and I don't believe we have a right understanding of this concept of submission. So I want to share with you five things that submission is not, and then I'm going to share with you seven things that submission is.

First of all, five things that submission is not. Submission is not merely a concept for women. Ephesians 5:21 says, "...submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Before he says, "Wives, submit" and "Husband, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church," he actually said that husbands and wives should be submitted to God in reverence and fear, and they should be submitted to one another in reverence and fear for God. So there is a mutual sense of submission.

In 1 Peter 5:5, it says, "Likewise, you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility..."—why?—"...for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Whatever happened to younger people respecting older people? We've lost that in our culture today. Even the Bible says you younger submit to the older. All of you be subject one to another. "Be clothed with humility." God resists the proud, but God gives grace to those who are humble. So submission is not just a concept for women.

Secondly, submission does not mean that the wife becomes a slave. When you hear the word “submit” in a word association, you think of a slave. But the truth is that the wife is never freer than when she is in submission to her husband. I want you to notice a little word in verse 18: “own,” “own husbands.” That word really jumped out from the passage to me this week. He could have said, “Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands,” and that would have been just fine. We never would have thought anything about it. But he said “your own husbands.” Why does he put the word “own” in there?

I thought this was kind of cool. You’re submitting not to just some man out there in society. You’re not just submitting to some ogre, some crazy person. You’re submitting to your husband. You go, “Yah, well, you don’t know my husband.” People think, If my husband had been here when Paul wrote this, he probably wouldn’t have put it in the Bible.

But the word “own” really spoke to my heart. I believe it intentionally, purposefully meant to convey that he’s your very own. And wives, when you think of your husband, you need to think, He’s really mine. He’s no one else’s. He’s mine. He’s my very own husband. That’s the individual you are submitting to, and your very own husband is to love you sacrificially and self-denyingly, modeled by the love Jesus had for the church and gave Himself for it. So you’re submitting to your very own husband; he’s yours and he belongs to you.

Thirdly, I would say submission does not mean that a wife never opens her mouth, never has an opinion and never gives advice. We get this idea that a wife submitting means that she is seen but never heard; that she is to be busy working and serving but she has no ideas, opinions or thoughts. Yet the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31:26 says, “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.” I like that. So ladies, if you speak, speak with wisdom and be kind, but I think a man would be a fool not to want to know his wife’s feelings, want to know his wife’s opinions, ideas or views. My wife has ideas and wisdom in ways that I don’t, and you’d be wise to draw from that.

When Albert Einstein and his wife were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary, someone ask Dr. Einstein to what he attributed their many years of successful marriage, and he said, “Well, we decided when we got married that I would make all the important decisions, and she would make all the minor decisions. But you know, after 50 years of marriage, there’s never been an important decision.” Kind of funny. I’ve heard wives say, “Well, if my husband’s the head, I am the neck and I can turn him whatever way I want to turn him. He wears the pants, but I tell him what pants to put on.” But, again, she has her ideas. She has wisdom and understanding. You can draw from that. You’re a team.

Fourthly, submission does not mean that the wife must obey ungodly counsel. There are limits to submission. If your husband has visions of you becoming the next Bonnie and Clyde, and you’re going to rob a bank—“Come on, let’s go rob the bank”—you say, “No, I must obey God rather than man.” If he wants you to do something that is immoral or contradicts God’s Word, you must obey God rather than man.

But just a little footnote here. Make sure it's a legitimate violation of God's Word, not just that he would like to have some mashed potatoes for dinner. You know, your husband says, "Will you make some mashed potatoes for dinner?" and you say, "I rebuke you, you devil. Get behind me Satan!" That's not ungodly or unscriptural. I just thought I'd share that with you.

Number five, submission does not mean that the wife is inferior to the husband. This is perhaps the most important negative point I'll make. In no way does submission indicate inferiority. The Bible says in 1 Peter 3:7 that the husband and wife are "heirs together of the grace of life." God doesn't love the husband more than the wife. God doesn't hear his prayers before her prayers. The ground is level at the foot of the Cross; husbands and wives stand equally in their access to God and their blessings from God.

So the question now is, what does submission actually mean? God has given order in the marriage so that there might be order in the home. The word "submit" is taken from the military genre or concept. Don't let that freak you out. That doesn't mean that the husband is to bark out orders and the wife must obey. It literally means to "arrange under." It's for the purpose of order and function. If you're going to define the word "submit," it means to "arrange under," and the conveyed idea or concept is order and function. God is a God of order. It has nothing to do with superiority.

It doesn't matter if you are a guy or gal, married or single or who you are, you might find yourself counselling somebody or praying with somebody. If you're young and single and haven't gotten married yet and you're going to get married—everyone needs to know what the Bible teaches about marriage, submission and a husband's love for his wife. We need to know these principles, no matter your life situation.

Let me give you seven facts about submission. Number one, the wife's submission to her husband is voluntary. Notice verse 18. "Submit yourselves." Paul could have said, "Submit," but he said, "Submit yourselves." Why? Because it indicates a voluntary action. You choose to be obedient to God—we're going to see that in a minute—and you choose to be obedient to your husband. A husband can't command his wife to submit; she has to voluntarily submit herself. Some translate that "to be in subjection."

Number two, the wife's submission to her husband is an imperative; it's a command. In the Greek it's called an imperative, so it's not a suggestion; it's a command. "Wives, submit yourselves." It's commanded. God's commands are for our good and for His glory, and we need to obey and trust God. You say, "Well, what if my husband makes a decision that is really a bad decision?" That's when you have to trust God. I have wives come to me, they're freaking out and they say, "My husband wants me to do this. It's crazy and I don't want to do it, but I know I'm supposed to submit. What should I do? How can I circumvent my husband or get him to change his mind?" You can share with him. You can communicate your feelings to him. Then you trust in the Lord.

We talked about the shield of faith in our study on Wednesday night. There comes a point in all

of our lives where we just need to trust God. You can trust God to take care of your husband. You can trust God to take care of your wife. You can trust God to take care of your children. You can trust God to take care of your health. You can trust God to take care of your finances. But you have to trust Him, and when you trust Him, God will go to work. You need to put it in God's hands.

Then, thirdly, the wife's submission to her husband is to be continuous. In the Greek, this is in the present tense. When he says, "Wives, submit yourselves," it is in the present tense in the Greek. That means that it is ongoing, continually, that it is to be a lifestyle of submitting. That means you submit in the things you want to and in the things you may not want to. If your husband says, "Let's go shopping and buy you a new dress," you say, "Yes, honey; I submit." Then he asks something else of you and it's like, "Oh, no. No. I don't do windows. I don't clean windows. I don't vacuum." Submission is something that is continuous; it's a lifestyle.

Number four is that the wife's submission to her husband is a positive concept. Notice that in verse 18 this is not what she is supposed to do, but it is what she is supposed to do. It's positive and not negative. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." The command is positive. A wife's submission to her husband has been described as "the freedom to be creative under divinely appointed authority." Submission means the wife puts all of her talents, abilities, resources and energies at her husband's disposal. Submission means that the wife yields and uses all of her abilities under the management of her husband for the good of her husband and the family. That's a freeing, liberating concept.

In Genesis 2:18 it says, "And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'" God looked at Adam and said, paraphrasing, "The dude needs help, big time." I look at some of the men around here and I think, Thank God he has a wife! Dresses him, feeds him, fixes him up, domesticates him. So many guys need domesticating. "Get married dude!" God looked at Adam and said man's aloneness isn't good. He said, "I'm going to make a helper suitable for him." So God created the wife to be a helper or a help meet suitable for Adam. That's how the wife finds her purpose and her role.

Number five, the wife's submission to her husband enables leadership. A lot of wives say, "My husband doesn't take the lead in my home." Sometimes—not always—it is because the wife isn't submitting. A lot of times, that will open the door for him to be able to take leadership. So, ladies, your submission allows your husband to demonstrate loving leadership in the home.

Shortly after her marriage to Prince Albert, Queen Victoria and her husband had a quarrel. Albert walked out of the room and locked himself in his private apartment. Victoria hammered furiously at the door. "Who is there?" called Albert.

"The Queen of England, and she demands to be admitted."

There was no response. The door remained locked. Victoria hammered again.

"Who's there?" Albert inquired. The reply was the same, and the door remained shut. Furiously

and fruitlessly, Victoria continued to knock. It was followed by the same pause. Then there was a gentle tap finally followed by “Who’s there?” Albert said.

“Your wife, Albert,” the Queen replied. Then the Prince opened the door at once.

I believe that when you are submissive, it opens the door to communication, it opens the door of enablement—it enables your husband to take that leadership—and it is a great responsibility. I believe that the more you submit, the more your husband will rise to the occasion.

Number six, the wife’s submission to her husband involves the attitude as well as the action. It’s not just submitting yourselves, it’s doing it with the right attitude, because God looks not only at our actions, but He looks at the heart. God wants you to do it with the right attitude.

In Ephesians 5:33, Paul concludes that parallel passage by saying, “...let the wife see that she respects her husband.” In the King James, it says “reverence her husband.” A better translation would be “respects her husband.” You say, “Well, he’s not respectful.” But I believe that you still need to respect his position.

There are two themes from Colossians 3:18 to 4:1 that are so needed today in our culture, even though we don’t like them. They are authority and submission, whether it be in the home—husbands, wife, parents, children learning to submit to authority—or whether it be in the workplace—employers and employees. Those two themes run through that whole passage. So God has ordained that in the home, the wife be subject to and submitted to her husband.

Number seven, the wife’s submission to her husband is a spiritual matter. If you miss this, you miss everything, ladies. Notice it in verse 18. “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in...”—or “fitting” or “proper” or “pleasing unto”—“...the Lord.” Notice how Paul ties the Lord together. Ephesians 5:22 says, “...as unto the Lord.”

This is what I call “the mission of submission.” There is actually a mission in your submission. The mission in your submission is that you’re going to do it “as unto the Lord.” You’re going to do it in obedience to God. You’re going to do it because you want to please the Lord. I believe that you submit out of obedience to God, that you submit out of love for God, that you submit because you want to please God and you submit because you want to glorify God. It’s all about the Lord. I already pointed out to you the references to the Lord all the way through this passage.

When Christ comes into your heart, he also comes into your home. He brings His presence and He brings His power. He brings His purpose and He brings His pattern. It’s all about Jesus Christ, so a wife’s submission is all done out of obedience to Jesus Christ. This is the motive of submission.

Jesus said this in John 14:15: “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” Never does a wife demonstrate more her love for God than when she is living in subjection and obedience to

God's Word by submitting to her husband.

A story is told of the captain of a ship, who looked into the dark one night and saw a faint light in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman to send the message, "Alter your course 10 degrees south." Promptly a return message was received which said, "Alter your course 10 degrees north." The captain was angered that his command had been ignored, so he sent a second message. "Alter your course 10 degrees south. I am the captain." Soon another message was received. "Alter your course 10 degrees north. I am a seaman, third class." Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear that it would invoke. "Alter your course 10 degrees south. I am a battleship." Then the reply came, "Alter your course 10 degrees north. I am a lighthouse."

I believe this book, the Bible, is a lighthouse. This is God's Word. If we do not alter our course to align with God's Word, we're headed for destruction. If you're here today and you don't know Jesus Christ, He's what you need. He can bring a new presence and a new power and a new peace and a new purpose into your heart, into your home and into your marriage. Jesus Christ transforms lives and thus He transforms marriages. But it all starts with seeing your need for Jesus and trusting Him as your Savior.

If you haven't done that you need to do that. You need to say, "Lord, I ask you to please forgive my sins and come into my heart. I surrender my life to you as Lord and Savior. I want You to make me Your child."

When you take up the Bible, it is a "lamp to our feet and a light to our path." Then you begin to read God's Word and obey God's Word and God's Spirit works through God's Word to change your life and change your marriage. God wants to heal your heart and heal your home and heal your marriage. But we must align our course; we must change our course to align with God's Word.