

The Gospel at Home (Colossians 3:18-21)

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Genuine spiritual living is bringing relationships into compliance with the example of Christ. Just as Christ submitted to the Heavenly Father and loved His bride, the Church, we are also to do likewise. Just as Christ obeyed His Heavenly Father and encouraged His children, we are to do likewise.

INTRODUCTION

We have been studying the Book of Colossians. It is common for the Apostle Paul to allocate the first half of the epistle to doctrine and the second half to duty; the first part of the letter consists of principles or instructions and the second part consists of practice. In Colossians 1 and 2, Paul contrasted true doctrine and false doctrine. The apostle taught them that Christ is enough. Our Lord Jesus is sufficient. But the false teachers were claiming that Christ was not enough and one needed to add various practices.

However, Christ is enough. Because of our identity in Christ, we are to live a certain way as recorded in Colossians 3 and 4. We are to put off or mortify our old self and we are to put on our new self. We are to exchange our worldly conduct with godly conduct. Because we're children of God, we are in Christ. He gives us the ability to live victoriously. Last week, we saw how our new self affected our personal life. The next two weeks, we will see how our new self will affect our domestic life, which includes our home life and our work life. Today, we will focus on our home life, where we will concentrate on the husband and wife relationship and the father/parent and child relationship. Next week, we will look at the work life.

In our society, our families are in terrible shape. In 1960, only 5% of children were born out of wedlock. However, in 2010, that figure soared to almost 41%. 53% of all births to women under age 30 were to unmarried women. In other words, people are choosing not to get married, but just co-habitat. 39% of Americans say marriage is becoming obsolete. Over 50% of marriages end in divorce.

There is a great craving for intimate marriages and intimate families because so many marriages and families are fractured. Broken relationships are everywhere. It appears that having an intimate marriage and family is hopeless. Is there a solution for this dreaded situation? In Colossians 3:18-21, God gives the secrets to an intimate marriage and family. Christ has provided a model to follow because He is enough for us to have an intimate marriage and family. The instruction that Paul gives to the believers is counter-cultural. God is not only the one that established family, but He holds the blueprint to a successful home life.

[This passage on the home as well as the passage on the marketplace resembles a similar passage in Ephesians, where it has the basic content, but with more details. Therefore, I would like to look at both of these passages together. Before examining our passage from Col. 3:18-21, I want us to turn to Eph. 5:18 to give you some context. It reads, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." Paul here contrasts a person being filled with wine with a person that is filled with the Spirit. When a person is filled with wine, he is not himself and has abnormally bad behavior because he is controlled by the wine. However, when a person is filled with the Spirit, he is not himself also and has abnormally good behavior, which is recorded in vv. 19-21: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

A summary of the three abnormal good behaviors are 1) a joyful heart 2) a thankful heart and 3) a submissive heart. This third behavior shows that there should be a mutual submission to one another. Since this principle of submission is so important, Paul goes on in the following verses

to give three practical relationships where mutual submission can take place. It includes the wives and husbands relationship, the children and parents' relationship, and the employee and employer relationship. This same pattern in Ephesians 5-6 is recorded in Colossians 3:18-25. Paul provides instructions for an intimate marriage and family. In order to carry them out consistently, we need to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has also set the example for us to follow and we need the Spirit to empower us to do it. I have broken down the message this morning into three points. You can find the sermon outline in the bulletin. 1st point: Believers are to submit to one another. 2nd: God provides blueprint to an intimate marriage. 3rd: God provides blueprint to an intimate family.

A. Believers are to Submit to One Another

One of the key evidences that the Spirit is controlling us is that we are submitting to one another, particularly in the home setting. Note that this is a mutual submission. There needs to be submission back and forth and not just one way. That is the key to understanding the rest of the passage in Ephesians 5 as well as Colossians 3. Before we discuss what submission is, I want to make clear that God has created both men and women in the image of God. We are all equal in position before the Lord. However, God has given different roles to husband and wives as well as children and parents. They are equal in position, but different in function.

What is this word "submit" means? It is a military term that means to arrange under rank. A soldier that is a private in comparison to a colonel does not mean that one man is necessarily better than the other. It only means that they have different ranks. Submit is a call to recognize and respond to the God-ordained authority. God is an orderly God. If He did not have chain of command in society, we would have chaos. So to have an intimate marriage, one needs to follow God's blueprint for marriage. Again, I want to remind you that this application is an example from the behavior of one being filled with the Spirit, where one is submitting to one another.

B. God Provides Blueprint to an Intimate Marriage

1. The Role of the Husband

I want to start by looking at the role of the husband first. V.19 "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." First and foremost, husbands are to love their wives because women are relational beings. What is most important for them is to be connected with others, particularly with her husband because he is her soul mate.

One of her greatest needs is to be loved. This love is not the erotic love, but the agape love, which is sacrificial love. It is giving the best for the person that you love. It is putting her as top priority of your life besides the Lord. What does that look like? Love causes one to place the needs of others above his own. This includes not only her physical needs, but also her spiritual and emotional needs, which are even more important.

One of the best ways to love your wives is to listen to her and communicate with her. Our spouse wants to connect with us. She wants to know us and journey with us. May we as husbands share what we are thinking and feelings with our wives. Loving our wives means understanding and meeting her needs in spite of the cost. That means that she needs to be valued. Do we brag about our wives or do we criticize her? Are we willing to go the second mile to meet her needs? What if we are tired and do not feel like it? Because we love our wives, we would be willing to make the sacrifice. I assure you, if you love your wife totally and consistently, your wives will do anything for you. The problem with many marriages is that our wives do not feel special or valued.

Note that Jesus has set the example for us to follow. In Eph. 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Christ loved the

church so much that He went to the cross to pay the penalty of man's sin. He was willing to die for us. The husbands are commanded to love our wives like Christ loves the church.

In addition, in verse 19, it also says that husbands are not to be harsh with their wives. He is not to misuse or abuse his authority by being overbearing. The husband should not treat his wife out of bitterness, but out of the love of Christ. Husband should not be rude to their wife.

In order for the husband to love his wife well, he needs to submit to her by putting her above himself. That is exactly what Eph. 5:21 says, "We are to submit to one another." [Let us examine the role of the wife as we read v.18, "Wives, submit to your husbands as it is fitting to the Lord."]

2. The Role of the Wife

In verse 18, it said that wives are to submit to their husbands. There is question if God made a mistake within the order of the family. Let me explain what it does not mean first. It does not mean that wives are to be doormats or slaves to their husband. It does not diminish the equality or destroy the dignity of the wife.

The word "submit" means to voluntarily place oneself under someone's authority. It gives the understanding of order and authority. Note that it is a voluntary action and not a forced action by the husband. It is not a position of inferiority, but rather a different role on the same team. The wife finds her identity not apart from her husband, but in conjunction with her husband. In order for the team to win, each member must understand their role and do their best in it. Husband and wife are teammates that complement each other and not compete with each other.

When we talk about submission, we remember Christ setting the example for us to follow. Although Jesus is equal to God, yet He submitted to the Heavenly Father to be incarnated as a man to die for the penalty of man's sin. In order to have proper order, there must be clear line of authority and submission. This is also true within marriage.

It goes on to state in this verse that the wife's submission is fitting in the Lord. The word, "fitting," means proper or appropriate. It is the right thing to do. It is God's design for wives to submit to their husbands. It is not because the husband is superior and the wife is inferior as a human being. She has surrendered her life to Christ and follows Him. Therefore, she trusts Christ to set up the order for marriage.

Why is it so important for wives to submit to their husbands? One of the other responsibilities of a husband as recorded in Eph. 5:23 is to be the head of the family or to lead. When the wife submits, it motivates the husband to lead. When husbands lead and love, the submission of the wife will naturally follow. Wives can best encourage their husbands to lead and love when the wives submit to the husband. But what if the husband does not lead or love? Both in the Eph. 5 & Col. 3 passages, it does not have any condition to submission. Wives are to submit to her husband because that is God's blueprint to an intimate marriage. We do what God has commanded for us to do and believe that God will put pressure on the husband to do what he supposed to do. We are responsible for what is within our control, that is our role. And leave the rest to the Lord.

[God not only provided us a blueprint to an intimate marriage, but also to an intimate family. Families are broken today. There is a great cry for harmony and respect for one another. How do we achieve that? Well, we need to understand our roles in the family and carry out our role, then we will experience intimate family. I would like to start with

the role of the fathers or parents first. v. 21 says, “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.”]

C. God Provides Blueprint to an Intimate Family

1. The Role of the Fathers/Parents

The key to an intimate family is the fathers. The term “fathers” was sometimes used of both parents. The principle can apply to both parents. The parents are the primary faith influencers. They have the responsibilities to train up their children and not the church or the grandparents or the teachers at school. In Eph. 4:4b, “Father/parents are to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Parents are respected only to a certain level because of their position. However, to gain more respect and influence, it is earned.

I want to share 5 practical ways how we can gain respect all starting with the letter A and then I will share how we can lose respect. 1) Show Acceptance to our child. Value them not because of performance, but as a child of ours. Do we tell them that we are proud of them? 2) Show appreciation for them. Let us thank them when they do something right. Too often, we do not say anything because we assume that’s what they supposed to do. It is so important that we validate their importance. Positive reinforcement works much better than negative criticism. In addition, parents are to 3) Show affection physically by hugs and kisses as well as affection verbally by telling them that you love them. 4) Show availability for our child. There is no short cut to show that our children are important to us than to spend time with them. They know that we are busy. When we are available to play with them, support them in their activities, pray with them, and talk with them, they will feel cherished. 5) Lastly, is accountability. Parents need to teach their children to make decisions. There are consequences to all the decisions that we make. Through accountability, they learn to be responsible. Don’t make all the decisions for them, but teach them to make decisions. If they make a bad decision, let them face the consequences and not over protect them. So here are the five practical suggestions that starts with the letter A that will help us gain respect: Acceptance, Appreciation, Affection, Availability, and Accountability. Training through positive directives is much more effective than through negative directives.

However, there are ways that we lose respect before our children. We read verse 21 again, “Fathers, do not embitter your children.” In other words, do not exasperate them or provoke them to anger. There are certain hot buttons that we do or say that tick the daylight out of our child. It gets them all aroused and angry. It gets them to want to fight. It breaks their spirit. How do we go about provoking our child to anger? One of the most frequent complaints from a youth is that my parent does not listen to me. In other words, we do not seek to understand them from their perspective. Telling them what to do without explaining why. We do not trust them with responsibility and want total control. When we are too strict, it frustrates them. Shouting and belittling them; shaming them; giving them a guilt trip. We embitter our child by being over-controlling or under-controlling. We provoke our child to anger when we set up a rule, but we do not uphold that rule ourselves. Being hypocritical with our standards can frustrate our child.

In the latter part of verse 21, it explains what will happen when we embitter our child, they will be discouraged. They in turn will revolt, rebel, and not listen nor respond. At times, they will withdraw and lose all desire to do right. In other words, we are shooting ourselves on the foot when we provoke our child to anger. Paul is saying do not do that, it will only harm ourselves. We will lose respect and lose influence toward your child. In order for us to not embitter our children, we must submit ourselves toward our children. We recognize those things that we do and say that will tick them off, but we choose not to do it because we want to obey God. This is an example of submitting to

one another. We know that children are to submit to parents, but parents are also to submit to their children by not embittering our children.

May we remember that Christ valued us, accepted us, and forgiven us. He has set the example for us to parent our children. Christ values us not because of what we have done, but simply because we are His children. Now that we have seen the role of the fathers or parents, let's examine the role of the children as we read v.20, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."

2. The Role of the Children

The word "children" refers to children growing up. It does not claim that children must submit to and obey their parents as long as they live. The word "obey" means to follow the direction. When fathers or parents give an instruction, we as children are to obey them. Not only selectively, but "in all things." Wait a minute, do we have to obey in all things? Does it mean that parents are always right? No, it means that children have the opportunity to learn self-control, patience, and order. We need to do what God commanded us to do by following His blueprint and leave it to God to apply pressure on the parents if they are not doing what they are supposed to do.

The word "for" introduces the reason for this command. When children obey their parents, it pleases the Lord. It is even more important to please the Lord than to please our parents.

Just as Christ obeyed the Heavenly Father, we likewise are to follow Christ's example by obeying our parents.

In conclusion, Paul has given us the blueprint to an intimate marriage and family. Each member of the family must understand their role and to uphold it. Husbands are to love their wives. Wives are to submit to their husband. Fathers are to not embitter their child. Children are to obey their parents. We cannot carry out these instructions consistently by ourselves. We need the Lord to empower us. We need to yield to the Holy Spirit to control us, then we will be able to submit to one another.

Genuine spiritual living is bringing relationships into compliance with the example of Christ. Just as Christ submitted to the Heavenly Father and loved His bride, the Church, we are also to do likewise. Just as Christ obeyed His Heavenly Father and encouraged His children, we are to do likewise. Jesus is enough and He is sufficient.

To help families to understand their role in each stage of their life, the church has set up the Home Life Resource Center, which is located close to the front entrance. There are books and pamphlets available for you. Actually, we are giving away a book each month for the next couple of months. You can sign up for a drawing. We will also have family life books in the book stall for you to purchase in the near future. The church would like to partner with you and to equip you to have better family life.