

**[1]**  
***Christ in the Home***  
**Colossians 3:18-21**  
**July 2, 2017, Jeff Germo**

If I were to sum up what Life is all about I would have to say the Bible teaches that it is about relationships. That is why God made us. When he created Adam, he said, "It is not good for man to be alone," so he created Eve to complete a community. He made us to relate to him and to each other, which is why Jesus said the two most important commandments summing up all the others are to love God and to love people. Nothing else matters as much because life is about relationships. The question is always, "Are we loving each other by our actions?"

We have all kinds of relationships to balance. We have our familial relationships, our friends, neighbours, colleagues, classmates, church family. Some of you may be in clubs of various kinds, or a part of different organizations. All of these relationships are important in some way, so we try to juggle them so no one gets left out.

I think most of us try to live balanced lives. But, balance is hard. There are so many spheres of our lives that we try to juggle and keep together. I don't know about you, but I don't always do very well at that.

Part of our problem is how we order our lives. We tend to prioritize our lives in this way:

**[2]**

If we are Christian, we say God is first, which we sometimes equate with ministry and church, and then comes our immediate family, and then our extended family, then our friends, and work, then leisure etc. So, if there is a conflict between church, or ministry and family, family loses out. Or if there is a conflict where we have to choose between family and friends, friends lose out and so on. What we can tend to do is compartmentalize our lives into sections where one is more important than the other. This might be true sometimes.

The problem with this, however, is that we can tend to compartmentalize God out of the rest of our lives, so he is a part of our church life, but not our friends, or our leisure time, or our business. He just gets one piece of the pie. I have actually heard Christian business men justify their unethical business practices by saying, "It's just business." The assumption is that in business it's ok to cheat and lie and take advantage of people because that's how you get ahead. The bottom line is the most important thing. They compartmentalize God out of their business life.

In truth, though, God should be a part of our whole life. So, instead of thinking about the different spheres of our lives as a list of who's on first, or second, or whatever, we should think of it like a wheel with spokes.

**[3]**

Each of the different parts of our lives take up a different amount of time, but they aren't listed in order of priority as if God is merely one in a list of priorities.

When the Apostle Paul was speaking to the Athenian philosophers about Jesus at Mars Hill he said,

**[4]**

**Acts 17:28 (NLT)**

***28 For in him we live and move and exist.***

In other words, God is not just one of many parts of our lives. ***"In him we live and move and exist."*** He is all and in all.

So, instead of just having Jesus at the top in our list of priorities, we can look at all areas of our lives as part of a whole where Christ is at the centre. He is not simply one part of the whole. He is the centre of it all. ***"In him we live and move and exist."*** Each part of our lives is influenced by our relationship with him, whether it's our family, church, work, friends, or leisure. He is not compartmentalized into just one piece of the pie, which means that our relationship with Christ will influence how we do business. It will influence how we treat our families. It will influence what we do in our spare time because he is a part of it all. ***"In him we live and move and exist."***

Paul, in the passage we are looking at today, deals with several areas of our lives and discusses how we can live so God is honoured in all our relationships.

The things he said were very counter culture in his day. He totally went against the norm of the Graeco-Roman and Jewish cultures.

This morning we are going to look at Colossians 3:18-21 where Paul speaks about ***"Christ in the Home."*** If it is really true that in Christ ***we live and move and exist***, what does that mean for our home life?

In that day, in first century Graeco-Roman society, women, children and slaves had almost no rights. They were all legally the property of the man of the house and he could do with them as he saw fit. We have to remember that this was the cultural milieu into which Paul wrote. This would have been the mindset of many of the people in the church as well.

I once had a lady tell me that she did not like to read the writings of Paul because he was a "male chauvinist pig." Those were her words. Well, we are going to see that this is categorically false. Paul was far from being a chauvinist. He actually exalted women to a higher plane than they had ever experienced in that culture. Paul's teaching was revolutionary, and I would venture to guess, was not very popular among the men of that day.

So, we are going to simply walk through this passage verse by verse and see what Paul has to say about how Christ should affect our family life. He immediately dives into very dangerous waters.

**[5]**

**Colossians 3:18-21 (NLT)**

***18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord.***

There is no way we are going to leave here this morning without offending someone. Somebody is going to be mad at me.

Maria Portokalos, in the movie, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, assures her daughter, Toula, that she can change her husband's mind about allowing Toula to go to college and leave the family business: **"The man is the head, but the woman is the neck, and she can turn the head anyway she wants."**

There is no other topic I could speak on that could potentially get me into more trouble than this one. I have seen this passage abused and misinterpreted by men who love to be king of their domain, and keep their wives under their thumbs, thinking that they are being biblical. "I'm the head of the house. What I say goes, no questions asked," they say while pounding their chests.

And of course, the flip-side of this is to ignore it all together and go the way of the the feminist movement that has been growing in momentum in the last forty years where women have reacted to the subservience they have experienced. Some have gone to the extreme of saying that women are invincible and men are no good. Neither of these extremes is biblical.

#### [6]

Remember the backdrop into which this letter was written. Women were seen as property of their husbands. Plutarch wrote this in his *Advice to Bride and Groom* (33AD), right around the time of Jesus' death: **"If wives subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of control."**<sup>1</sup> One of the popular teachings of the day was from the Jewish Rabbi Hillel who misinterpreted Old Testament Jewish law to say that a husband could divorce his wife for any and every reason, even for burning his dinner. But the wife, on the other hand, had no right whatsoever to divorce her husband.

The wife was seen as mere chattel. She was her husband's property just like his livestock was his property, and he had the right to do whatever he wished to her. The wife's opinion meant nothing. She was to remain in quiet subservience going along with whatever the husband wished.

#### [7]

Now, at first reading, verse 18 might sound like this is what Paul meant. **"Wives submit to your husbands."** But, we can get into all kinds of trouble by taking a part of a verse by itself, or a verse out of context and developing a theology or ideology out of it.

Paul wrote a similar thing to the church in Ephesus.

#### [8]

### **Ephesians 5:22-33 (NLT)**

**<sup>22</sup> For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. <sup>24</sup> As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch, *Advice to Bride and Groom*, taken from the *NIV Application Commentary: Colossians/Philemon*, p. 243

Again, if you read this far without reading it in context, you might build a case for a one sided relationship where the husband rules the roost and the woman follows in humble submission without having any say in the matter. But, Paul doesn't end it there.

**[9]**

***<sup>25</sup> For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. <sup>27</sup> He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. <sup>28</sup> In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself.***

**[10]**

***<sup>29</sup> No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. <sup>30</sup> And we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. <sup>33</sup> So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.***

These things Paul said about husband and wife relationships were revolutionary to his audience. He did not subjugate women by the things he said – quite the opposite. He liberated them to new heights.

The Greek word for "submit" here is *hypotasso*. It does not in anyway suggest some sort of innate inferiority on the part of the wife, "but is used for a modest, cooperative demeanor that puts others first." And this same kind of attitude is expected of all Christians, no matter what station in life, or what gender. In verse 21 of Ephesians 5 Paul says we are all to ***"submit to one another out of reverence to Christ."*** Paul is not asking of the wife something that he is not asking of every other follower of Jesus.

**[11]**

The same kind of demeanour was commanded of the husband in Ephesians 5. Look at verse 25:

***<sup>25</sup> For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her...***

Christ gave up his rights, humbled himself, became like one of us so that he could serve us. He did all that so we could have a relationship with him. If that is what Christ did for us, Paul said, husbands should do the same for their wives.

**[12]**

***<sup>29</sup> No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church.***

So, Christ is the husbands' model for how to treat their wives. Just think of the women in Jesus' ministry. They loved being around him. That was very unusual in that day. Women were not used to being treated with dignity in the Graeco-Roman or Jewish world in that era. Jesus went against societal norms and restored the dignity deserving of someone made in the image of God.

**[13]**

## Colossians 3:19 (NLT)

**<sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.**

This was totally counter culture. He was following the lead of Jesus. Look at how Jesus treated women in the Gospels. He totally went against the current of culture that subjugated women.

The truth is that all over the world, wherever the Christian faith has made inroads into culture, women have been liberated. Let me give you just one example. In India, the Hindu religion had a ritual called *sati* where the wife of a Hindu man would throw herself, either voluntarily, or by force, on the fire of her husband's burning body at his funeral. It was the Christian missionary William Carey who fought to get this tradition outlawed because of the biblical belief in the equality and dignity of all human life.

The idea of man being the head of the home **is** a biblical concept, but headship in no way means that the husband is superior, or that he alone makes all the decisions so they are good for him to the detriment of the other family members. It's actually quite the opposite many times. Paul said in Ephesians that the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. How did Christ love the church? He laid down his life for her. So, husbands, the best thing you can do for your family is to love your wife, your children's mother, to make sure she has everything she needs to flourish in the life God has given her. She needs a safe place to grow, to become the best version of herself, in the same way you do. The biblical idea of headship is to create a safe place where everyone in the family can thrive.

Can you imagine what husband and wife relationships would be like if husbands took seriously their role to lay down their lives for their wives like Christ laid down his life for the church, to love, nurture and care for his wife like Christ loved and cared for the church? Marriage relationships and families would be revolutionized.

We will not coast into having a good marriage. It takes a lot of hard work from both partners.

There was a story that made the news headlines around the world over a decade ago about a man from Berlin, Germany, who took quite an unusual approach in trying to bring peace to his marriage. The man regularly used an old air raid siren to stun his wife into submission. "My wife never lets me get a word in edgeways," the man identified as Vladimir R. told the police. "So I crank up the siren and let it rip for a few minutes. It works every time. Afterwards, it's real quiet again." The 73-year-old man's 220-volt rooftop siren was confiscated by police after neighbours filed complaints. As for his wife of 32 years, she said "My husband is a stubborn mule, so I have to get loud."

Trust me, there is a better way than this. It starts with the husband, like Christ, laying down his own prerogatives for the sake of his wife, so she can become the best version of her.

**<sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.**

**[14]**

## Colossians 3:20 (NLT)

**<sup>20</sup> Children, always obey your parents, for this pleases the Lord.**

This morning we have something to make everyone squirm. You kids thought you had it easy didn't you. You were enjoying watching your parents squirm right? Nobody gets off easy this morning. There is something for all of us. **<sup>20</sup> Children, always obey your parents, for this pleases the Lord.**

**[15]**

Paul gave a similar instruction to children in **Ephesians**.

### **Ephesians 6:1–3 (NLT)**

**<sup>1</sup> Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. <sup>2</sup> “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise: <sup>3</sup> If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.”**

So, kids, if you want to live a long life, obey your parents. They brought you into the world. They can take you out.

This is not just a rule to obey. Your parents have your best in mind, which is why they put healthy boundaries around you to protect you from harm. God does the same thing with us as adults. The things God tells us not to do, or the things he tells us we should do are not arbitrary. He doesn't tell us not to have sex before marriage to keep us from having fun, for instance. He tells us this because God made us to be one flesh with one person of the opposite sex in a monogamous relationship for life. That is how we will be most satisfied as human beings. He tells us how to live because he loves us and cares about us. And we obey so it will go well with us.

**<sup>20</sup> Children, always obey your parents, for this pleases the Lord.** Paul doesn't say obey your parents in the easy things. He says in everything.

**[16]**

Paul continues by giving the balancing side of his argument.

**<sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged.**

Paul has just finished telling children to obey their parents, and he balances that off with saying, “Parents, if you want your children to obey you there is a right way to treat them and there is a wrong way.” Someone once said, “Shouting to get your children to obey is like trying to use your horn to steer your car, and with about the same results”

The ESV says, **“Fathers, do not provoke your children.”**

The Message says, **“Parents, don't come down too hard on your children or you'll crush their spirits.”**

The NASB says, **“Fathers, do not exasperate your children so that they will not lose heart.”**

The NLT says, **“Fathers do not aggravate your children...”**

There are lots of different ways to say the same thing. There are right ways and wrong ways to discipline children. I am certainly no expert, and I think it would be quite presumptuous coming from someone who doesn't have children to come across as if I had all the answers about child rearing.

**[17]**

But, I would suggest that tying them to the hood of your car and driving at breakneck speeds down the highway is not the right way to discipline a child. If your goal is to break their spirit, then that might be the way to do it, but if your goal is to nurture your children so they grow up to be fully functioning adults who love the Lord, then Paul says there are better ways.

***21 Fathers, do not aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged.***

The goal of the father should be to create a safe place where your children are empowered to become the best version of themselves.

Let's wrap this up. Just before Paul says, in Ephesians 5:22 that wives are to submit to their husbands, he says that we are all to submit to one another.

**[18]**

**Ephesians 5:21 (NLT)**

***21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.***

This is not talking about subservience. It is talking about voluntarily putting the needs of others first. It is counter to everything. Seek first to understand and then to be understood.

Maybe the main thing we can learn from this passage is that our new life in Christ is played out first in the home. Sometimes it's easier to treat those who are not close to us with great respect and care, and then let our guards down at home and treat those who are supposed to be the closest to us with disrespect, and contempt. Paul says, that is not God's way.

If you are feeling guilty right now because you haven't been the best husband, wife, father, mother or child, join the club. Don't be disheartened. I continually have to grow in how to love Ruth better. We are all in the same boat. We all need to own the fact that we do not naturally do this well.

Growth does not happen overnight. God wants to do a work in all of us to conform us to the image of his Son. This takes a lifetime of cooperating with the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

If anyone in the relationship is feeling dominated you need to have a conversation. Each person in the family should be feeling empowered. Can I make a suggestion to you? If you feel there is a need, tell your wife, husband, children, or parents that you want to become the kind of person in your relationship that God would have you to be. Ask for forgiveness if you need to. Ask them to help you become a better version of you. I guarantee you, if you do that you will enter deeper into your relationship than you could ever imagine. Ruthie and I have done this with each other many times because we are just like you. We do not naturally do relationships well.

Life is about relationships. Because we are broken, good relationships take hard work, whether we are talking about marriage, or parents and children, friends or colleagues. The only way that it is possible to guarantee a good relationship is if both partners follow Jesus' example. This is not about subservience. It is about cooperation. ***"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."*** (Ephesians 5:21)

**[communion]**