

Jesus in Relationships, Part 1

Colossians 3:18-4:1

- We only have three weeks remaining in our series through the book of Colossians, and I am feeling what I heard another pastor express: now that we are at the end, I feel like we should go back and cover it all again. I feel I understand the whole book better now, so I would love to start fresh!
- As we have seen, the entire book centers around this idea: Christ is all and in all”.
- This morning, we are seeing how that truth specifically applies in our relationships.
- If you get nothing else from this morning’s message, it’s this: Bring Jesus into every relationship.
- Paul talks about two different spheres of relationships in the section we look at this morning, specifically applying the attitudes we saw last week to distinct relationships we find ourselves in.
- In fact, that brings up a really important point for us to remember.
- We need to remember that American ideals don’t always line up with God’s design, and this is one place for that.
- One of the hallmarks of modern America is the isolation of individualism.
- I am an American, so I can pull myself up by my own boot straps, I can chart my own course, and I am free to be whatever I want to be.
- Don’t lose sight of the fact that all these attitudes—kindness, humility, compassion, gentleness, forgiveness—are collective!

- Think back to the garden of Eden, when God created Adam, and God said,
 - *<Not on screen>Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18, NASB95)*
- That's before sin ever came into the picture.
- We draw from that the understanding that you and I were created for relationships.
- Your Christian walk isn't just about you. When God calls you to obey Him, you are hurting the entire body of Christ, not just yourself.
- When you and I don't live lives that honor Jesus in everything we do, our relationships are negatively impacted.
- That's why Paul takes these attitudes and principles from last week and applies them directly to two of our largest spheres of relationships: home and work.
- We will handle the home this week and discuss our work next week.
- Here's what we find in what Paul says, and I don't want you to miss it because of the simplicity of the statement: We must reflect Jesus in every relationship.
- You know that, and I know that, but let's stop and think about what that actually looks like.
- Everything that happens in your home or at your job must be a reflection of who Jesus is.
- That's what we saw in **verse 17** last week.
- **In 3:18-4:1, we see what that looks like in greater detail, so dive in with me:**

Jesus in your home.

- This comes out of **verses 18-21**.

- In another rapid-fire pattern, we see Paul highlighting key attitudes of different family members.
- It's fitting that he begins at home, since we have often said that if we fail to love those at home, we are not succeeding in loving anyone else.
- Some of what God communicates to us here through Paul sounds dated and even offensive to the modern mind.
- Again, we need to remember that we are not citizens of modern America; instead, we are citizens of Christ's kingdom, and we must behave as such.
- That means we live out Jesus to each other in our home.
- For the wife, that means being...

1) An honoring wife.

- Of all the statements, this is the one most people try to dismiss because it has been largely misused.
- In fact, we are going to spend some time on this one, not because it is more important than the others, but because it is more misunderstood than most.
- Some believe that submission means when a husband says, "Jump," the wife asks "How high?"
- There is the idea that a wife who submits herself to her husband's leadership is weak, pathetic, and beaten down.
- However, that's not the biblical picture of submission at all.
- Do you remember how we said that we are bringing Jesus into every relationship? At first glance, this command to submit seems to run contrary to that idea, because Jesus is Lord! He is the boss, the king,

the leader of our lives, and as we saw earlier in our study, of all creation itself.

- That is certainly true, but you are forgetting something: Jesus modeled this kind of submission for us during his earthly ministry.
- Paul said it this way elsewhere:

But *I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:3, NASB95)*

- You see, Jesus willingly submitted Himself to the Father's will while He was on earth.
- That didn't make Him any less God; it simply meant He was fulfilling a unique role.

Therefore *Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. (John 5:19–20, NASB95)*

- That's the picture of an honoring wife: willingly submitting yourself to allow your husband to take the lead, not because you are less, but because that is what God has called you to do.
- That doesn't mean a wife can't have an opinion or must be her husband's slave; it is a willingness to trust her husband in such a way that she allows him to take the lead.
- One commentator, speaking on another passage, said it this way:

"It *is not a spineless submission that is meant but, as someone has finely put it, it is a 'voluntary selflessness.' It is the submission*

which is based on the death of pride and the desire to service. It is the submission not of fear but of perfect love.”¹

- By the way, there is a limit to this submission: if the husband is calling you to disobey a command of Scripture, you must obey God rather than him.
- Short of that, though, a wife is called to show her strength by exercising voluntary selflessness, honoring her husband with the position of leadership.

- Guys, before you become arrogant about this, look at **verse 19**.
- Do you want to help your wife be who God has called her to be, like we saw in **verse 18**? Then you need to make sure that you are...

2) A loving husband.

- Gentlemen, if you are having difficulty with your wife not respecting you, I suggest you start with a good hard look at yourself.
- You see, God calls you to demonstrate Jesus by sacrificially loving your wife.

- Before you tune me out, men, stop and realize what we mean by love.
- The call to love is much greater than a call to give her flowers or candy, or to sing sonnets to her in a rowboat at sunset.
- Here’s how John MacArthur put it:

¹Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters of James and Peter*, on 1 Peter 3:1-6.

"The willing, covenant love in view here is the activity of self-sacrifice. It is a deep affection that views the wife as a sister in the Lord and the object of a promise to be kept."²

- It is the love Jesus spoke of when He said, *"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13, NASB95)*
- You are called to lay down your life for your wife.
- Read Paul's more complete explanation of this over in

Ephesians 5:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her...So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church... (Ephesians 5:25-29, NASB95)

- Here's how Jesus enters into your relationship to your wife, men: You are to be willing to love her fully, no matter the cost.
- In fact, you are called to give yourself up for her.
- You are called to sacrifice to protect her, especially to protect her walk with Christ.
- You are to join with Jesus in helping your wife grow in holiness.

- Guys, we are notorious for the way we obsess about certain things.
- Maybe you have had a car that at some time, you couldn't let it get a spot or dent. If it was dirty, you had to scrub it.

² MacArthur, John Jr. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series: Colossians & Philemon*. Chicago: Moody Press (1992). 169.

- Perhaps it is your tools; you always make sure they are clean and put away after each use.
- Same with your guns or your golf clubs or any number of things.
- Listen men: if we spend that much time polishing and cleaning and arranging things that won't last for eternity, why don't we spend time helping our wives grow in holiness.

Gary Thomas, in his book Sacred Marriage, says, "Loving something and purifying something go hand in hand."³

- If you love your wife, lead her spiritually.
- Talk about God's word with her. Pray with her in the good times and in the bad. Look for ways to serve Jesus with her, and encourage her when you see God at work.
- When she fails, love her unconditionally like Christ does. When she disappoints you, reaffirm your love to her in a way that shows her the kind of love God shows us.
- When you have to sacrifice yourself to make that happen, do it, because that's how you reflect Jesus to your wife!
- Paul specifically says that as we love our wives, we can't become bitter at them.
- Listen: no human being can fulfill you. Your wife is not God, nor is she supposed to be.
- Don't allow bitterness to creep in when you start feeling like she isn't who you need her to be; instead, love her, cherish her, and care for her just like Jesus does for us!

³ Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2000). 93.

- As you do this, you create an environment that helps her grow and makes you a man she can trust.
 - That doesn't mean that your wife will always do whatever you want—your wife is a person with emotions and opinions that you need to consider.
 - However, it means you are creating an environment that helps her be the woman God has created her to be, giving her the security and stability that you will lead her with confidence and grace.
- With all that in mind, Paul then turns to our relationship with children.
 - He starts with the children themselves, addressing how they are to behave. From this, we see that children are called to be:

3) Respectful children.

- Look at **verse 20**.
- Incredibly, this is something we see modeled in Jesus as well! Although He was God in the flesh, He was submissive and obedient to His earthly parents:

And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:51-52, NASB95)
- Not only that, but as we have already seen, Jesus modeled that submissive obedience to God the Father as well:

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a

cross. (Philippians 2:8, NASB95)

- Children, then, must be taught to obey *in everything*, just like the Bible says.
- That's why we have taught our kids the definition of obedience that I learned from Life Action Revival Ministries years ago:

"Obedience is doing what I'm told to do, when I'm told to do it, with a happy heart."

- Why is it important for kids to obey their parents?
- For one reason, because God commands us to.
- Drawing from the parallel passage in Ephesians, we see this:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. (Ephesians 6:1-3, NASB95)

- If you have been around children, you know that they ask the question "Why?" over and over again.
- So, why will they live long in the land if they obey their parents?
- Because when children are young, they don't know right from wrong. As parents, we are there to help them see who God has created and called them to be.
- It's essential for children to learn to obey, even when they don't feel like it, because one day, they will stand on their own two feet spiritually, and God will draw on their hearts. When He does, they need to be trained to respond and follow Him, honor Him, and do what

He desires.

- Just like in our discussion about a wife's submission, we see that those to whom children submit have a responsibility to create an environment that encourages obedience, which is why we must also be...

4) Reasonable parents.

- Look at **verse 21**.
- Parents, I want to point something out very sobering to you: We mentioned a minute ago that children learn to obey God by learning to obey you.
- Don't miss the weight of that statement.
- As you parent, you shape your child's understanding of who God is.
- They look at your attitudes, your actions, the way you treat them, and that formulates the way they think about God.
- You are the single greatest influencer in their life, especially when it comes to spiritual things.
- We have tremendous volunteers in our children's ministry who want your children to know and love Jesus, but they will have a difficult time undoing the negative ideas they pick up about God with you.

- This is especially true for us dads in the room, because God has chosen to reveal Himself primarily as our father.
- That's why the command here is that we don't exasperate our children.
- So, what does it mean to exasperate your kids?

- Exasperation is the idea of finishing, doing your best, and then being told it's not good enough.
- It is that nagging and picking that causes a child to doubt whether they really have any value or if they can ever measure up.
- Listen, parents: when you are never pleased with your children, you are teaching them that God is never pleased, which discourages them from obeying God.
- What's the point if I am never enough?

- Some of you know exactly what this is because you felt it from your parents, and you hear it in your voice as you correct your kids.
- Listen: growing up is really, really hard. Growing up and trying to honor your parents and God in a world that is consumed with itself is harder than many of us imagine.
- Should we not try all the harder to communicate to our children that we love them, no matter what, because that's how Jesus loves us?
- Does Jesus love you more when you obey? No! So why would we treat our kids that way?
- Yes, we hold them to a high standard, but we apply that standard consistently and encouragingly, not changing the rules depending on how we feel.

- That's how Jesus has loved us, and that's how we bring Jesus into our parenting.
- We set reasonable, attainable standards, and consistently encourage our children to reach them, and celebrate with them when they do.

- Do you see how we bring Jesus into our homes?
- Whether submitting like He does to the Father, loving like He has loved us, obeying like He did, all the way to the cross, or consistently loving, challenging, and encouraging, we must bring Jesus into every relationship in our home.