

## Jesus is Lord of Your Marriage

Good morning.

Please turn with me in your bibles to Colossians 3, we'll be in verses 18-19 this morning.

Before we begin I just want to give you a quick update on one of our missionary partners, the Hansens.

Mark and Carla Hansen have been missionary partners of ours in Spain, and they have finally come off the field after serving the Lord faithfully for X years. Many of you know them well, and it's been an honor to be able to partner with them. We want to lift them up in prayer as they transition into their next season, and also thank the Lord for their years serving him in Spain.

Let's do that now.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for Mark and Carla, and their faithfulness to serve you as missionaries in Spain. We praise you for the fruit of their ministry that they were able to see, and we pray that there would be even more fruit that might not bloom for years to come, but that you would water those gospel seeds that were planted in their ministry. We pray for their health as there are some things that they each battle with, as well as that you would make clear what this next season looks like for them.*

*Father your word tells us in Luke 10:2 that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, and that we should pray that you would send out more workers to harvest for your kingdom. As we celebrate a missionary partner coming off the field and finishing well, we pray Lord that you would send more workers to the ends of the earth. That you would break more of our hearts for the millions of people who live and die without ever having a chance to hear the gospel. That you would use us, Rock Prairie Church in Tipton Indiana, to impact the nations for the kingdom. That we would have some that might go from our body to share your glory to the nations, and that we would have many from our body who would hold the rope for those that do.*

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*As we turn to your word this morning, give us eyes to see what you want us to see, and humble hearts to receive it. Guard my thoughts and guide my tongue as I preach your Word.*

*In Jesus' name, amen.*

Our passage this morning is short and sweet. I had planned to go through verse 21, but there was just too much richness here even in these short verses, so we're in Colossians 3:18-19. Let's read.

***18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.***

***19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.***

It's important to remind ourselves every once in a while as we preach through Colossians that Colossians is a single letter, and it would have been read in the church in one sitting.

When it's all said and done, we will have spent 21 weeks in the book of Colossians, and we are months removed from talking about things that he wrote just a few paragraphs ago in the letter.

All the way back in March, we looked in Colossians 1:15-17 and saw that Jesus is supreme over all of creation. We beheld this magnificent truth that Jesus isn't just the creator of the universe, but he's sustaining it as well—the entire universe is being held together by Christ.

And that same Christ, the one who is the fullness of God (v19), died (v21) so that you could be holy and blameless before God himself (v22).

If that is true, if the gospel is true, then that changes how you live individually like we saw 2 weeks ago, that changes how we live as a church like we saw last week, and that changes how you live as a family like we see in our passage this week and next week.

Put another way, If Jesus is the Lord of the universe (Col 1:15-20), he is Lord of the family too.

That's what these verses are about. Jesus, who is Lord of the universe, is Lord of the family.

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<sup>18</sup> Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Children obey your parents—for this pleases the Lord

Slaves, obey your earthly masters—fearing the Lord

Whatever you do—work heartily as for the Lord...you are serving the Lord Christ.

It's all about the Lord! If you're single, or a widower, or someone who doesn't fit neatly into one of these categories of husband or wife or child or parent, the principle is the same for all of us:

If Jesus is the Lord of the universe, he's the Lord of my life too.

And here we see: If Jesus is the Lord of the universe, he's the Lord of your marriage.

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If we look at these verses first and foremost as a way to have a better marriage, or more obedient kids, we're looking at it backwards.

Instead, we need to say, "Ok Jesus, if you're Lord of the universe, if it's true that everything was literally created through you, that you are literally holding all things together right now, then I want to do *whatever* it takes to please you. In my life, in my church, in my family, in my job, whatever you say, I'll do it.

That's the attitude we need to have coming into these verses. And the beauty of it is that doing these things *will* help your marriage, it *will* help your home life. But that's not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is pleasing the Lord.

Ok Lord. I want to please you in everything, including in my home. How do I do that? This week we're talking about the marriage relationship, and next week we're talking about parenting.

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**First, Wives, submit to your husbands.**

<sup>18</sup> Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

That's obviously a loaded verse, and we need to be very careful that we are precise in saying what it means.

There are three things it doesn't mean. First of all, it's telling that the word that is translated "submit" in this verse is a different word than the word translated obey in verse 20 and verse 22.

You see that? In verse 20 it says "children obey your parents," and verse 22, "slaves obey your earthly masters." Those two words are the exact same greek word. If Paul was trying to communicate a kind of parental or "boss"-type of obedience, he presumably would have used the same word. But he doesn't.

There are some that would abuse this passage and demand obedience from their wives in the same way that a child is called to obey a parent. But that's not what's happening here.

Second, you'll notice it says, "wives, submit to your husbands," it doesn't say, "women, submit to men." The bible does not call all women to submit to all men. Again, these verses are about how to honor the Lord in the household.

Just like it's important that we don't soften things in scripture that might be difficult for us to hear, it's equally important that we don't go too far to apply it to something that was never intended. These verses are talking about the husband/wife relationship, not the marketplace or politics or anything else.

Third, it doesn't mean that the wife should submit because it was culturally acceptable at the time. In two weeks we're going to look at slavery, and we're going to see that in no way does the Bible condone slavery.

And many argue that just like slavery was a cultural thing at the time, so too is submission.

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But it's not. The last phrase "as is fitting in the Lord" makes that clear. It doesn't say, "As is proper in society." It says, "As is fitting in the Lord. Meaning, "this is what people who are children of God do."

So it's not talking about rote obedience, it's not talking about all women submitting to all men, and it's not something that was just for that culture. So what does it mean to submit?

What it means is this: Wives, recognize the place that God has placed you in the order of creation. We see this more explicitly in Ephesians 5:22-23:

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**Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.**

This is actually really beautiful. And it's important that we don't apologize for it. Christ, in the divine order of creation, is the head of the church. In the same way, the husband, in the divine order of creation, is the head of the wife.

This has nothing to do with personhood, it has nothing to do with worth, it has nothing to do with value, it has nothing to do with superiority and inferiority or even with gifting. I know many husbands who are married to wives who have far greater leadership skills than they do.

It's not about any of that. It's about how God created it.

He gave us a model for godly submission: the church and Christ.

Is it demeaning for us as a church to submit to Christ's direction? Is it dehumanizing for us to trust that he is going to lead us in the direction that honors God the most?

Of course not.

In the same way, when modeled after Christ, submission can be a beautiful, life-giving, God-glorifying action that shows the world around you that Jesus is the Lord of your marriage.

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I can hear the objection: "My husband isn't leading me like Jesus, so how can I submit?"

There are two answers to that:

First, Your ultimate submission is to God first and foremost. If your husband is calling you to submit to something that is contrary to God's word, it's not your job to submit.

If he's asking you to participate in sin, if he's treating you in a way that is degrading, or dehumanizing or abusive, you are absolutely 100% not called to submit. If you're in that kind of situation right now, you need to reach out and get help.

But there's another sense in which you calling to submit is *independent* of how well your husband is doing in leading you. If he's not asking you to submit to sin, you need to do whatever you can to allow for his leadership in your home.

Too often I think that wives can view submission like one of those student driver cars with the extra brake. Where the instructor can take over at any time.

Some of you are doing that in your marriage. You're saying, "You drive, honey," but then the second your husband does something you disagree with, you take over the wheel.

The truth is that's not honoring to your husband, and it's not honoring to Christ. Because we don't treat Christ's headship that way. We don't say, "Jesus you're the head of this church unless you call me to do something I don't want to do."

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The bummer for the wives among us, is that you're not married to Jesus. I fail in my leadership in the home all the time. I consistently do things that make it difficult for my wife to joyfully submit.

But that doesn't change the way God created it. Your husband's leadership failures do not negate how God is calling you to live. He's the Lord of the universe, and he's the Lord of your marriage.

Wives, to please the Lord in your marriage, you need to recognize that God is calling you to joyfully and humbly submit to your husband.

It's a mindset change. If you're just submitting to make your husband act like you want him to, it's not going to work. Submission isn't like marriage duct tape. Pretty soon you'll go back to forgetting all about submission.

But if you're doing it to please the Lord, your whole mindset will change. If you're saying, "God, I trust that you created me fully and equally in your image; that I've been fully gifted, and I'm fully valuable in your eyes; and now that through the gospel I'm a daughter of the king, I'm going to do whatever it takes to please you in my marriage.

What a radical way to be countercultural for the sake of the gospel. Joyful submission? Are you kidding me? Not begrudging submission, but joyful. What an amazing opportunity to be distinct from the world. To show uniqueness of the kingdom of God. To give up what our culture says is your right to be equal at best or domineering at worst, and to say, "I'm going to gladly live in submission, because my ultimate submission is to the Lord, who will never lead me astray.

Wives, submit to your husbands, and in doing so, show the world the beautiful life transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Husbands, you're not off the hook.

For you, according to this passage in Colossians, the way to make Jesus the Lord of your family is to love your wives.

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**Husbands, love your wives.**

Verse 19.<sup>19</sup> **Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.**

If you put yourself back in the Colossian church, where this letter would have been read aloud, verse 18 would have been pretty ho-hum. Because it was a patriarchal society, the idea of wives submitting to their husbands would have gone right along with the culture.

But verse 19 was totally counter-cultural. According to the culture, the important thing for men to do was to maintain order and decorum in the household. Think of the captain in the Sound of Music whistling for his kids to come.

Men were expected to maintain order and discipline in their homes. Loving your wife wasn't even an afterthought, it just wasn't important.

In fact, there is no other ancient household code of conduct requires husbands to love their wives. The bible is totally unique in this way.

How are husbands called to love their wives?

Again, Ephesians 5:25-28 is instructive.

**(VERSE SLIDE)**

It says,

<sup>25</sup> **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,**

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**that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.**

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Husbands, you are called to love your wife sacrificially. Before you get too excited about the idea of your wife submitting to anything and everything you want, you need to realize that these two ideas work together.

As your wife submits to your headship, your leadership, you at the same time are called to look to her interests. To lay yourself down for her. It's the opposite of oppression, of coercion, of manipulation to get your way. It's a love that looks to her needs, her desires, as if they are your own.

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I love how my former pastor Mark Vroegop put it:

“A godly husband and father is a gentle giant of a man. The strength of his person and his position become the platforms from which he dispenses love and gentleness”

Your leadership in the home isn't something that elevates your needs and desires above everyone else. Your leadership in the home is the platform from which you dispense love and gentleness to your wife and your kids.

You're called to be a gentle giant.

Husbands, you might have the same objection that we talked about before:

What if I do that but my wife still refuses to recognize my leadership? What if I try my best to put my wife's needs ahead of my own, but it doesn't work?

First of all, it's basically impossible to max out your sacrificial love. So continue to grow in that. Continue to seek ways to put your wife's interest ahead of your own. Not to manipulate her, not to make her do what you want, but because that's what Christ did for us.

Like we said last week, you can't out-love God. You can't out-grace the King of Kings who died in our place. So keep seeking the Lord. Keep trying to model Christ-likeness in your home.

Second, like we said before, Jesus is the Lord of your marriage, so you do what he calls you to do regardless of the outcome.

That's what I'm trying to get across. This isn't something you “try” for a while to fix your marriage.

Ok I'll try submitting, but if he doesn't love me better, I'm done.

I'll try to be sacrificial in my love for my wife, but if she doesn't start to submit, then I'm moving on.

These aren't grenades for you to lob at one another. It's what you're called to put on, in your unique role, as one of God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved.

If Jesus is Lord of the universe, it means he's Lord of your marriage. Which means you need to model the gospel in your love for one another.

### (SLIDE)

Wives, allow your husband to be the leader that God created him to be. Don't look for every chance to cut him down; don't take every opportunity to criticize his leadership, however valid you think that criticism might be. Not that there isn't a place for you to voice disagreement; God knows how many stupid things I've avoided saying or doing because of my wife's wisdom in my life. But let that voice be grace-filled, encouraging instead of nagging.

And let your joyful submission to your husband be a model and a witness of how we're all called to humbly submit to the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Don't be overbearing, don't be domineering, don't be passive—refusing to step up and lead when you need to be the leader.

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Remember how Christ made himself a servant, and look for opportunities to serve your wife with joy—not with expectation of repayment but out of the joy you have in Christ.

Let your marriage be a witness to the watching world of the radical love of God.

If you're not married, let your life be a reflection of the Lordship that Christ has in every area, not just marriage.

If you're not married but hope to be, remember that marriage is not ultimately fulfilling, only Christ is. Marriage is an opportunity to grow in godliness and reflect God's character, but it's not an end unto itself. Only Christ can fulfill your deepest desires.

And for all of us, remember the words that Paul said in the verse right before our passage, that in whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Jesus is the Lord of the universe, and he's the Lord of your life as well.

Let's pray.

*Father, I pray that our lives would reflect the Lordship of Christ. That we would be willing to do whatever you call us to do, and be whoever you call us to be. That our first instinct would be to look to scripture to know how to live, rather than the world around us. Our culture gives us a million false messages about how to be made whole, but we know that the only way is through the gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray for the marriages in our church, that they would reflect the love that Christ has for the church. I pray that the husbands in this church, myself included, would love their wives in a way that honors you, that they would be the spiritual leaders in their homes, and that they would look to others' interests before their own. I pray that the wives would joyfully and humbly submit to their husbands in a way that honors your created order, and glorifies you. And may we be a church that does everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*In his name we pray, amen.*