

Colossians
Family
Colossians 3:18-21

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HDBC

A little seven-year-old girl had just watched *Cinderella* for the first time and wanted to test her neighbor's knowledge of the story. The neighbor, wanting to impress the little girl said, *I know what happens at the end. What?* the little girl asked. *Cinderella and the prince lived happily ever after.* To which the little girl answered, *oh no, they didn't. They got married.*

The goal of everyone who gets married is to *live happily ever after*. But that does not always happen. Part of the reason is a failure to understand God's specific design for marriage and the family. Words of Charles Swindoll.

Whatever else may be said about the home, it is the bottom line of life, the anvil upon which attitudes and convictions are hammered out. It is the place where life's bills come due, the single most influential force in our earthly existence. It is at home, among family members, that we come to terms with circumstances. It is here, life makes up its mind. Chuck Swindoll

The family is the primary building block of human society. It is God-created, God-instructed, and God-ordained. He has made it a priority for life, and He has offered clear instructions for how the various members of the family are to interact with each other. Those interactions are somewhat dictated by God-ordained roles for husband and wives, children and parents. This is the subject of this part of Paul's letter we know of as Colossians.

Read Text: Colossians 3:18-21

There is a clear and strategic attack on the family. Satan desperately wants to destroy what God has created and declared good when it comes to the family. It seems to me that Satan has a three-pronged strategy to destroy the family.

Number one: Convince people that gender is irrelevant and fluid.

In other words, the goal is to essentially have a genderless society.

Listen to the words of feminist writer Susan Moller Okin.

A just future would be one without gender. In its social structures and practices,

one's sex would have no more relevance than one's eye color or the length of one's toes. No assumptions would be made about "male" and "female" roles; childbearing would be so conceptually separated from child rearing and other family responsibilities that it would be a cause for surprise, and no little concern, if men and women were not equally responsible for domestic life or if children were to spend much more time with one parent than the other.

The lines are now blurred, and any differences are discounted as mythical.

Number two: Convince people that marriage and parenting have no value.

Both are portrayed as traps to be avoided. Marriage is seen as unnecessary, and parenting is often presented as a burden. These are two of the greatest gifts that God has given to humanity. Therefore, they are attacked & devalued.

Number three: Convince people gender-based roles are harmful & archaic.

Any thought of pre-determined roles in the family based on gender must be eradicated.

Apparently, these attacks were already present in the first century in which Paul wrote this letter. The family was already under attack. So, Paul outlines God's plan for the family by offering simple instructions for four roles in a family. Let's not make these complicated. Let's simply hear what God says.

1. Wives

Be subject to – To arrange under. To subordinate. To submit to another. To some people those are fighting words. But remember, Paul is writing of roles and responsibilities, not worth or position. When it comes to our position and worth, Paul wrote that in Christ there is neither male nor female, slave or free, gentile or Jew. This is about function and role, not status or worth.

The great example is the Lord Jesus Himself. Who voluntarily subjected Himself to the will of His Father. Though equal in nature and sharing in the same divine nature, power, glory and authority, Jesus voluntarily submitted to the Father's will. This is the kind of submission wives are called upon to imitate. Keep in mind that Paul is writing only of the marriage relationship.

Two things. First, this kind of submission is only between a wife and her husband only. It is not intended to instruct all women to submit to all men.

Second, this is not blind obedience. The word indicates a voluntary submission to another. It also does not mean a woman should submit to her husband if he is leading her to violate God's revealed will. Nor does it mean she should allow herself to be in an abusive situation. It does not give husbands a right to be a tyrant ruling the house with a heavy hand.

In fact, this verse is not for husbands at all. Men, you can forget that this verse is even there. It is for your wife. In no way are you called to make your wife submit. That is not your role. Whether she submits or not is not your business. So, what is your role? Paul makes it clear.

2. Husbands

The husband is to love his wife. This is **agape** love. The highest form of love. It is a love that is unconditional and that reveals itself through humble service. In Ephesians Paul said husbands are to love their wives like Christ loved the church. How was that? He gave Himself for it through sacrificial, unconditional love that never ends.

Tony, from Allentown, PA operated a pizza parlor. Survived five attempts on his life by his wife. Twice she arranged for assailants to beat him with baseball bats. One time she put a trip wire at the top of stairs. Twice arranged for him to be shot. First time she drugged his soup so he would be sleeping soundly when he was shot. Shot in the head but survived. Second time he was shot in chest and sustained minor injuries.

She was convicted and sent to jail. He visited her faithfully every week. When she was released, they got back together and according to Tony are more in love than ever before. He went on to say he did not understand why couples broke up over silly little things.

Okay, so that may not be a very good illustration of how to be a good husband. But it does at least illustrate a tenacity to love another person with an unconditional, never-ending commitment.

Paul makes an interesting statement. Husbands are not to be **embittered against their wives**. It means *to make bitter, to be irritated*. It would be easy and even natural for a husband to become resentful of a wife who does not respond to this kind of love with an equal & reciprocal love and respect.

That would be natural, but it would not be Christ-like. Christ loves us despite our response to His love. Husbands are called to imitate this high standard of love. Anything short of this will lead to bitterness that will poison the marriage and the family. Guys, if you are married, you have a high calling that goes far beyond what the culture expects.

This kind of love involves a willingness serve her. Just because you are to be the primary leader in your home does not mean you are the king of your own little kingdom. Real men who really love their wives are willing to change diapers, make up the bed and help in the kitchen. **It's a proven fact, no woman ever shot her husband while he was doing the dishes.**

Men, loving your wife means giving your life on a day-by-day basis for her.

3. Children

Children are to obey your parents, in everything. This is not up for negotiation. It is your role to obey your parents. Kids, you will be much better off now and later if you listen to mom and dad. Obviously, this does not mean you obey them if they are asking you to violate God's word. For most if not all of you, this will not be a problem.

Remember five things:

- 1) They've been where you are. You have not been where they are.
- 2) They really do want what is best for you. They want you to enjoy life.
- 3) They are looking at the big picture of your life. You look at this moment.
- 4) They are not perfect. Don't expect them to be. Pray for them.
- 5) They are carrying burdens you cannot now begin to understand.
- 6) Your call to obey them will only be during a small portion of your life.

Life will be much easier if you will obey and do so with a positive spirit.

4. Fathers

Do not **exasperate** your kids. What in the world does that mean? The word means **to stir up, to provoke**. It means acting in a way that causes them to lose heart, to become discouraged, to have a broken spirit.

Children are a tougher on outside than we think they are. But they are also softer on the inside than we think. Self-esteem can be a very delicate thing.

Creativity can be dashed so easily. Confidence and security can be shattered. We must be careful to shape their will without damaging their spirit. **How do we exasperate our kids?**

- 1) Selfishness – When it's all about me
- 2) Harshness – When we are rough and harsh in tone and actions
- 3) inconsistency – When they struggle to know what we expect
- 4) Apathy – When it appears we have no interest in them
- 5) Hypocrisy – When you act one way outside the home and other inside.
- 6) Passivity – Unwillingness to step in and defend them from the enemy.

How many of you have seen the movie, ***The River Wild***. Meryl Streep and Kevin Bacon. Spoiler Alert: Mom and son are going white-water rafting. She used to be a guide. Dad stayed home to work. At the river two guys, the bad guys, ask if she can help them down the river. She agrees. Before they shove off, dad shows up. He decided to go.

Down the river the bad guy's true character comes out. The dad is separated from mom and son, who are held captive by the men. They force her to lead them through dangerous part of the river. Most likely will kill them when they get through it.

Dad quickly hikes down river ahead of them. Sets a trap, dives into the water and fights the bad guys. Dad, mom and son survive. Officer is interviewing the son about the experience. Were you scared? I wasn't scared of the river. I knew my mom could get us through that." "And your dad, what did he do?" **"My dad? He saved our lives."**

Dads, you need to be a sentinel on the wall, watching for danger and stepping in to defend your kids and for that matter your wives. There are bad guys out there who will attack and destroy your family. Not talking about physical attacks, but spiritual ones. Don't let it happen. You be the one to save their lives.

To wrap it up.

Husbands and wives, guard your marriage by following God's plan. It REALLY is best. Assume your roles . . . when you feel like it and when you don't. Just trust that God know best, just like you want you kids to trust that you know best.

Kids, obey your parents. Don't make it hard for them. Trust that God knows best.

Dads and Moms, guard, defend and protect your kids. There are forces that want to destroy your children. You must defend them, **tenaciously, sacrificially** and **consistently**.

Several years ago, a 12-year-old boy was snorkeling in a Florida lake near his home. Attacked by an 11-foot alligator. Bit his head but got only the snorkel and mask. The boy frantically swam for shore. His cousin on the shore saw what was happening and screamed. The mom who was nearby ran to the lake.

Just as the boy made it to shore both she and the gator got a grip. The gator had his legs, and she had his arms. For a few seconds there was a tremendous tug-of-war. Surprisingly the gator let go. The boy was pulled safety. Several months later he was showing the spot to a friend. Showed him the scars on his legs and his head where the gator attacked. Then proudly showed him scars on his arms where his mom had dug her nails into his hands.

In a similar what we are in a tug-of-war for our families. Satan and his demons are looking for ways to steal, kill and destroy. The very fabric of our culture once supported a biblical perspective on the family. That is no longer true. The culture is being used by Satan to rip apart your family and to capture the minds and hearts of your children. A distortion of God's plan for sex and gender is the point of the spear. Don't let it pierce their hearts. Guard them with the truth.

You must hang on to your kids with the determination of that mom who refused to let that gator take her child. May God give us the tenacity to do so, now and for the rest of our lives.