

All Things New
Week 10: A Brand New Home!
Colossians 3:18-21

If you're like me, you've got a drawer in your dresser with some clothes in it that you'll wear around the house and around family, but if you had to run to the store for something, or you knew that someone was dropping by, you'd probably change out of them first.

I've got these purple shorts that I sometimes wear at night. They're from when I coached soccer for Sullivan High School in 2003 and 2004. The girls make fun of me for them all the time because they're 20+ years old. They're all faded and tattered. I would NEVER wear them outside of the house. Only around my family.

But that's why family is so great, right?! It's the people you can let your guard down around. Get comfortable with. Our families know things about us that no one else knows. They see the clothes we wear that no one else sees, because we don't wear them when we're outside of the house. In a way, they get to see the "real you" more than anyone else. That's true, not just with the clothes we wear on the outside, but with what we're clothing ourselves with on the inside.

Over the last couple of weeks in our series through Colossians, we've looked at the transformation that the Holy Spirit is doing inside of us. How he's taking off the old and putting on the new. And we're working with him to put to death some things from our old way of life...things like sexual immorality and greed and anger. We work with the Holy Spirit to take off the old clothes we used to wear so we can put on the new clothes of compassion and kindness. Humility and gentleness.

And as the Holy Spirit does His work in us, our lives should be transformed into something that looks less and less like who we used to be, and more and more like Jesus. And as we come to the end of chapter 3, Paul turns his attention to our homes, as if to say, "If the Gospel is real in your life, then the first place it should show up is in your home." In other words, **the real measure of what's happening inside of you is shown behind closed doors.**

Our families see the clothes we wear more fully than anyone else. So, if you want to know if I'm taking off the old and putting on the new clothes of Christ that Allen talked about last week, ask my family. Ask Amber if I'm growing in compassion and forgiveness and love; ask my girls if daddy's gentle and kind, or if he's harsh. Demanding. If you want to know if the Gospel is growing in you and if you're being made new, you just need to ask your family.

As Abraham Lincoln once said, **"You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool your wife and kids!"** *Or something like that!* If you want to know if you're being clothed with Christ and his character, ask the ones who know you behind closed doors because they know the true story of what's taking place in your heart.

That's where Paul is taking us in our text today, and the first relationship he points to is our marriage. And, I know this can be a difficult passage. Not just because it's hard to live out or because of a particular word it uses, that might already have your guard up a little. This is a difficult passage because, for many of us, marriage is a painful topic.

It's painful because you want to be married, but you're not, and it's confusing to you. It's difficult because you've suffered through the pain of an unhealthy marriage, whether it's yours or your parent's. Maybe you've lost your spouse and verses like this are a reminder of what you once had.

I also know that, for some, this topic is painful because the Bible's teachings on marriage have been misinterpreted and abused, and you've been the object of that abuse. And so, you hear that "S" word in this passage and it takes you right back into that pain.

As we study this passage, my hope is that we'll be able to see what it's actually saying, because I think it has a lot to say to those of us who want to let the Gospel's work in us be experienced through us in our homes. So, let's look at it again. **Colossians 3:18-19...(READ)**

I spent a lot of time praying this week about how to approach this text, and I think I want to start by looking at verse 19, because it's the verse that would have grabbed people's attention. Verse 18 gets all of **our** attention, but to the original audience, nothing in verse 18 would have stood out, but nearly **every word** in verse 19 would have! Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them."

This seems obvious to us, but it was radical in Paul's day. It's not to say that husbands didn't love their wives, it just wasn't expected. Household codes were more about order than love and the husband was expected to **rule** over his home. And, it's into this culture that Paul comes along and says, "Husbands, don't rule over your wife, love her."

And the word Paul uses here for love is *agape*. It's more than just the feelings of love, it's the action of love. Paul's calling husbands to have a deep, committed, sacrificial love for their wife. A love that is actively putting her first. Actively committed to her good even above their own. Paul uses this same language in Ephesians 5:25, but he puts a little more meat on the bones. He says...(READ Eph. 5:25)

How did Jesus love his bride, the Church? By giving himself up for her. It wasn't a passive love and it certainly wasn't a dominating love. Jesus loved his bride by dying for her. That's how Jesus showed us the fullness of his love. He actively put us first in every way.

Husbands, that's how we've been called to love our wives. We put them and their needs above our own. **Love is willingly yielding to the needs and desires of another person from a place of affection for them.** So men, that's the kind of love that Paul is calling us to. It's a

deep, committed, sacrificial love for our wife that reflects the work of the Holy Spirit in us, clothing us with compassion and kindness and humility and gentleness.

And I think that context is important as we look at **verse 18...(READ)** Now, here's our word that makes us tense. It makes me tense. I believe the Bible is God's final word in faith and practice, and yet, I read this verse and I flinch a little. Maybe you do, too.

When our teaching team met to talk about this text, Tim Thompson said that this verse is kind of like his car right now. After winter, it's covered in dirt and salt and grim and it needs a good washing to get all the gunk off of it. For many of us, there's a lot of gunk on this passage, and that one word, in particular. Hopefully we can wash it off a little and see what it's actually saying.

And, to do that, I want to nerd out on grammar for just a little bit. The NIV actually does a really good job capturing it, but that verb, "submit" is used in what's called the *middle voice*. There's the active voice, passive voice, and middle voice. The active voice sounds something like this, "I am counseling my friend." I'm the one initiating. I'm the one acting. The passive voice would say, "I am being counseled by my friend." In the passive voice, I'm the recipient. I'm passively receiving the counsel. But the middle voice would be this, "I take counsel." Do you hear the difference? The middle voice means I am actively involved in what is happening to me.

So apply that to our text and "submit" becomes a choice. It's why the NIV says "submit yourselves," meaning it's an act of your will, not someone else's will over you. Submission is not something done to you, it's something you willingly choose to do. **Submitting yourself is a powerful demonstration of love and respect for your husband, not a sign of weakness or inferiority.**

And don't miss the significance of this. Paul is writing to a culture where wives had no say. Where wives just had to fall in line with the will of their husbands. But, Paul's saying to them and us, "Wives, you are equal with your husband as one created in the image of God. You have a choice in this."

And so, just as he calls husbands to love their wives in response to the work of the Gospel in them, he's calling wives to submit to their husbands in response to the Gospel's work in their life, too. Jesus submitted himself to the will of the Father as an act of love, even though he was equal with God. In doing so, he shows us that **submitting yourself is willingly yielding to the needs and desires of another person from a place of affection for them.**

And, if that sounds familiar, it's because it's the same definition of how husbands are to love their wives. **Agape love, the way Christ loves the Church, is willingly yielding to the needs and desires of another person from a place of affection for them.** It's two sides of the same coin. I think this is what Paul means when he says in Ephesians 5:21, **"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."**

So, how do we actually live this out? A couple of practical things as we wrap up this morning. First, husbands, we talked about the way Jesus loved the church was by dying for it. It was a sacrificial love. And, most husbands I know would sacrifice themselves for their wife. They would die for her. So, the question isn't, "would you sacrifice yourself for your wife" but, "are you living sacrificially for her?" It's not, "would you die for her," but, "are you willing to die to yourself for her?"

Like, I would take a bullet for my wife without batting an eye, and yet I still get defensive over stupid stuff all the time. I think more about my needs than hers. Heroic sacrifice sounds good, but like Washington said to Hamilton, "Dying is easy, young man, living is harder." It's those daily acts of living sacrificially that matter. Those little moments when you die to yourself for her sake that will make your wife feel loved.

I believe that the danger for most marriages is not that the husband would love another woman more than his wife; but that he would **love himself** more than his wife. And so, husbands, what are the ways, today, you need to die to yourself for your wife? Maybe it's putting your phone in another room and having a heart to heart conversation with her. Actively engaging in your marriage instead of passively taking things as they come. Maybe you need to step up and show your wife that you love her in a way that's meaningful to her, and not just to you.

Wives, I think in a lot of ways, submitting to your husband looks a lot like respecting him. Even though he's not perfect. Even though he's inconsistent and does and says some really dumb things sometimes, respect him. Support him. Encourage him to pursue his passions. Submitting yourself means that you are for your husband, not against him. You are actively committing yourself to his good and showing him that you are with him, come what may. When you do that, your husband will feel loved.

My wife is such a beautiful example of this kind of love. Last year, I had two panic attacks while preaching. But those were just the two that people saw. There were more. I'll never forget, one of them happened during the 9:30 service, right before I was about to come up to preach. We were doing announcements and the sermon bumper was about to roll, and I was a mess. I was shaking, I had this sense of dread that just washed over me. I wanted to run out of the room and go hide in my office.

Amber was sitting next to me and noticed that I wasn't in a good place. She could have easily said, "Hey! Snap out of it! Pull yourself together, you've got a job to do!" Instead, she just lovingly and tenderly reached over and put her hand on my leg. She looked into my scared eyes and said, "It's okay. If you can't go up right now, whatever happens, we'll figure it out together. I'm with you in this."

And as the sermon bumper started to play, my heart, physically and emotionally, started to rest because I knew I wasn't alone. The most important person in my life was willing to walk through the hardest parts of life with me.

Submitting yourself to your husband does not mean that you are inferior or less capable. It's actually the exact opposite. It's recognizing the power you have over your husband and choosing to use that power wisely. You know how to use your body language and your tone of voice to communicate approval or disapproval. You know the power in what you give and what you withhold. You know how to give that look from across the room when he's talking too much or telling a joke for the 20th time that's just not that funny! You have the power in your words and body language to completely crush your husband's soul!

Which means you also have the power to speak life into him. To encourage him. To comfort him. To bless him. Submitting to him might just mean using that power wisely. So, today, what are some ways you can speak life into your husband? Ways you can show him, "I'm with you, I'm for you, and we're in this together?"

You know, when it comes down to it, I think marriage is just a call to give your life away for the good of another.

If you think about it, the husband's love is really an act of Christ-like submission. And the wife's submission is really an act of Christ-like love. And these commands are not...and cannot...be isolated from one another. They go together like a hand in a glove. They flow out of one and fuel the other.

I think if we're doing marriage right, according to what Paul is teaching here in Colossians 3, I think it's hard to tell who's loving and who's submitting. It's hard to tell who's leading and who's following. It's two people who love one another and respect one another so much that they're in perfect sync...and it's beautiful. It's how God designed marriage to be.

Paul's not calling us in Colossians to a 1st Century marriage. He's not calling us to a 1950's "Leave it to Beaver" marriage. Paul's not calling us to a 2024, "Do what's best for me" marriage, either. He's calling us to a Gospel-centered marriage. A marriage that is shaped by Jesus, how he lived, how he died, and how He loves us.

And as the Gospel does its work in us, the first place it should be seen is in our homes, as the Holy Spirit transforms us more and more into the image of Jesus, who submitted himself to the Father's will and who loved us with a sacrificial love.

So, may the Gospel bear fruit in our lives in a way that strengthens and nourishes our marriages, too.