

When I originally planned out our sermon series I was going to preach today on Colossians 3:18 all the way through chapter 4:1. In this section you can see that there's a lot there concerning relationships. It talks about wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, work, and master. That's a lot! At the beginning of last week I decided that it was too much to cover in one week, so we're going to break it down into this week and next week.

Today, we are going to focus in on two verses, verses 18 and 19. These verses talk about the main responsibility of the husband and the main responsibility of the wife. Think about all the different types of relationships that a person will enter into throughout their lifetime, the marriage relationship is different than all the rest. It's a relationship that a person *chooses* to enter into and *commits* themselves to for a lifetime.

I remember when I asked Laura to marry me. In the summer of 2002, she came to visit me while I was doing an internship at a church in Huntington, Indiana. I took her to an old limestone quarry that was no longer in use and been converted into rather unique park. It had a pond and a lot of flowers; I thought it was the perfect place and the right timing to ask her if she would be my wife. But I was incredibly nervous. Any guy who has been in that situation knows what I'm talking about. But I was so filled with emotion before I asked her; I was excited but at the same time I was terrified. This could go one of two ways.

But before I got down on one knee and ask her to be my wife, I gave a Laura a hug. And that hug was mostly so that I could gather my courage to ask an enormous question. Well, if you have ever seen Laura and I side by side you, you know that Laura comes up to about right here on me. After a brief hug, she pulls away and looks up at me and says, "Luke, are you nervous? Your heart is pounding really hard!"

Well, better do this now. So I got down on one knee and asked her if she would be my wife.

There are a lot of you who have a story similar to that, or perhaps in the future you will have a story like that. A relationship with another individual that leads to an enormous question, that then leads to an enormous commitment; a lifelong commitment as husband and wife. A commitment, *now lets be honest*, that is not easy. We're born into this world with our own ideas. We're raised learning to go after what we like best and to stay away from what we like least. Then we choose to go into a relationship with an individual that has their own set of ideas, their own preferences, their own weakness, and their own sin.

But that is the remarkable thing about marriage. In the midst of a relationship where you are so closely connected to an individual, you are given an opportunity to grow in maturity. Relationships are like a workshop; where God takes you in close to another person in order to chisel away your pride, in order to round off your

rough edges, in order to fasten on a truly compassionate heart that cares and loves someone other than yourself.

God is the master craftsman who gave us marriage. Genesis 2:18 tells us,

“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

God is the one who established marriage. He is the One who created marriage. In order for us to have a marriage that is built to last we must follow **The Designers Plan for Marriage**. God’s design is that the husband has certain responsibilities that he must fulfill, and the wife has certain responsibilities that she must fulfill. Each has a different role within the marriage.

Our passage begins with **The Role of the Wife**, so we will begin there as well.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:18

Wives are to submit to their husbands. We’re going to talk about what it means to submit, but before we do that, I think it’s important to get some misunderstanding out of the way. Because when we hear the phrase, *wives, submit to your husbands*, that shouldn’t make us cringe in discomfort going, “I can’t believe the Bible says that.” God has designed a healthy marriage to work in a very specific way and a wife submitting to her husband is part of that design. So what are the misconceptions that are out there?

Misconception #1 –Submission Implies Inferiority. This is the idea that if I am to submit myself to another person that means that they are more valuable than I am. That is simply not true. A different responsibility does imply a different value. Men and women are created equal and have equal value. Neither one is more important than the other.

Misconception #2 –Submission is a result of the Fall. A popular view today is that woman’s role of submitting to her husband is because of what took place in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve rebelled against God and brought the curse into the world. Some argue, that since God reversed the effects of the curse through Christ, that He put an end to differing male and female roles.

But Paul, however basis the woman’s subordinate role in the order of Creation, not the Fall:

“For Adam was formed who first, then Eve.” –1 Timothy 2:13

Eve was created after Adam to be his helper (Gen. 2:18) –she was designed to follow his lead, live on his provisions, and find safety in this strength. The Fall brought difficulty, but it didn’t change the design.

Misconception #3 –Submission is an Absolute Submission. Every person is supposed to first submit to God. You are commanded to let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. You are to live your life according to what is found in Scripture. So when you are told to do something that goes against what you find in your Bible, you have every right to say no. Nothing and no one trumps God. You follow Him first.

Misconception #4 –Submission gives license to Dictatorship. This one is directed at the guys. One of the big causes for submission to leave a bad taste in our mouth is because of men looking at it as a way to dominate their wives. This idea of, “I’m in charge.” “Serve me!” “Do what I tell you to do!” “I’m in control.”

Do you know what the funny thing is when you have to tell someone that you’re in control... Do know exactly what you’re not? You’re not in control. Someone who truly leads doesn’t have to tell other people that they’re the leader. A true leader proves through their wisdom, through their sacrifice, through their love that they’re worth following after.

Submission is not necessarily easy, but the burden becomes heavier when we carry into it misconceptions of what it truly is. So let’s head in a different direction and talk about what does it mean to submit.

Submission means to “be under the authority of, take a subordinate position.” Submission is actually a military term where it helps the unit to function effectively. A unit that heads into battle will do the most good when each member of that team fulfills the responsibility that they’ve been given. The husband is to lead his home with love (we’ll talk about that in a minute) and the wife is to willingly put herself under the authority that has been given to her husband.

Now we might object saying, “Whoa! My husband is not a great leader. He hasn’t proven himself worthy of being followed after. Why should I submit to him?” Well, you submit to him, not for what he is in himself, but for authoritative role that has been placed upon him. [Think about it like this, when a police officer pulls you over for speeding and walks up to your window, would you ever say, “Officer, before I accept the ticket you’re going to give me, I need to know a few basic details about your personal background.”](#) No! You would never say that. He has authority that has been placed upon him to issue traffic tickets that has nothing to do with his personal beliefs, character or actions.

[You submit to him because God tells you to submit to all governing authorities.](#) And the same thing is true of Christian wives. You submit to your husband, *not because of authority that dwells in them*, but because of the authoritative responsibility in which God has placed them as the head of the home. And since God places a husband’s authority upon him, it is God whom wives respect when they respect

their husbands, it is God whom wives follow when they follow after their husbands leadership.

Wives, I want to encourage you to respect your husband. Wives, I want to challenge you to follow after your husband's leadership. Submission is a good thing! Elyse Fitzpatrick in her book ***Helper by Design*** says,

“Submission isn’t a matter of who is smarter or the most deserving. Submission in marriage is simply another reflection of the beautiful pattern of the roles seen in the Trinity.”

As we come to a fuller understanding of submission we are able to come to a fuller of understanding of God Himself. Where God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are equal in everything, but we are able to see that there is an order that is displayed within the Trinity. No one is fighting to be the head. The Son of God willingly subjects Himself to the desires of the Father. And the Spirit willingly subjects Himself to the will of the Father and to the will of the Son. And wives, you have an opportunity to put that relationship on display within your marriage as you follow after the design that God laid out.

This does not mean that you sit passively off to the side waiting for instructions. No! Genesis 2:18 makes it very clear where God said,

“I will make him a helper fit for him.”

You are companion to your husband. You are to help in everyway possible. Think for a minute on the model example of a wife that is found in scripture, the Proverbs 31 woman. This woman was defined by helping her husband at all points. Because she did, her husband rose to a place of leadership as an elder sitting in the city gates.

That means that if a husband's thinking is out of line with the Word of God, his wife's task is to help him correct his thoughts. If he is simply confused in a decision, she must bring her best reasons to the decision-making process. Help, given respectfully, never conflicts with submission. There is so much joy and satisfaction in fulfilling your God-given roles.

In just a minute, we're going to turn the corner and address the men and their role in the marriage relationship. But before we do that I want to give you three practical ways for...

How to Show Respect for Your Husband

First, Accept His Authority. Don't resist it. When you resist it, it can have devastating results. It may have an effect where he abandons his role as the leader and encourages you to assume the responsibility where you are now carrying a heavier load that you weren't intended to carry.

Second, Show Confidence in His Decisions. Your husband does not want to fail! He wants to lead and he wants to lead well. He learns more through his own failures than you can imagine. So even when he fails, allow him the space to learn from his failures.

Third, Be Grateful. Avoid talking about him in a negative way to other people. Discover what makes him feel appreciated and serve him in that way.

*Well, it's time for us to turn our attention to the **Role of the Husband**.* We've been talking about God's Design for the Marriage, and the man's responsibility within that relationship is spelled out in Colossians 3 as well as several passages throughout the New Testament.

READ COLOSSIANS 3:19

Husbands, you are to lead in loving your wife. Did you know that nowhere in the New Testament is the wife commanded to "love your husband"? But the husband is commanded to love their wife in multiple places. Let's take a look at another passage, Ephesians 5 (25-33).

Husbands, **love** your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... In the same way husbands should **love** their wives as their own bodies. He who **loves** his wife loves himself... However, let each one of you **love** his wife as himself.

Four times in the span of a few verses the husband is commanded to love his wife. Clearly, love is the task of the husband and not that of the wife. Not that the wife shouldn't love, every Christian is to be characterized by love. But this reveals that the husband is to initiate love, to maintain love, and to see that love grows in the marriage. Men, that is your responsibility.

If there is a lack of love in your relationship, if there is no love in your relationship... men, that's on you. Now, I'm not talking about love in the way that it's played out in the movies where it's this sentimental, overly emotional relationship where romance dominates the day. The best of relationships are not ones that are overflowing with romance. The best relationships are the ones that are filled with a whole of friendship and contain a little bit of romance.

Husbands we need to learn and we need to keep on learning how to love our wife. The basic component of love is giving. It's giving up your life for your wife. It's saying that her needs are more important than your needs. It's a willingness to fulfill her desires and lay yours off to the side. I have no doubt in my mind that there are plenty of men in here who would take a bullet for their wife, but would you give up the remote for her? Would you sacrifice your desire to be right on issues that are not significant?

Men, when you committed yourself to love and cherish your wife, till death do you part, you committed to give. If, on the other hand, you married for what you could get out of marriage, that's not love, that's lust. That's the pursuing of your desires rather than pursuing the responsibilities that are laid out in Scripture.

You may start to say that is a pretty tall task; why is that my responsibility? Because the marriage relationship, says Paul, must reflect the love of Christ for His church. I'll probably never get a tattoo, but if I did I would get the reference Ephesians 5:25 tattooed right here on my finger as a constant reminder as to how I am to demonstrate my love for my wife. You see, it was not the church that first loved Christ; Jesus Christ took the initiative, so that while we were weak sinners, even enemies (when there was nothing in us worth praising, nothing in us that was attractive), but Jesus set His love on us anyways.

As 1 John 4:9 says,

We love because [Christ] *first* loved us.

Men, we need to understand this fact and commit ourselves to following it. By doing this, we are on our way to fulfilling our roles as leaders in the home. We are to lead, wives are to submit to the leadership of her husband. But it is a *loving* leadership *that looks out for the best interest of everyone involved*.

So husbands are to lovingly lead your wife, and as the second half of verse 19 says, don't be harsh with them. There should be a gentleness that characterizes our interaction with them. They're not one of the guys, and they should not be treated like one of the guys.

In college I had a roommate my Junior and Senior year, and we got along with each other really well. But there were certain things we would clash over. He was very neat and orderly... I was not. But we'd have arguments from time to time about how the room was to be kept. We would yell at each other, we'd call each other names that were not nice... then two minutes later we'd be like, "Alright, you ready to go to lunch?" We treated each other like guys, and there was no gentleness in the relationship.

But in your marriage relationship, there better be. You treat your wife as someone who is precious to you, and as someone you care about. For the things that you love are the things that you really take of. Have you ever noticed how some guys are passionate about taking care of their yards? They cut them just right, fertilize it faithfully, make sure that it's receiving just enough water. They love their yards, and hope that the neighbors would be impressed when they drive by. There's no way they're letting their kids dig holes in the front yard. It's out of the question that they would allow anyone to park the car on the perfectly manicured lawn. It's precious to them and they'd do whatever it takes to protect it from being harmed.

In the same way, husbands, care for your wife. Love her. Be gentle with her. For in fulfilling your responsibilities there are three results that I can think of:

First, God is Glorified. When you sacrificially love your wife, you are acknowledging God's good design for the marriage. God, and God alone, deserves are praise and worship, that is not something that exclusively reserved for a Sunday morning or when we sing praises to His Name. We glorify God when we faithfully pursue the commands that have been revealed to us.

Second, when you love your wife, **The Gospel is Properly Displayed.** We talked about this already, but as Christ loved the church, the husband puts that on display as he sacrificially loves his wife.

Third, You will Influence Others. Think about these questions for a minute: What is the healthiest, happiest marriage you have ever seen? What is the one marriage that if you could copy, you would? We learn so much from watching others and we are in need of examples that are worth copying. Men, when you love your wife the way God intended, you will without question impact your kids, your extended family, your church and anyone else who comes in close contact with you.

Husband, love your wife! And I want give you guys give you three practical ways for...

How to Show Love for Your Wife

First, Make Her First Place in Your Life and show it. I'm not saying that she replaces your relationship with Christ in significance. But as far as earthly relationships and responsibilities, she as to be at the top and there is no competition. I understand you come home from work mentally, physically, and emotionally drained. God has given you a responsibility to provide, and we are thankful for that. But your job is not done once you punch the clock at the end of the day.

A wife needs more than a provider. She needs a husband that engages with her, and if you have kids, she needs a father to your children. We must be thoughtful, and intentional, and who continually engaged with what is going on at home. That is our greatest priority. Just because you're the head of the home doesn't mean you're the king of the castle... you do wear a crown, but it's more like a thorn of crowns like Jesus wore, where you place the needs of others above your own.

Second, Provide Time for Intimate Conversations. 1 Peter 3:7 says, "Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way." In order for you to live with your wife in an understanding way you are going to have to study your wife. You're going to have to think hard and ask really good questions that dive below the surface. Because anyone can stay on the surface, but husbands be the man who makes it a priority to know what makes *your* wife tick.

Third, Be the Spiritual Leader in Your Home. Your wife longs for this. Take full advantage of what's going on in our church with the various ministries, but don't let spiritual conversations only come up here. Spend time on your own with the Lord. Then the things that you're learning and growing in, talk about it with your wife. Also come up with a plan of getting into the Bible together as a family. When problems arise within your home look to solve them biblically. Lead your family towards the things of God.

Conclusion:

Well, I know I've said a lot today. But marriage is a beautiful gift that God has given us. And I am so thankful that He did! There is so much for us to learn as we look at this relationship. I pray that you will walk out here today seeing marriage as a picture of the gospel; that through this relationship you can learn to love and live with someone in the same grace that Jesus loves and lives with you. In so doing you are going to learn about the grace of God yourself, and give a picture to your children and the watching world.

May the Marriage that you have proclaim the greatness of Jesus Christ.