

Colossians 3:18—4:1

November 24, 2019

The best golfer ever according to accolades and silverware is Jack Nicklaus. He won 73 PGA tour events in his career. But what separated him from the pack was his consistency in the major events. Of these big tournaments (US Open, British Open, Masters, etc...) Nicklaus won a staggering 18 times. No one—not even Tiger Woods—has eclipsed that mark.

For two decades Nicklaus was the best golfer on the planet. And every year before the beginning of the golf season Nicklaus would go home to Columbus, OH and make an appointment with his very first golf coach, Jack Grout.

And every year the greatest player on the planet would say, “Coach teach me the game of golf.”

And Grout would proceed to review stance, grip, swing fundamentals of the greatest golfer ever born. Even the best have to review the basics. The best become the best by mastering the basics.

Today we receive a lesson in following Jesus. We might as well have asked Paul, “Teach me to be a Christian.” Today we get a treatment of the basics.

Not instructions on world change
Not direction on spiritual warfare
Not the high and lofty mysteries of the faith

But the basics. New life begins at home.

Today we learn again how to be a Christian at home. With those who are closest to us. This new life in Christ is meant to be expressed in our homes and families.

It can be easy to assume that because you believe that Jesus is Lord (master):

- The Lord of the universe
- The creator-Lord of all things
- The Lord of Salvation
- That Jesus is your Lord

You can believe these things and yet the lordship of Jesus Christ NOT be expressed in your home. It is possible to understand the lordship of Jesus and yet not submit to his lordship at home.

Being a people fixed on Jesus should make an impact on lives at home. If you like titles: How being fixed on Jesus changes your home.

Jesus has authority over all things.

By his power all things hold together—and yet—he cares about what happens in your kitchen.

Each night he calls out the stars—and yet—

All things are created for by him and for him—and yet—he

He is before all things—and yet—

In him the fullness of God is pleased to dwell—and yet—

I'll give you a warning: If there were ever a sermon that you might be tempted to listen for other people—this is it. One piece of advice: Don't.

The Lord is addressing us all today.

LIVE submitted to your master, Jesus.

I'm going to read beginning in verse 17 to set the context a bit. I'm going to ask you to ignore the heading that cuts the flow between verse 17 and 18.

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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

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

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. ²² Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. ²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." Colossians 3:17—4:1

PRAY

Three human relationships that define our home life and in which we submit to the authority of Jesus Christ.

1. Marriage—Col. 3:18-19

Verse 18,

"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."

I'll admit straightaway that the word submit grates on our 21st century ears and sounds completely antiquated. The whole concept of submission is appealing as nails being dragged on a chalkboard.

Some say that this direction in verse 18 & 19 applies only to Paul's day in his culture and we can safely ignore it. Others say that because women did not have much education as a rule they needed their husbands direction more than they might today. Still others say that the talk of submission will lead to spousal abuse.

None of those solutions are very satisfying. The scriptures direct us to listen even if the direction is hard to swallow. Before we dismiss the whole idea of submission—it might be helpful to define the word.

This is important.

You might think—

- These kind of misogynistic ideas are wrong and possibly even harmful.
- Submission is old-fashioned traditionalism and has no place in the 21st century.
- Submission results in women losing individuality, personality, uniqueness and voice.
- You might think submission is dangerous.

Biblical submission is none of those things.

Women, I'm not promising you won't be offended by the conversation we are going to have this morning, but if you are offended I want you to be offended by what Paul is actually means by the word submit.

It is probably helpful to define what the submission does NOT mean—

1. *Submission does mean wives are valuable than their husbands.*

Leadership is not inherently more valuable or important than those who follow, not in any realm especially not in marriage. Wives, your calling to submit doesn't mean that you are somehow lacking in your personhood.

Role distinction is not value distinction.

I'll come back to this later, but think of Jesus. We know from scripture that Jesus is equal with God. He is God the son. He doesn't just appear to be God, he is God. He isn't some kind of lesser deity.

Not at all.

"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. [27] And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." John 5:26-27

The Father sends the son and the son willingly subordinates himself to the Father. You might say that the Son submits to the Father.

I've bet you have never thought—Jesus is he is okay—but THE Father he is so much better. Submission is built into the essence of the Trinity.

You have to consider submission in the light of Christ—you have the honor of reflecting the character of and role of Jesus in a unique way.

2. Submission is not being subject to every Christian man.

You are only called to be subject to your own husband. No one else's husband, not your father either (but that is a different message).

3. Submission is NOT the end of independent thinking.

As a wife you are not called to be your husband's yes-woman. Whatever ideas he comes up with you bat your eyelashes and say, "Yes dear."

No, submission is coming up with ideas and taking responsibility for the marriage too. You are the helpmate not the helpless-mate.

This is going to mean that you are not always going to agree with your husband. If you always agree with your husband, you are not properly submitting. As a wife you are called to share everything with your husband, all your thoughts, hopes, dreams, ideas.

Submission doesn't mean that you wait for your husband to bring up all the topics or come up with the ideas. An example in our marriage was when we had adopted our third son and I was done was ready to move on in life without diapers.

I had my little cub-scout troop and Tiff said that we should try pray for a little girl. I said, nah. She said it again, I said, nah. Then she said, "Have you prayed about it?" I said, no. Then I said, "Ok I'll pray." Then she said, "Have you gotten input from anyone?"

AND my oh my am I glad that my wife pressed me into the Lord on that decision. I have a daughter—and she is my favorite (don't tell the boys).

4. *Submission is not because wives are not as capable as their husbands.*

Submission is not a statement on a woman's potential or intelligence. Just a different role.

Submission is not a statement on your capability, but on your calling and role.

5. Submission does not mean that your relationship with God flows through your husband.

Wives, you are a Christian before you are a wife. And you are called to follow Jesus and know him for yourself. Your husband is not your high priest—your bridge to Jesus—he is your husband. Yes, he is to wash you in the word, but Jesus died and lives for you as a believer.

You are a disciple of Christ before you are a wife to your husband. You owe it to yourself, your husband and your family to take seriously your relationship with Jesus.

Heirs together!

6. Submission does not mean following your husband into sin.

Being subject to your husband does not mean that you follow him into sin. That is ALWAYS wrong. What if he won't listen to you?

This is why you have relationships in the church. If he won't listen to you, let others come alongside you and echo what you are saying to try and win him over.

7. Submission is not a license to be taken advantage of.

You might think it is dangerous to submit to your husband, because what might he do? By no means am I or the Bible saying that you have to submit to abuse by your husband in the name of submission.

Again, this is where you have to let someone know. Biblical submission is not a license to take advantage. Church we have a calling, an obligation to protect and serve women in this predicament.

8. Submission is not about fitting a certain mold or style.

Ladies, don't think that submission means you have to let go of your personality or become some other person. Biblical submission does not mean that you lose who you are; rightly understood submission enhances your strengths and helps your weaknesses.

There isn't some kind of unwritten rulebook that everyone is reading from and you are somehow out of the inner circle.

This is where we need to be careful of a model of this is what you do to be submissive. Do this. I'll give you an example:

When we were first married the man had to do the finances. So I did for a number of years, but I married someone who loves numbers. She used to literally get excited when the bank statement came in so that we could reconcile—what fun.

We made our way, but for me it is better for my wife to do the finances and I lead her. We talk about all of our financial decisions—but it isn't usurping for her to pay the bills.

In fact, BOTH of the cars my wife bought and called me on the phone. I came home and boom, I had a car to drive.

The point is as a couple you need to find out what works for your family.

9. Submission is not waiting for your husband to come up with all the ideas.

Servant leadership is never unilateral, and godly submission isn't silent. Your husband needs you. You all are a team that needs to know their respective roles.

If he going to be godly, he must listen, and they are going to find out next week that their role is harder than it might seem.

Likewise, ladies if you have the idea—"Oh, I don't know I'll just let my husband figure it out." Maybe that is good, and maybe not. He needs you. He needs your thoughts and opinions and input and prayer. You are a team.

Ok, so I have gotten this far and I've been all around the topic of submission but haven't yet defined it.

What is submission?

In the context of marriage:

Submission is the wife's inclination to lovingly follow and support her husband's leadership.

Notice that Paul gives boundaries on what submission. Look again at verse 17.

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

You submit as is fitting in the Lord. You do not follow your husband into sin. You are following the Lord as you submit to your husband.

Husbands—LOVE your wives.

Love them. That is your job. You are not to demand that they submit to you and show you the appropriate respect. You are to love your wife.

That we are commanded to love our wives shows us that this is no mere feeling, but a choice. Love is always a choice. Husbands, you wonder how your authority should be expressed?

Love.

The primary thing your wife should be aware of is that you love her. You must work harder to make sure she understands that you love her than she understands that you are in authority.

This is going to mean—

You give yourself for her.
You lay down preferences for her.
You look to her interests before your own.
You serve her.
You encourage her.

Most of the husbands in the room would be willing to take a bullet for their wives. That is easy. This passage is directing us in a different direction. This passage says you need die not just once for your wife but daily for her.

Does your wife know you love her?

I once heard a wife say of her husband. I'm more sure that he wants to make sure I turn the air conditioner off before I turn off the car than I know he loves me.

This ought not be.

Love her and DO NOT BE HARSH.

You have no right to be harsh with any other follower of Jesus much less your wife. Are you harsh?

My husband was a harsh man. Maybe you have met him. He is probably the guy who asked how you were doing and who asked how he could pray for you. Not just how he could pray for you—he would pray for you right then and there. When you asked him about his family he told you that he had a great wife. He was very blessed. Sounds harsh right? Not yet. He was also the guy who would tell me that he loved me almost every day when he left for work. He brought me flowers and candy and cards on all the appropriate occasions. But behind the public mask and the surface Hallmark checklist of what makes a good husband lived a harsh man.

He disregarded my opinions.

He disregarded my needs and desires.

He disdained my emotions.

I wasn't allowed to disagree.

I wasn't allowed to cry.

I wasn't allowed to raise grievances.

I wasn't allowed to be critical about anything that he did.

Everything else came first in his life: sports, work, video games, entertainment, sleep, news, television, our dogs, money. I came behind all of these things. Everything that I did was judged and came up lacking and I learned to carry the weight of never being good enough.

When God convicted me and I asked for forgiveness for something, my words were met with silence. If I did break the unspoken rule of raising a grievance my words were interrupted and immediately turned into accusations against me. If I said the way he was talking to me hurt me as his tone was often so unkind, I was told that it was my problem because that is not how he meant it.

When I cried my tears were met with zero empathy no matter the depth of the trial that I was walking through or worse they were met with anger.

But perhaps the worst part of his harshness was the loneliness and isolation he fostered in our relationship. He arrived home late from work almost every day. He filled his time with television, internet, biking, reading, walking and video games. He stayed up very late into the night doing these things while I cried myself to sleep just wanting connection.

I just wanted acceptance.

I just wanted to be loved.

I have never been lonelier than when I was married to a harsh man.

Jesus and Lordship.

2. Parenting: Col. 3:20-21

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Children: Obey.

Fathers: Don't provoke.

I'm going to spend most of the time on verse 21,

Simple to say hard to do.

Notice why children are directed to obey in everything...this pleases the Lord. Parents, this should sober us. Is our direction to our kids in line with the kindness and generosity of the Lord?

Fathers (Parents)—do not provoke your children. Provocation can come in many forms. We who are parents would do anything for our kids. Anything.

We want them to be a success.

We want them to avoid our mistakes.

We want the best for them.

And most of all we want them to follow Jesus.

Right now my wife and I are in the throes of teenageness at our house. Woah it is hard. I can tell you what we are learning about provocation. We can be tempted to be like machine guns of questions and direction with the kids:

- Don't do that.
- Why did you do that?
- Where were you?
- Do you know how good you have it?
- What were you thinking?
- Why can't you just listen?
- What are you doing?
- Why is your room like that?
- Not another word!
- Am I just talking to myself?

Some of these questions must be asked. But if these are the ONLY kind of questions we ask our teenagers we risk provoking them. They will begin to think you can't be pleased.

Kids will either retreat into themselves OR be a totally different person when you aren't around.

I'll give you a fresh example from our home. Two weeks ago.

I had a conversation with this child about a specific request for the next day. That next day dawned and this child rolled out of bed

around 1pm. He seemed to be disregarding my direct request. He tumbled out of his room and I wanted so badly for my first words to be ones of correction and reproof.

But instead. I waited. So hard. So hard. I told Tiff that I was choosing not to say anything in that moment and it was taking all of my strength.

I talked to him two days later. It was a better conversation.

When I did talk to him I was able to be calm and ensure that he understood that I wanted his best and I loved him and the request I made of him was important.

Parents—our kids must be most aware of our love. Are they?

More than anything I want my kids to know that I love them in both what I say and what I do. So hard.

3. Slaves: (Col. 3:22—25)

²² Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Part of the reason that the ESV translated this word bond-servant and not slave is because the history of slavery in our country. Slavery is a terrible blight on our history. In fact, the church in the past has used passages like this to justify slavery. Nonsense.

What are we to make of this direction?

First, This passage does not endorse the institution of slavery. Paul is speaking to a household reality in that day and age. This is a massive difference between Marriage and Parenting and slavery.

The Marriage and Parenting will go on until the end of the world.
Slavery? Not so.

Second, the nature of American slavery was racial and, not so in Paul's day. But, that said, it doesn't make slavery any more palatable. The slaves were still NOT their own. The intent of this passage is NOT to endorse slavery but to speak to the way things were in that day.

The irony is that Paul addresses slaves at all. They were considered property and had no rights at all.

Notice what he tells them to do—

Vs. 22,

"obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord."

Do you see why?

For the fear of the Lord. In serving their masters they needed to understand that they were really serving their Lord. He was watching and wanted them to obey with all their hearts these masters—because the Lord is watching.

None of us here today are slaves—praise the Lord—but many of us here are employed and have bosses. This counsel is good for us too. Have you ever worked for a bad or unreasonable boss?

How are you to respond?

Working with sincerity of heart. Not trying to put on a show of doing a good job but actually doing a good job.

Why? God is watching.

Then in verse 23, everything changes—

²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,
²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

All work you do is really for the Lord.

Do you see what this means?

1. All our work is for the Lord
2. We are all slaves to the Lord
3. No job is wasted or unimportant
4. All work is God's work