

Intro

Sometimes the Bible really goes against the grain of fallen human thinking. Few areas stand out more strongly than male-female roles.

This opposition isn't a reflection of the Bible's foolishness. This opposition reflects how far our culture deviates from God's design.

The battle for us this morning is a fight for faith. A fight for confidence in God's ways.

BIG IDEA: God's commands are right and good.

READ PASSAGE (3:12-19)

Body

How this speaks to everyone present today

A good number of you are unmarried. You've lost a spouse to death. You've lost a spouse to divorce. You've longed for marriage. It hasn't happened. You're a child.

What does a sermon on marriage have for you?

To the **single** and those who've **lost a spouse**. The principles that inform marriage speak to the ways we relate to God. And the ways God relates to us. As we consider marriage, we'll learn how Jesus deals with us and how we relate to Jesus.

Singles, occasion may arise when married people seek your counsel. Be prepared by knowing God's word.

To those who are moving towards marriage. Be as prepared as you can be.

Children. Understand the beauty of God's design. God's ways are always good.

Some of you may think your **marriage is unrecoverable**. Remember that you've died to sin and risen with Christ. There's hope for change in Christ.

Some of you might be thinking **I've got marriage down**. Think of this as reminder. Maybe there's growth still needed? Have you killed all sin in your heart?

Non-Christians. God's design for marriage points to the gospel. The good news of forgiveness of sins and rescue from bondage to sin through the death of Jesus Christ.

The marriage relationship is a picture of how God deals with his people. He dies for them, he cleanses them from sin, he feeds them, and he cares for them.

The call to faith is a call to trust the God who created you. A call to let him rescue you from the fallen patterns of sin.

Point 1: The whole book of Colossians speaks to marriage relationships.

- 1) Growing in knowledge and wisdom (1:9) entails knowing how to do marriage wisely.
- 2) Walking “*in a manner worthy of the Lord*” (1:10) includes how we do marriage.
- 3) Being rescued from “*the domain of darkness*” (1:13) entails being rescued from fallen cultural norms.
- 4) Christ as Lord of the universe (1:15-20) includes his lordship over our marriages.
- 5) Continuing “*in the faith*” (1:23) entails doing marriage in a way consistent with that faith.
- 6) Being “*mature [or complete] in Christ*” (1:28) means leaving no area of life untouched by God’s word.
- 7) We continue in the way we began (2:6-7).

We began by faith. We continue by faith, trusting God’s ways are always right and good.

- 8) We build on the foundation of forgiveness in Christ (2:7), like learning how to do marriage.
- 9) Spiritually we’ve been resurrected from the dead and died to sin (new birth, born again), so there’s resurrection power in Christ to have victory over sin in marriage ((2:11-13; 3:1, 5, 12).
- 10) Paul is saying live out who you are in Christ.

One way we live out risen existence is in the marriage relationship.

- 11) Paul says to be at peace in the church, bearing with and forgiving one another (3:12-15).

The way we live in the church is the way we live in marriage.

- 12) Paul says, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*” (3:16).

God’s word should affect our marriages.

- 13) Paul says to do everything in Jesus’ name (3:17). This includes marriage.

The entire book speaks to marriage. Don’t limit yourself to 3:18-19.

Point 2: Paul’s instructions on marriage are binding in every culture.

By a show of hands, how many of you have heard something to the effect that these commands in 3:18-19 were cultural and limited to people in that day and not relevant to marriage practice today?

In Colossians 3:18, wives submit to their husbands because it’s “*fitting in the Lord.*” A wife’s submission to her husband is proper because she’s in Christ.

She isn’t commanded to submit to her husband because it would violate the norms of Roman culture and be bad for Christian witness. She’s commanded to submit to her husband because she’s in Christ. Because Jesus is her Lord.

READ Ephesians 5:22-33

- 1) Wives submit to husbands because there’s a correspondence between the wife-husband relationship and the church-Christ relationship (5:22-24).

As the church submits to Jesus, the wife submits to her husband.

- 2) The husbands' love for his wife is grounded in Jesus' example (5:25-27).

The husband imitates Jesus' love for the church when he loves his wife.

- 3) Husband-wife relationships are grounded in creation not culture (5:31-32).

The marriage relationship itself points to something greater: Christ's relationship with his church. Mystery (5:32) = truth once hidden but now revealed. From the very beginning, God intended that the male-female marriage relationship would be a picture of Christ's relationship with his church.

Paul grounds the submission commands in Jesus' lordship, example, and creation, not culture.

Point 3: The wife's submission

So what does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband?

- 1) The verb means something like submitting or subjecting oneself to the directives of another who is in a position of authority (e.g., God's law, governing authorities, Jesus submitting to the Father).
- 2) The Greek tense indicates the wife should voluntarily subject herself to her husband's leadership.

It's a voluntary submission not compelled by force.

- 3) The way a wife submits to her husband corresponds to the way the church submits to Christ (Eph 5:22-24).

Jesus stands in a position of leadership above his church.

- 4) Submission is comprehensive.

"in everything" per Ephesians 5:24.

- 5) Submission is owed regardless of the husbands' merits.

Jesus doesn't say submit to your husband if and only if he meets these conditions. Submission is based on the fact that God has chosen that the husband to be head of the wife. Submission owes to the husbands' role, not the husbands' merits.

Much like submission is owed to government given their role, not their merits.

- 6) Submission involves the wife's attitude.

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. – Ephesians 5:33

Respect based on the husband's God-assigned position. Not because of the husbands' merits. Paul doesn't say respect your husband if and only if he meets these conditions.

- 7) The wife submits to her husband because she first submits to Jesus' lordship.

The way a wife relates to her husband reflects the way she responds to Jesus.

- 8) Submission \neq you obey husband over God.

God's law trumps the husband's headship. When a husband's wishes conflict with God's, obey God.

- 9) Submission \neq a wife never admonishes her husband.

Believers admonish (warn and correct) one another per Colossians 3:16.

Single men. Look for a woman who affirms these truths!

What submission isn't

- 1) The wife is a child.
- 2) The wife has to violate her conscience because the husband says so.
- 3) The wife can't step in when her children are abused.
- 4) The wife has to submit to domestic violence.

Point 4: The husband's headship

The Bible is concerned about how the husband treats his wife.

- 1) Love your wife like Jesus loved the church (Eph 5:25).

Jesus' love for the church = the model husbands follow.

- 2) Jesus loved the church by dying for it (Eph 5:25).

Church = all those who would ever believe.

That's self-giving. That's suffering for our wife's good. Looking to our wife's interests instead of our own.

- 3) Love your wife like you love yourself (Eph 5:28-29).

In the same way that you care for your own body, care for your wife. Care for your wife like you care for yourself.

- 4) Love your wife by providing everything she needs to flourish spiritually (Eph 5:26-27, 29).

Sanctification = positional and experiential.

Nourish = providing food.

Cherish = caring for someone in terms of providing what's needed because they're valued, because you're concerned for them.

There's a spiritual focus here. Jesus does what's necessary for our spiritual good.

Likewise, the husband ensures the wife has everything necessary to thrive spiritually.

Jesus presently cares for us in such a way that he gives us what we need to thrive spiritually, helping us kill sin..

- 5) Love your wife because you are one flesh (Eph 5:28-31).

One flesh = physically and relationally. In marriage a new relationship forms. With new commitments and responsibilities. Husbands, treat her well because you are one with her.

6) Love your wife by dealing with her gently (Col 3:18).

“harsh” literally spoke of bitter taste. Translated either harsh (ESV, NIV) or embittered (= resentful, hateful, angry; NASB, NKJV). Bitter would reflect the attitude. Harsh would reflect behavior that stems from the attitude.

Deal with her gently (cherish), not harshly.

7) A husband loves his wife regardless of her merits (e.g., submission, respect).

8) A husband loves his wife because he first submits to Jesus’ lordship.

The way a husband relates to his wife reflects the way he responds to Jesus.

9) The New Testament model is servant leadership.

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." – Matthew 20:25-28

The husband leads for the benefit of himself and his wife. Because they’re one flesh. Leading well involves self-denial, forsaking our own desires for her good.

Single women. Look for a man who affirms these truths!

Putting these together

1) Discuss family vision together.

Seek God’s wisdom. Pray together.

2) Seek total agreement.

Look out for each other’s interests.

3) Consider her input.

She may be wiser.

On some decisions Kaitlin was right and should have resisted stronger.

4) Consider her good.

What will lead to spiritual thriving?

5) Consider her desires.

Giving in to Kaitlin’s financial desires.

6) Husband ultimately decides.

Rest in the fact that you are submitting to God’s right and good design.

Unsaved spouse

Be winsome.

1) Wife, radically submit counter-culturally.

- 2) Husband, radically love her and lead for her good.

Show the beauty of Christianity lived well.

Point 5: Be resolved to treasure God's ways.

The fight for faith

What God says and does is always right and good. This is faith. So it is with God's instructions on marriage.

Given our culture's radical opposition to such commands, the battle is a fight for faith. A fight for confidence in God's ways.

Equal yet different by design

Paul's commands don't speak to the inferiority of women and wives. Women are equal in creation (equally created in the image of God) and salvation (equally sharing the same salvation privileges; Jesus died for both men and women).

What's different isn't the value of men and women. What's different is the design of men and women. Women are fitted to help, to nurture, and to engage in motherhood. In other words, women by God's design are fitted for certain roles. Submission in marriage reflects God's very good design for women.

If a woman isn't a wife or a mother, they can live out their nurturing nature in other avenues.

Submission \neq the wife in inferior or lacks in dignity and value. It reflects different design.

Why are these commands so off-putting in our culture?

- 1) The denial of universals.

There's no God to whom we'll give account and there's no revelation that's universally binding on all people.

- 2) Liberty became freedom to do as I want instead of freedom to do as I ought.
- 3) The individual's freedom (personal happiness) became more important than the community's good.

We became an individualistic society without regard for divine revelation.

How does this play out in marriage? No order and final authority in the home. And no guiding revelation to order our goals. We're left with two individuals fighting against each other to get whatever they want.

This is fallen marriage. Colossians 3:18-19 is risen marriage.

Conclusion

God's commands are right and good and make for human flourishing. When we reject God's ways (sin), we subject ourselves to self-inflicted consequences. We live against our design. We're fighting the order of the universe. Like standing in front of a car going 90 mph and thinking nothing will happen.