

Family Relationships

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[0:00] All right, we're getting there. While you're finding your seat, go ahead and open your Bibles to Colossians chapter 3. We're going back there today. But before we plunge into the passage, somebody asked me earlier, John, are you doing a job interview later?

No. My suit comes out for weddings and celebrations of life. So today is Jane Munson's funeral. I encourage you to stay. That's at 1 o'clock. We'll celebrate Jane's life. I got to tell you, I had a conversation with Jim this week, just talking about his desire for the time this afternoon, and hearing him talk about his wife.

That's what we want. That's really the type of life that we want in marriage. Hearing him talk about her and their life together, 42 years, was really encouragement to me.

And I think it's good, certainly, to grieve with Jim and his family, but also just to hear about how to run the race well in marriage would be good.

[1:12] And then, so that's at 1 o'clock, and then immediately after the service, we'll have lunch downstairs. So Colossians chapter 3, just by way of review, a couple of things.

Remember, first of all, we talked about mystery. Paul addresses a mystery revealed at the end of chapter 1. And as we talked about that mystery revealed, we also talked about the idea that we all feel mystery.

Life is a mystery. We don't understand why our lives go the way that they do. We don't understand the hardships we endure. Sometimes we can say, okay, I did something that caused this consequence.

But oftentimes, there's no consequence. There's no cause and effect. I'm just going about my life, and I get blindsided by hardship. I get blindsided by the unexpected.

There's also the mystery of what is God expecting of us? What does it look like to enter into the adventure of following him? And how do we make sense of all the things that we face in life?

[2:15] The little things of our lives and the big picture of how the world works and how God allows the things that he does. It's a mystery. And our brains just aren't big enough to figure it out.

But we can't help ourselves. Being part of created in the image of God is that we are problem solvers. Part of the mandate to Adam was to manage the garden, to figure out what the problems are, and to fix them in partnership with God.

And so we have a predisposition to try and unpack mysteries and figure out how this stuff works. Well, there's one of two directions we can go. And what Paul was doing, if you recall, in Colossians, is addressing a heresy, a false teaching, that was arising in the area of Colossae, the city, that was trying to address the mystery.

And what his answer was, that we as Christians should know and should embrace that the mystery of life, the mysteries that we're always trying to solve, the mystery revealed is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

That when Jesus said in John 14, 6, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life, when you look at me, you see my Father.

[3:38] He was telling his disciples and us, I am the answer to all of your questions. And we have to figure out how that works.

It's part of the dynamic of our relationship with God. But the mystery has unfolded, Christ in you, the hope of glory. And you have Christ in you, if you have trusted in him as your Lord and Savior.

If you've recognized that you're hopeless, you're a hot mess, you sin, oftentimes you see the right path, and you go, nope, I'm going to go the wrong way instead, just because.

We do the wrong thing. We pursue a path of our own away from the path that God has prescribed for us. That's sin. And the consequence of that is hell.

Hell in this life, an ultimate eternal punishment away from God, in literal hell. We have to acknowledge that. My way is bankrupt.

[4:42] But Jesus died on the cross for me. The sin that I carry as a human being, and the sin that I practice, was dealt with at the cross. Jesus took my sin and gave me his righteousness.

He took the punishment that I deserved and gave me a relationship with his Father instead. And now I turn and I choose to follow Christ.

At the moment that that dialogue takes place, Christ enters into you. You receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ literally lives within you.

And that is the hope of glory. The mystery is satisfied. We need to own that. We need to marinate in it. We need to think about it. That the mystery has been revealed.

We take the things that we don't understand, we bring them to the Lord, and we listen as the Spirit responds to us and tells us and speaks to us because he does speak.

[5:47] We need to listen. We need to tune our ears to hear what God is saying. So as Paul was developing his argument in Colossians, the book, we came across a couple of things that appear to be contradictory.

If you recall, there was a paradox of rule. In chapter 2, Paul says, don't let anybody judge you because of your behavioral choices. Whether or not you honor certain days, whether you embrace dietary restrictions, when you fast, all that stuff.

Don't let anybody judge you for that. And don't work yourself into a frenzy trying to follow angels and to pursue God. Stop following all these rules.

Stop embracing a life of asceticism thinking that's going to earn favor with God. Rules have no benefit. Remember, we looked at this several times in chapter 2, the last verse.

Rules have no value in changing our behavior. We can't build fences high enough to keep us on the right path. We just stubbornly choose to continue to go the wrong way.

[6:52] We're kind of stupid that way. Rules don't change our behavior. And so we saw that. It's very clear. Paul makes it absolutely crystal clear. But then you turn the page, you get into chapter 3, and Paul says, keep seeking the things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of the Father.

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. And then he lists what look an awful lot like rules. Like, wait a minute, you just said rules have no value. Then why are these rules here?

And what we unpacked over the last couple of weeks as we focused on Colossians 3, 1 through 17, is that what we're seeing there is not rules.

It's actually a description of the character of somebody who has Christ in them and who is in Christ. This is what it looks like to be that kind of a person.

Because you see, with rules, we're trying to earn a path. We're trying to earn God's favor. We're trying to get God to say, yep, I see you, I love you. Yep, I'll accept you.

[7:58] Reluctantly, but I'll accept you. But what we're seeing in Colossians 3 is, no, no, you're already accepted when you put your trust in Christ. This is what it looks like as you follow him in the path that he prescribes for you.

So that's the paradox of the rules. Then the other confusing thing between chapter 2 and chapter 3, is the description of God. Because the heretics have this image of God that God is distant.

He really doesn't want relationship with us. He has to be bribed and tricked, and we have to get angelic help to get into his presence. And so God is up in heaven with his arms crossed, his back turned to us, and we've got to somehow break through the door and convince him to accept us.

Some of us had that in our fathers, and we project that onto God, which is certainly not true. That's not how God treats us. God is not our boss.

God is our father. God is not aloof and distant, with very high standards that we've got to struggle to achieve.

[9:09] No, no. God is a father. Always keep in mind the picture that Jesus paints in the story of the prodigal son. That's God's view of you. My son was dead, but he's back.

And remember, the son said, in his mind, he had a script all written. I'm going to do all these things for my dad. Dad, I don't deserve to be your son anymore. I just need three square meals a day, so I'll do whatever it takes.

And the dad said, stop talking. Don't say a word. I love you. You're already accepted. You're already my son. That is what Paul is telling us in Colossians chapter 3.

You already have that. Remember verse 12? So as those who have been, past tense, chosen of God, holy and beloved. You're already there if you're in Christ.

That's the resolution of this dichotomy, this paradox that we see in Colossians chapter 2 and 3. God is not distant. God is a very present help in time of need.

[10:17] He's right there. We have permission to come boldly into his presence. You remember that particular week when we talked about that?

I was doing the greeting and Jesse came up and wanted to help Poppy with the greeting. That's the boldness that we have to come before our Heavenly Father, to call him Daddy.

You need to remember that. We're not taking on a new set of rules. We're learning to live out what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus in partnership with him.

And we're not pursuing a God who rejects us and who has to be sold on the idea that we're acceptable. We are being pursued by a God, a Father who loves us and is drawing us deeper into relationship with him.

Because he knows that the more we're like Jesus, the more we are like ourselves. we fulfill who we were meant to be. Because he designed us to be an echo of the Lord Jesus himself.

[11:20] We need to hold on to these things. Because it's so easy, it's so seductive to fall prey to the idea that God is distant and aloof. It's so easy to think, well, I need to check all these boxes.

Nope. Remember what's true of you. You have been chosen of God. That's our hope.

That's our life. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Now this morning, we're going to turn the corner from what appears to be broad strokes general conversation of what it looks like for us as Christians to very specifics about marriage, husband-wife relationship, father-child relationship, employer-employee relationship.

Master-slave in the time that the New Testament was written. And it feels like we're going from general to specific. What I want you to keep in mind as we go through this passage this morning is that actually what Paul did is he chose three types of relationships that we can all relate to.

Even if we're not married. Even if we've never been married. We have parents. And so we can see that dynamic of a husband and wife. And that's an intimate example of how we live out this new character that we have because we're in Christ.

[12:40] And so it's a picture that we can look at and go, okay, what does that mean for me? And the same is true of the parent-child relationship, specifically father-child that Paul talks about.

And then next week, we're going to talk about employer-employee. But these are examples. Now there are specific examples that we as husbands and wives and fathers and children and employers and employees, we should take them to heart and apply them specifically to those contexts.

But this passage that we're going to study over the next two weeks is actually better understood as an illustration of what Paul was talking about when he said, this is what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus.

So I want you to look at it from that perspective. So I'm going to take a drink of water and then we're going to read a few verses in Colossians chapter 3. Because the preschoolers are here today, I decided to keep it shorter.

I'm just that kind of a guy. So we're going to start in verse 17. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. Verse 18.

[13:50] Wives, be subject to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

Fathers, do not exasperate your children so that they will not lose heart. I thought that said, do exasperate your children until my kids got old enough to read and said, no, there's a knot in there. Knock that off. Just kidding. But that's something we need to be very aware of. So let's pray together and then we'll plunge into these verses. Father, thank you for all that we have in Christ. That we are loved by you. That you who gave your son freely will with him freely give us all things. That nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Not height, depth, no distance, no authorities, no powers, not even our own foolishness can separate us from you. And God, I pray that as we look at these relationships and families that we

would think about how we live not just within the context of those family relationships but also in our relationship vertically with you and horizontally with everybody we cross paths with.

[15:07] Help us to learn what it means to become like Jesus. To take on the character of Jesus and then live that out wherever we go. God, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So I want to talk about some problems that you always encounter when you come into the Bible.

Always. Or any piece of literature. And I'm not saying there's flaws in the Bible. Don't misunderstand. What I am saying though is that any sort of communication has its limitations. And the written or spoken word has limitations that we have to be aware of because in being aware of them we know how to dance around them or dance with them as the case may be.

So the first one is language is linear. That means it's in a line. It's sequential. There's A plus B plus C plus D. You can't get around that. That's just the way it is.

We're bound by time but some of the things that appear in Scripture even though they're listed in an order actually would look better or fit better in a Venn diagram.

[16:13] That's like the circles like I have for discipleship where you see where the different areas overlap and how they relate to each other. This is one of those examples. It's given in a sequential order but actually what we're talking about is it's better understood as a web.

This is a web of relationships that every element touches every other element. The relationship between a husband and wife affects their kids.

The behavior of the kids impacts the parents. All of those relationships impact how the family interacts with the outside world and even with God. And so I want you to recognize that limitation of language that sometimes when there's an order in Scripture sometimes there's a specific order.

I think the Ten Commandments for example were given in a very clear specific order because they lay out our priorities in terms of how we relate to God and to each other.

and it's helpful to see that sequentially but in this I want you to look at it as a web and think of it in that context everything impacting everything else. So that's one problem.

[17:21] Another way to better understand it and we're going to develop this quite a bit is the idea of a dance. Not a dance between two people but a dance like a square dance where everybody's got a role and they're moving around like with each other.

That's the picture that Paul's developing here. Or if you've done athletics I love volleyball and I love watching football. Everybody's got a part to play and everybody has to do their role.

You might list the positions in a specific order but everybody has a piece of the puzzle. That's the idea here. So that's one problem. The next problem is there's this abrupt transition that Paul does where he's talking about how we relate to each other in community.

These are the characteristics of someone who's a follower of Jesus and he goes from general boom from one sentence to the next to very specific. Wives do this.

Husbands do this. Fathers do this. Children do this. Fathers do this again. And so it's kind of jarring about how why he chose to write that way. And it's very easy to look at that and say well I'm not a wife so this doesn't apply to me.

[18:25] I'm not a husband. Doesn't apply to me. My parents have passed away or this doesn't apply to me. So don't think of it that way. That abrupt transition like I said at the beginning is this is an illustration of the principles that Paul is trying to teach us in the verses that precede the ones I read 18 through 21.

So we've got language is linear but this is more of a web. We've got the fact that Paul jarringly moves from general to specific. And the last thing is the structure of our Bibles themselves.

It's very helpful to have chapters and verses. Because I can tell you turn to Colossians 3 verse 17 and you go oh boom I know what that means.

Or if you don't it's easy to find out. Well if I had to say turn in Colossians 3 and we just got this massive writing and the original Greek they didn't use punctuation.

So it's just this massive text and I want you to follow just move your finger until you finally get to the point where the verses are that I'm talking about this morning. It's really helpful to have a verbal shorthand so we can find the passage quickly.

[19:37] But that's also a problem because subconsciously we create these silos. So verse 18 silo is just for the wives. Verse 19 boom is just a silo for men.

And so we compartmentalize unconsciously because that's verse 18 that's verse 19 that's verse 20. You need to pull that out of your brain. And think of it the way Paul wrote it.

He was talking to his secretary who was writing things down. And so think of it more conversationally than with this rigid structure. And as you do that I think you'll get a better understanding of what Paul's flow of thought was.

Also and I've beaten this horse to death but I'm going to mention it again ignore the subtitles. They are not they're not inspired they're not part of the Bible.

My Bible says between 17 and 18 family relations. Yeah but no by putting that in the editors of my particular Bible restricted my interpretation of what that passage was saying.

[20 : 45] And I had to pull back that curtain to get a better understanding. So be wary of those things. So the structure of what we've done to make things easier in some ways has obscured the interpretation.

So what I want you to do is look at this as a whole. Everything links. Paul was developing an argument and this is just a continuation of that argument. The context of marriage family and work are things we can all relate to and this is the context that Paul says this is where you live out. What it means to be a follower of Jesus. So those are the problems. family is a intimate setting for practicing what it means to be in Christ because our family sees all the warts all the misbehavior. When I first got saved I was pretty hardcore for Jesus and was reading my Bible every day ten chapters a day that'll melt your brain because that's what the book that led me to Christ said to do. And I had very specific views on a whole host of topics upon which I was not qualified to speak. And I was very obnoxious about projecting on other people how I thought they should live.

[21 : 59] I had really gotten good at being a Pharisee. Well my brothers you're still the same guy that before January of 1980 and that caused conflict that caused doubt but it also caused a context for me to begin to live out what it means to follow Jesus.

I can remember somewhere hearing exactly this thing that your family knows the truth about you better than anybody else. And that's the context in which you learn how to relate to other people in a godly way and you also discover what it means and how God relates to you.

So let's look at this first thing these first two commands. Paul says wives be subject to your husbands or submit to your husbands is the language that Paul uses in Ephesians 5.

Husbands love your wives so what's this idea this overlap between submission and love and this is part of what's so important we need to look at them both we have to take them together.

Now one of the things that has evolved in American Christian family culture is a military interpretation of submission. There was a very very popular teacher back in the 70s that though he has been thoroughly and disastrously discredited his teaching remains.

[23 : 24] You guys many of you who have been around a while remember the name Bill Gothard. You remember the Institute of Basic Youth Conflicts. His logo was a fist pressing down on the family and the fist was the dad.

It was this very militaristic I'm the dad you're the wife and kids do what I say. Because submit to me that was the view and a lot of Christian families adopted that view because there's some things that are attractive about it.

For a husband he just tells I lay down the law I'm the law giver just call me Moses and we know how well that worked. I'm just Moses and for women it's actually in some respects it's easier because you could abdicate responsibility well my husband said to do this stupid thing so it's on him.

But it was disastrous for families. Interestingly enough Bill Gothard never married and had no children. So sometimes you want to check your sources.

But that model is not what's being talked about here. Submission and love are interwoven together. They go together.

[24 : 36] You can't have one without the other. A better picture of the relationship between a husband and wife is a waltz. I have a good friend who's actually here with us last week that has been taking dance classes I don't know for probably 10 years.

She's really good. I wouldn't know because she would never dance for me because she can't handle the damage to her feet if I was to dance with her. I have two left feet. So I called Carla and just said hey talk to me about dance.

Talk to me about the relationship between the partners and the lead and the follower because what started our conversation was why did Paul this question why did Paul start with wives?

Why did he start with husbands? If they're supposed to lead if they're supposed to be the head which he says in Ephesians 5 why did he start with the wives? Well in a dance the lead the man

offers himself.

He invites the woman to come in to join him in the dance. But she has a choice to make. She can say no. The first step I think is actually the wife choosing the woman choosing I will choose to dance with this man.

[25 : 53] And it's a great picture of what happens in our relationships as husbands and wives. As the courtship progresses the man is trying to woo this woman to demonstrate that he's an adequate lead.

That he can do what's necessary and she chooses to submit to him. And then the metaphor of dance really develops because there's things that they need to know separately and then together. They each really need to know themselves. They need to know their level of skill. What am I capable of? How well do I know the dance? How well do I know the music? But they need to know themselves.

In the case of a marriage or any relationships, we need to know vertically where we stand with God, who we are, what is our identity? Are we in Christ? Have we embraced the reality of what that means?

And then the person needs to know the dance itself. What am I being called to? What does it look like to follow Jesus? And then lastly, they actually need to know their partner.

[26 : 57] Carla was telling me that I can't remember what the context was, but there's a type of dance event, might be a competition where when a man approaches a woman and says, will you dance with me?

It's not one dance, it's four. The first three are figuring things out. What is the level of skill of the two partners? How do they move? How do they communicate? And then they're actually not enjoying dancing until the last dance.

Because at that point, they've discovered enough about each other that it flows, and their bodies move together, and it becomes art. And they're able to move within the confines of the dance, but also improvise, because there's always something that goes wrong, just like life.

And so they're learning to dance together. The man leads, he initiates a movement, but the woman has to choose to submit to that leadership.

She has to trust that he won't hurt her. What if it's something involving a spin or a movement that's abrupt, and she doesn't have the confidence that he won't drop her on her head? Well, she may stiffen up.

[28 : 02] And so there's this back and forth of he invites her to the next move, she responds in kind, and they move, and if they're good, art develops, but it's a progressive learning of how they relate together.

It's a choice to lead and follow. And it's two people operating together. It's not one saying, I'm in charge, you need to submit, or the other one saying, you need to be a worthy leader because you're not giving me clear direction.

It's them learning together. Now, where does love fit into that? Love is essential. Men are told repeatedly to love their wives.

Why? Why? What do we know about love? Read 1 Corinthians 13. Love has a very high regard for the beloved.

Hope's the best, believes all things, is focused on the well-being of the beloved. He assumes the best about the beloved.

[29 : 11] We need to have that mindset, men, toward our wives. Love takes initiative. You see that at the cross. When did God demonstrate his love for us?

When? Tell me. What were we? Say it. He's enemies. What else? Sinners. What else? Dead.

Love initiates. We need to initiate, men, to love our wives. Love knows the beloved. Knows what the beloved needs.

Knows what the beloved likes. Knows where the beloved is weak. Peter actually says, and we'll get back to this, Peter actually says that men, we should love our wives acknowledging the fact that she is weaker than we are.

Part of that Bill Gothard mess was to really demean women and to take weak in its absolutely worst possible meaning. Weak is not a value judgment.

[30 : 15] Weak is just an expression of fact. Men are physically stronger. But the weakness of our wives helps us to be gentle.

By listening to Kara saying, whoa, dude, a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down, not a stick. And some of that is my wife has to think about, I'm more vulnerable.

I have to be aware of danger around me that you're too dumb to see. And so that's part of the dance. And so in recognizing the weakness of our partner, we're not demeaning our partner.

No, quite the opposite. A healthy man protects and stands in her defense. That's what we're talking about here. And I dare say that type of a person is pretty easy to submit to because his first thought is what is best for the one I'm loving, the one I'm leading.

Now there's another piece of this. Jesus talked very clearly about what leadership looks like in the church. Do you remember? Because the Pharisee, or the disciples, right after Jesus said, hey guys, I'm going to die.

[31:37] Oh, bummer. Hey, which of us is the greatest? Talk about tone deaf. And Jesus sat them down, put a child in their midst, and said, the greatest among you has to be like a child.

In the new paradigm, in the body of Christ, leaders serve. You don't take the head of the table, you take the tail. You're at the lowest seat.

You are a servant. And I got to thinking, what is a servant? A servant, at its most basics, a servant's job is to clear obstacles out of the way so the one served can do their most important things.

to be all that they are meant to be. So if I'm serving you, my job is to bring things to you that will help you and to get things out of the way that will be obstacles to you.

That's what a servant does. A servant does the dishes and cleans the house. I am not talking about family roles here. I'm just talking about domestic help. Do not misunderstand what I'm saying.

[32:40] But if you hire somebody to come in and do those roles, why are they doing that? So that you've got freedom to do more important things. That's what a servant does.

So, husbands love your wives takes on a whole new meaning. The military picture goes right out the window and is replaced again by the dance.

I'm leading. I'm studying my partner to know how we can best flow together and to experience that movement that's beautiful, that's glorifying to God, and that makes my partner feel safe and seen and beautiful.

That's the idea that is the Christian plan for, God's plan for marriage. But that's also God's plan for us. That's why this is a metaphor, it's a picture.

We need to learn to dance together, to resolve conflict, to love each other to this degree, and to submit to one another.

[33:39] years ago, I was, I've been married a few weeks, a guy that I worked with said to me, hey, you Christians, doesn't the Bible say wives submit to your husbands? And I said, yes it does.

He said, what's up with that? That sounds horrible. And I said, well, let's talk about it. And let me tell you, I want you to have these types of experiences.

I was 21 years old. the Holy Spirit just said, hey, I got this. There are times where you're going to be asked questions by people that you're going to think, I don't have any idea.

I am so far out of my depth. Let the Holy Spirit speak through you. Because what I said to my friend Conrad was so brilliant. It could not have possibly come from a 20-year-old's head or heart.

God was speaking. Because I said, Conrad, first of all, the verse immediately before wives submit to your husbands is submit to one another. First of all. Second of all, it says, wives submit to your husbands.

[34:41] Husbands are the head of the household. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. And I said to this guy, he was a nominal Catholic, said, how did Christ demonstrate his love for people, for his church?

And even this guy who's never, hadn't been to church in years said, oh, that's easy. He died on the cross for them. Exactly. So, if I'm loving my wife like that, do you think she'd have a problem submitting to me?

He said, oh, not at all. Think about that. That's what we need to recognize. That's a model for the relationship that we have with one another. So, if you look back at verse 12 of chapter 3, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving each other.

These are the characteristics of a Christ follower, of someone who's becoming more like Jesus because we're following his way. And where we get to practice it and experience it and grow in it is primarily in marriage, but it's also a model for us in all of our relationships.

There is a lot of similarity between the marriage relationship and all of our relationship. I want you to think about that. Contemplate it. Allow that to sink into your head. Now, real quickly, I want to point out two things that Paul says.

[35 : 57] First of all, to the wives, be subject to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. That was another problem with the Bill Gothard model is that women were to submit themselves to their husbands, no questions asked.

As is fitting in the Lord is a very important qualifier. What does that mean? First of all, it's behave like a Christian wife. As is fitting in the Lord, Paul talked about one of the consequences. this is chapter one, verse nine, where the outcomes of being filled with the knowledge of the will of God was that we would walk worthy of his calling. We would walk in a way that was worthy of someone who claimed to be a follower of Jesus.

Well, that's the exact same idea here. Walk with your husband, submitting to him in a way that a Christ-following woman would. That's one part of it.

The next one is not as a doormat. Sometimes we husbands say things that are just like, I don't know about that. I don't think that's a good idea.

[37 : 03] And one of the ways that we serve one another is saying, hey, there's a red flag here. I don't think that's a good idea. You really shouldn't do that. Wives, we need that. Men are more prone to risky bonehead behavior.

You know, you hear the story about some guy's doing something and he says, hey, here, hold my beer. Which precedes something really, really dumb. Right? Well, we don't outgrow that.

As is fitting in the Lord is sometimes we need to say, time out. Can we stop? I'm not sure this is a good idea. That's not unsubmitive. I used to ask teenagers when I was a youth pastor, we would study the Old Testament.

If you recall the story, David is fleeing. No, no, David isn't king yet. And he sends his guys to this man named Nabal. And Nabal's a rough character and David says, you know, we've been protecting your flocks.

We've been a shield from the bandits around you. You know, it's feast time. Could you hook us up with some food? And Nabal says, ah, who's David? I don't know this clown. I don't know who he is.

[38 : 13] I don't even know he's protecting us. This sounds more like a protection racket to me. No, you can't have anything. And then Abigail, his wife, hears the news, realizes that Nabal really stepped in it, and goes and talks to David, apologizes, sends them food, and Nabal subsequently dies.

And I used to ask the kids, so is Abigail a submissive wife? Was she? Yes. She was looking out for her husband's best interests. That's part of what is being fitting in the Lord.

And then the third one is consistent with your own temperament, gifts, and calling. Remember the dance metaphor? Sometimes in the relationship, not sometimes, always, in the relationship between a husband and wife, part of what dictates what we do as individuals is affected by our partner's gifts and abilities.

They're not able to do what we do. They're not able to enter into it. They're not able to follow. Well, I think part of fitting in the Lord, and this is together, the couple needs to discern, okay, this is my calling, husband, this is my calling, wife, but what is our calling?

And where are our separate callings, perhaps incompatible, and we have to figure out how it fits together so that we're serving God in a meaningful way separately because we spend a lot of our lives apart, but also together.

[39 : 44] So as is fitting in the Lord, is in a way that you don't completely submerge your identity in your husband. You have a personality that God gave you.

You have gifts. What is God doing with those gifts? I'll give you a quick example, then we'll move on. As you know, I grew up in the Plymouth Brethren movement which has a very, dare I say, rigid view of the roles of men and women, one of which is who is allowed to speak and who is not.

Well, this couple we knew, Jim was a gifted doctor, he was a professor at the University of Portland, and they traveled all over the world so that Jim could teach missionary doctors the latest techniques in ear, nose, throat surgery.

That was his thing. He was a terrible speaker. He was an elder at our church, but nobody wanted him up in the pulpit, including him. But his wife, Pat was a great speaker.

She could take God's word and unfold it and unpack it in a way that was just compelling. You could listen to Pat speak and go, oh yeah, I totally understand what's being said here. So how did they reconcile that with their understanding of how God designed the church?

[41:00] Did God make a mistake giving these speaking gifts to Pat instead of to Jim? No. They figured it out. And Pat had a vibrant, strong ministry talking to women on the mission field, who by the way, are in the majority, about their walk with God.

And so she was able to fulfill her gifts, while also at the same time honoring how God had structured their family and the way that their gifts were to be expressed. So when it says that you were to submit to your husband as is fitting in the Lord, God gave you your gifts.

Figure out how to use them. Some of it supporting your husband, some of it separate, some of it as equals, but you too need to figure it out as husband and wife. And again, that's true across the board.

This is a picture of how we're supposed to live as Christian people, as we submit to one another. And of course, husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. Romans 12, Paul calls out two specific types of gifts and gives a warning.

And he only does this with two. Those of you who serve, do so without complaining. Those of you who lead, with diligence. Well, I can tell you as a man who's gifted in leadership, and a lot of the books on my shelf back there address this issue, leaders are sloppy.

[42:24] We tend to be very goal-oriented, and we trust that the force of our personality and our energy will kind of sweep under the rug the details that we don't take care of.

And so Paul said, leaders, you need to be diligent. Well, the same way, servants, people who are naturally bent to be in a serving position, selflessly give, generously give, but eventually people take advantage, they take them for granted, and they get angry.

Rightfully so. But, it's important for that servant or the husband to recognize, I have been called to love my wife.

That love is unconditional on her response. That love is simply a matter of following Jesus and living out the life of Jesus in relationship with my wife. So, she may not be doing what I need her to do.

Well, you need to talk about it. You need to work it out. And not get bitter, not get angry, not get short. But instead, be the leader. Talk it through.

[43:29] Figure out where the disconnect is. Here's the matter is, my experience, when we look in the mirror, gentlemen, it's our fault.

Oftentimes, we're the beginning cause. So, don't be embittered. Take the steps to prevent that, to work in concert with your spouse. I'm going to give you some tools. I want you to write this down. This is directly from the mouth of Tim Doffing. Hopefully, I remember him, because I just put myself on the spot. As we're talking with our spouse, there's three things about expectations, because that's what we're talking about here, is what are my expectations of my spouse?

The first thing is, they have to be reasonable. It goes back to me as a man respecting what my wife is gifted in, the fact that she's weaker than I am, in some respects.

I need to respect that. So my expectations of her need to be reasonable. I've seen couples where they're in the husband's blue collar, and he just expects his wife to pull the same load he does.

[44:29] That's not reasonable. So reasonable is the first one. The second one is spoken. Uh-oh. You mean I have to, she can't read my mind? He can't read my mind?

We can't read each other's minds? No, they need to be spoken. What are my expectations?

Because that helps us discern if they're reasonable. And the last thing is they need to be agreed upon. And oftentimes what comes out the other end of that conversation is not what went in.

Because we begin to understand there's nuance here that we didn't get on both sides. But that conversation will help you gentlemen not be embittered.

Will help us as we relate to each other not to be embittered. And then as we, as I'm not going to, I don't have time to go over it, but as we talk about children, you know, I've been using this metaphor of dancing.

You want to talk complicated dance? Just throw a kid in the middle of it. I'm sure Elias and Caitlin are going through that new steps in the dance. And actually, let's be fair, Ren and Gratia are too.

[45:35] There's this new complicating factor. That's life. And they have a will. And they like to improvise. That's kids. So, children, obey your parents.

This is fitting in the Lord. But fathers don't exasperate your children. It's the same ideas with our wives. We have to be aware of our kids, that they're younger, they don't know what we know, and we need to respect that and work around it.

When my oldest son was in high school, his grades dipped. And I did what every father has done since the invention of public school. You need to study more. And the look on his face, kind of bonk, hit me right in the forehead.

So I realized, Josiah, you don't know how to study, do you? He goes, no, in an exasperated tone.

So we laughed, and I sat down, I taught him how to study.

I had exasperated him in demanding, you need to study more, I know how to study, why don't you know how to study? Well, dad, I'm 17. You're 42.

[46:38] There's your answer. So we need to have that mindset with each other as well. It goes back to expectations. So to wrap it up, I'm going to land where I began.

This conversation about family is specifically to the roles that Paul's addressed, but it's also to every one of us as an illustration of what it means to be in Christ and to live that out.

And so what I want to encourage you to do is to talk it over with God. What does this mean? When it says to submit, how should I be submitting?

What does submission look like? What does fitting in the Lord look like for me in whatever context I'm in? What does it mean to love the people that I'm supposed to lead?

And how am I living that out? How do I avoid being embittered against the people who are supposed to follow me? How do I obey those who are over me in a way that's fitting to the Lord?

[47:42] How do I, as a leader, not exasperate the people who are following me? And trust me, all of us are in a leadership role. I want you to think about that. You need to take time, sit with God, open your Bible, and think, Lord, show me, what does this look like?

How does this work out in my life? And then do it. Do it with each other in community. Let's pray together. Father, thank you that we have your spirit living within us.

Thank you that your spirit guides us. Thank you that your spirit talks to us. Lord, I want to learn how to be more fully engaged in that dialogue, and I pray that for each one of us, that we would be dedicated to learning to discern and understand your voice and respond to it.

And in doing so, that you would be honored and our lives would be changed, that we would be more like Christ. God, thank you that we don't have to keep rules, that instead of keeping rules, you're showing us how to live in the way that you designed us to live.

Help us to see that become reality in our lives. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. may may may may may!

[48:59]