**Colossians 11.1**

Colossians 3:18-19

11/19/25 AM

**If you have your Bibles, go ahead and turn to Colossians 3.**

In this letter, Paul has not stopped talking about the new life found in Jesus Christ.

* At one time we were dead in our sins and rightly objects of God’s wrath.
* But through the shedding of his blood, Christ offers forgiveness for our sins and reconciliation with the Father.
* And if we are “in Christ” through faith, then we are united with him and participate in his death, resurrection, and new life.
  + As Paul has said, in Christ, we have new identity, a new home address, and a new set of clothes.
  + In Christ, we are no longer who we used to be. Everything has changed.
* And one of the most important changes brought about by our new life in Christ is our new relationships.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Author Max Anders writes, *“True spirituality deals with “real life.” The false teachers [in Colossae] promoted ideas which made spirituality a matter of “higher” knowledge and mystical experiences and severe self-denial… [but] Paul points believers in another direction. Spirituality is nothing grand, romantic, or impossible. It is submitting to the supremacy of Christ which will transform our character and revolutionize our relationships.”*[[2]](#footnote-2)

* And in our passage today, Paul will approach the most intimate human relationship, which is the bond between husbands and wives.[[3]](#footnote-3)
  + When a believer becomes a new woman, she becomes a different kind of wife. When a believer becomes a new man, he becomes a different kind of husband.

So, let’s pick up where we left off two weeks ago. To those who’ve been raised to new life in Christ, to those who’ve set their sights on the realities of heaven, to those who are putting off the old life and putting on the new, Paul says…

***Colossians 3:18-19 NLT*** *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord.* ***19****Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.*

**The first institution God founded on earth was the home (Gen. 2:18–25; Matt. 19:1–6).**

* So, marriage is God’s gift!
* Biblical marriage is a complete and comprehensive union, covenantal and lifelong, between one man and one woman and it’s a blessing from the Lord.

***Proverbs 18:22 NLT*** *The man who finds a wife finds a treasure, and he receives favor from the Lord.*

**But marriage is also purposeful.**

It’s not just a human institution, up for debate and adjustable to the currents and trends of our culture.

* It is a divine creation, intended to point to Christ—to display the beauty of a Savior who gives himself sacrificially for his bride and of his bride who yields herself gratefully back to him.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**So, one of the greatest things we can do as Christians today is to help to build godly Christian marriages, godly homes.[[5]](#footnote-5)**

* And in Colossians, I think Paul gives us at least a few instructions on how to this.
  + Thanks to Mark Jackson.

Three observations for building godly marriages and the first is really for those of you who have not yet married but aspire to be married. If we want to build godly Christian marriages…

1. **We need to marry a fellow believer.**

**If we want to do marriage God’s way and build a godly Christian marriage, then we need to marry a fellow follower of Christ.**

* If we read across the epistles, Paul’s picture of marriage is clearly based on a man who is actively pursuing Jesus and a woman who is actively pursuing Jesus.
  + Colossians 3:1

This is what Paul says in…

***1 Corinthians 7:39 NLT*** *A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if he loves the Lord.*

* Paul’s only stipulation for widows who choose to remarry is that they marry a man who loves the Lord, a fellow follower of Christ.

PAUSE

One of the biblical phrases used to describe the union between a husband and wife is the phrase one flesh.[[6]](#footnote-6) All the way back in Genesis we find this phrase…

***Genesis 2:22-24 NLT*** *Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.* ***23****“At last!” the man exclaimed. “This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken from ‘man.’”* ***24****This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.*

***Matthew 19:4-6 NLT*** *“Haven’t you read the Scriptures?” Jesus replied. “They record that from the beginning ‘God made them male and female.’* ***5****And he said, ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’* ***6****Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.”*

***1 Corinthians 6:15-16 NLT*** *Don’t you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never!* ***16****And don’t you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, “The two are united into one.”*

**So, clearly, when a man and woman get married, they become one flesh.**

* Physically, when we have intimacy, we come together and we’re one flesh.
* This phrase expresses a physical intimacy that is encouraged by God only within the God-given boundaries of heterosexual marriage.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**But the union is not only physical but also it is emotional, mental and spiritual.[[8]](#footnote-8)**

So, church, thinking about what Paul has declared up to this point—that if we are in Christ, then we have a completely new identity.

* It’s as if we have died and there’s a new us, not even us, Christ in us.
* That is our primary identity.
  + Not Americans, republicans, democrats, Tennesseans.
* Who we are at the core, is followers of Jesus. Paul says that comes before everything else.
* **So, if that’s our identity, then wouldn’t we want to marry someone who is also a follower of Christ?**
  + Wouldn’t we want to say, “we’re not just one flesh physically and relationally, but also, spiritually?”

PAUSE

**So, for my young people in the room, my teenagers, or anyone who aspires to marry, as you begin dating or looking for your spouse, if you follow Jesus, this should be criteria number one—do they follow Jesus.**

* If the answer is no, then, I don’t think you need to enter into a dating relationship with that person.
* And that’s not to say that we should treat the lost unkindly or that we shouldn’t love them.
  + **But as Paul instructs us in Colossians, and all his letters, we must be careful how we live.** 
    - Because if the enemy gains a foothold in our lives by tempting us to compromise our faith, he will make significant strides toward undermining our relationship with the Lord.

Just think of Paul’s instruction in…

***2 Corinthians 6:14 ESV*** *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*

Scholars believe that most likely, Paul was alluding to Deuteronomy 22:10, which prohibited the yoking together of oxen and donkeys.[[9]](#footnote-9) The command reads…

***Deuteronomy 22:10 NLT*** *“You must not plow with an ox and a donkey harnessed together.*

Now, that probably sounds like a strange law to us, but such a mixture of animals would not be advisable because of their differing strength, gaits, and temperaments.[[10]](#footnote-10)

* + Pushing the sled.
  + That’s part of what Moses was talking about here.
* But even more so, this prohibition taught Israel through symbolism that they were to remain pure by separating themselves from the surrounding pagan nations.[[11]](#footnote-11)
* A mixed yoke speaks of an unwholesome partnership, an attempt to find common ground when none in fact exists.[[12]](#footnote-12)
* That’s what Paul is pointing out here.

As one author put it, *“Paul has in mind an alliance with spiritual opposites, and the image of harnessing oneself to someone who is spiritually incompatible evokes images of spiritual disaster. Those who bear Christ’s yoke (Matt 11:30) cannot share it with others who deny Christ.”*[[13]](#footnote-13)

* When a believer and an unbeliever yoke themselves together, one is going to pull back the other.

**So, if you have not married yet and you aspire to marry and you are a follower of Christ, I challenge you, encourage you, marry a fellow believer.**

PAUSE

But maybe you’re here today and you would say, *“Pastor, it’s too late. I’m a Christian and I married a non-Christian, or I became a Christian after I got married. What should I do?”*

* Well, you need to be faithful to your spouse, faithful to your marriage.
* Once we enter marriage, God’s will, is that we stay faithful to our spouse.
* So, we need to be true to our vows and love our spouse and set a Christlike example of love and servanthood and we need to pray for our spouse, that they would come to know Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Raymond

So, it can happen and we thank God when it does.

But, if you have not married yet and you aspire to marry and you are a follower of Christ, I challenge you, encourage you, marry a fellow believer.

A second instruction and this is for those who are already married. If we want to build godly Christian marriages…

1. **We must die to ourselves in marriage.**

I don’t know if there’s any piece of advice or instruction more important for husbands and wives than this: we must die to ourselves in marriage.

* We must die to our own will, preferences, and selfish tendencies and desires.

PAUSE

Over the last 50 years in America, we have seen a reduction in marriages to the point that marriage is now at a historic low.

* Less and less people are getting married, more and more people are living together apart from marriage, and more people are getting married much later in life.

**What’s brought about the shift in views and actions regarding marriage?**

One of the many factors is that our culture tells us that we have the “right” to pleasure and ease and personal fulfillment, getting what we want, when we want it and how we want it—just living our own truth.

* This is the mantra of our culture which does not jive with the reality that marriage involves dying to ourselves.
* Bluntly stated, one of the main reasons marriage is on such a decline is that marriage does not let life be about me.
* Marriage involves dying to ourselves.

Look again…

***Colossians 3:18-19 NLT*** *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord.* ***19****Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. [Paul adds in Ephesians]…*

* Husbands, love your wives.
* Wives, submit to your husbands.
* What do those two commands have in common?
  + They both involve dying to ourselves!

**Husbands, we cannot love our wives as Christ loves the church unless we die to ourselves. It’s a sacrificial love.**

* It’s a love that involves giving ourselves away for the good of our brides.
* It involves crucifying our flesh and resolving to be faithful to her, not yielding to the temptations of lust, anger, and pride.[[14]](#footnote-14)
* It means a call to complete self-sacrifice.
* It involves doing good and loving our brides, even when she may not be returning the favor, remembering that Jesus went to the cross to die for us while we were yet sinners.
* It involves a love that puts our wives’ needs above our own, always seeking the best for her, pursuing her, and lifting her up.

If we are to love our wives as Christ loves the church, we must remember that Jesus dedicated his life to the establishment and welfare of the church. He ultimately gave his life for the church.

* To that degree, and in that quality, Paul says, we are to love our wives.
* We are to give ourselves up for her. We are to dedicate our lives to the physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare of our brides.
* Following the example of Christ, we are to give our wives not only all that we have but also all that we are.[[15]](#footnote-15)

PAUSE

Husbands, love your wives—involves dying to ourselves.

**And, wives, you cannot submit to your husbands as the church submits to Christ unless you die to yourselves.** **It involves sacrificial love.**

Now I know we can get tense when reading this verse or similar verses elsewhere, so, let’s just make a couple of comments about submission

* 1. **Submission is for all Christ-followers.**

The word means “to arrange under.” It was a military term that referred to the subordination of soldiers to those of higher rank. For the good of all, good soldiers turn loose of their own agendas.

* And so, it is with Christ-followers. Following the example of our savior, we serve one another. We arrange ourselves under one another.
* If we look at the Ephesians passage with similar instructions, Paul begins with the reminder that submission is for all Christ-followers.
  1. **Submission does not mean being a doormat.**

The equality of women and men before the Lord, of which Paul wrote in Galatians 3:28, has not been retracted.[[16]](#footnote-16)

* So, the ‘submission’ here is not that of the slave, or the doormat.

And in context, there’s nothing demeaning about this call for wives to submit to the loving leadership of their husbands, for her submission is not to be an unthinking obedience to a husband’s rule but rather a grateful acceptance of his care.

* To quote Markus Barth: ‘The submission to, and respect for the husband, to which the wife is specifically admonished … is by no means the submissiveness of a housecat or a crouching dog … Paul … is thinking of a voluntary, free, joyful and thankful partnership, as the analogy of the relationship of the church to Christ shows.’ Whenever the husband’s headship mirrors the headship of Christ, then the wife’s submission to the care of his love, far from detracting from her womanhood, will positively enrich it.[[17]](#footnote-17)
  1. **Submission is not a license for abuse or control.**

**As Mark Jackson put it, submission is not a smokescreen for abuse and there is no place in the KOG for domestic abuse.**

The husband, though given a role of authority, is not to treat his wife as a “subject.” The husband’s call is to sacrificial love.

* And again, the model for this is Christ himself.[[18]](#footnote-18)

So, submission does not suggest slavery or servitude, nor is it a pass for abuse or being harsh.

* And certainly, submission never calls for husbands to make their wives submit.[[19]](#footnote-19)
* That’s not the command.

PAUSE

In preaching a text like this, I think it’s helpful to hear from some mature Christian women about the application/meaning of marital submission. So, from the conversations I’ve had, respectful submission to a husband’s loving leadership…

* It involves partnership, discussion about decisions regarding the family, making decisions together.
  + Katie’s insight.
* It involves supporting your husband in prayer.
  + Praying together.
* Encouraging husbands to lead.
  + Encouragement from a wife is unbelievably powerful in the heart of a man.[[20]](#footnote-20)
* It involves friendship. Being friends with your husband. Finding things that you like to do with one another. There needs to be laughter, there needs to be joy and there needs to be friendship in the marriage.[[21]](#footnote-21)
* It involves not talking badly about your husband to others.

PAUSE

**Husbands, love your wives and wives, submit to your husbands—the commonality is dying to ourselves.**

PAUSE

Again, I know this goes against the mantra of our culture.

But to quote author Matthew Richard, “marriage is not a curse to avoid or put off for a better time. It is not something that ends dreams and ruins lives. It certainly is not a ball and chain…We must remember that Satan continually attacks marriage. Our enemy can never create but only pervert God’s gifts. So, this he does with marriage.

* He attempts to distort our perception of marriage so that we will stay away from it.
* He holds self-love over sacrificial love as the ideal.
* He strips sex out of wedlock and then sets it loose to cheapen it.
* He entices us to place other priorities above marriage, as if marriage is some old-fashioned thing.
* He tries to convince us that marriage is just too inconvenient.”

PAUSE

**Church, marriage involves dying to ourselves, which can be tough…**

The late Ruth Bell Graham, wife of evangelist Billy Graham, was once asked if she had ever contemplated divorcing her husband. She replied, *“No, but I have considered murder a few times.”*

Marriage may be tough, and it involves dying to ourselves, but marriage is also a good gift, and a tool God uses to bring about our sanctification.

PAUSE

If we do not die to ourselves, our marriage will not last or at least, it will not be a God glorifying marriage.

Lastly…

1. **Don’t forget the big picture.**

The Bible is full of pictures and metaphors that God has given to help us understand who he is and what he has done for us.

* And in the beginning when God wanted to reveal his heart for humanity, he started with the picture of marriage.
  + But the picture doesn’t stop in Genesis with Adam and Eve, it continues throughout the OT with the people of Israel, and then ultimately in the invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb, where the church is pictured as the bride of Christ.

Marriage is not merely a human institution… It is a divine creation, intended to project onto the screen of the human imagination the beauty of a Savior who gives himself sacrificially for his bride and of his bride who yields herself gratefully back to him.[[22]](#footnote-22)

**In other words, marriage points beyond itself.**

With marriage, God gives us a picture! Or, rather, our marriages are supposed to be living pictures of God’s love and will for humanity, which is embodied in Christ.

* Our marriages are to be a display of the gospel.[[23]](#footnote-23)
  + This is why the instructions are rooted and grounded in what Jesus has done for us and our relationship with him.[[24]](#footnote-24)

PAUSE

In our culture today, the purpose of marriage is for two people to make one another happy.

* It’s what sociology has termed a pure relationship.
* It’s not pure in the sense of moral purity, a pure relationship is when individuals decide to carry on maintaining a relationship because it meets their emotional and sexual needs. The relationship will only be successful if the individuals continue benefitting from the relationship.[[25]](#footnote-25)

But this understanding of marriage just terminates on itself. And if a marriage exists for no other purpose than to make two people happy, it’s no wonder that…

* Marriage is at an all-time low, and that the God-given boundaries are being attacked.

**If the starting point for marriage is me, then I am starting at the wrong place. Marriage exists for Christ’s glory.**

* And if we’re going to make sense of marriage for ourselves and our children, we’re going to have to recapture the larger purpose of marriage as a sign of God’s love for his people.

So, we need to let our marriages be an offering of worship as we love each other, forgive each other, and serve each other. We need to remember that God has given us marriage to understand who he is and what he’s done for us and that there’s a greater purpose.

* May we let our marriages serve as an aroma of Christ before a watching world.[[26]](#footnote-26)

PAUSE

Church, if we are in Christ, then everything has changed—including our relationships.

* How have our relationships changed since coming to Christ?

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2. Max Anders, [*Galatians-Colossians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc69ga?ref=Bible.Col3.18&off=6&ctx=le+of+Christ.%0a3%3a18.+~The+arena+of+relatio), vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 332. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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4. R. C. Ortlund Jr., [“Marriage,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/ndbt?ref=Page.p+654&off=3848&ctx=more+sublime+level.+~Marriage+is+not+mere) in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 654. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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7. Manser, [*Dictionary of Bible Themes*](https://ref.ly/logosres/dicbblthemes?hw=one+flesh&off=652&ctx=elations+Ro+1%3a26-27%0a~One+flesh+expresses+). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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9. Richard L. Pratt Jr, [*I & II Corinthians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc67co?ref=Bible.2Co6.14a&off=484&ctx=RSV).+Paul+probably+~alluded+to+Deuterono), vol. 7, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Eugene H. Merrill, [*Deuteronomy*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac04?ref=Bible.Dt22.10&off=449&ctx=cholars+have+noted%2c+~such+a+mixture+of+an), vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 300. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Pratt Jr, [*I & II Corinthians*](https://ref.ly/logosres/hntc67co?ref=Bible.2Co6.14a&off=632&ctx=em+odd+to+us+today%2c+~this+prohibition+tau), 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
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19. Richard R. Melick, [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](https://ref.ly/logosres/nac32?ref=Bible.Col3.18&off=1237&ctx=luntarily.+The+term+~does+not+suggest+sla), vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 311. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
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24. https://medium.com/koinonia/the-meaning-of-marriage-f1c6555d1497 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/topics/pure-relationship#:~:text=A%20pure%20relationship%20is%20when,and%20they%20benefit%20from%20it. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
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