

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Pursuing God in Our Family Colossians 3:18-21**

Today we will be dealing with Colossians 3:18-21. As we sang about loving one another, the family is a great place to practice love for one another.

There is an adage that says compassion grows with distance. The further people are away from us the easier it is to have compassion, the closer they are to us the more difficult and challenging it can be and our family is one place we need to be considering how to apply love.

So Colossians 3:18-21 is where we are. I'll read it to you and then we will look at the context. The context is important.

Colossians 3:18-21, "Wives, be subject to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. (19) Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. (20) Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. (21) Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart."

Now there is not a whole lot of words here when it comes to pursuing God in your family. Now you think of all the conferences that are given and all the books that have been written and the magazines that are published, it goes on and on and on about the family, you would think that we would have a lot more information given to us then just these verses. So either something has been left out or these must be pretty important. I'd consider these must be pretty important.

Also, I think that we can say the rest of the Scriptures also apply to the family, not just these verses that are directly applicable. To look at the context, we have to appreciate what comes before this so we can apply this as well.

As we looked to Colossians chapter 1, we saw Jesus, who Jesus was. We were grounded in the truth by knowing who Jesus is, that He is the creator, God Himself, and that He is the reconciler, He reconciled man to Himself.

Then Colossians chapter 2 guarded the church from error. The church was guarded from error, the philosophies of man, the things of this world that want to lead us astray and give us false teaching that deludes us and deceives us so we need to be careful. And careful in terms of our family, not to buy into ideas that delude us.

Then in Colossians Chapter 3, last week, we saw the church growing in relation to God. We concluded this section last week because we need to grow in relation to God if we are going to be in a position to do what we will look at this week, which is guiding the church in relation to others.

This will be the last section. From Colossians 3:18 through the end of chapter 4 we will look at how Paul wrote in guiding the church in their relationship with other people.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

But we have to know that in order to live well in the context of other people, it is dependent upon having a good relationship with the Lord.

It is imperative to understand Colossians 3:1-17 before we can begin to apply this in any way, including our family. If you have been raised up with Christ, we need to be pursuing Him, seeking Him, setting our minds on the things above not on the things on earth, and putting off sin and putting on righteousness. We need to have that internal change within us so that it can manifest itself in our relationships.

There is a town that in the 60's that had well over 1,000 people, maybe a couple thousand people, in Pennsylvania. This town is named Centralia, I don't know if you have heard of it. It was a normal small town. This town has changed over the years. These days it looks quite different now. Something happened. What happened between the 60's and now is an incident on Valentine's Day in 1981.

On Valentine's Day in 1981 a fellow about 12 years old named Todd Domboski was playing in his grandmother's back yard and the earth gave way underneath him and he began to fall into a hole. Fortunately, he grabbed hold of some tree roots and his older cousin came to save him. Well, he would have fallen 150 feet into a very extremely hot pit, which changed the whole town's perception of itself.

Twenty years before that time there was a trash dump that was set on fire. That trash dump caught fire to some coal that was beneath the ground. The fire was put out on the surface, but beneath the ground the coal continued to smolder, and that continued for 20 years. It created quite a problem beneath the town that didn't become as evident as it really was until this incident.

So the result was the thriving town changed, and now it continues to smolder and who knows when it will stop smoldering, maybe when all the coal has been eliminated. There has been millions and millions and millions of dollars been poured into trying to put out the fire, and it hasn't happened yet. Though there are very few people left in this town, the few people who are left, want to save their homes.

How does this relate to the family? Well, I think in families we can have things happen, we can have decisions made, we can have ways that we can begin believing and conducting ourselves that don't really evidence themselves until many years later. Things begin to happen, problems begin to occur and its because of what we've have done earlier. In other words, we reap what we sow and if we are not careful we will end up on a smoldering pit that will implode. Better yet that we sow righteousness so that we later can reap righteousness rather than we sow evil selfishness and we reap destruction.

We are going to look this morning first at the problems that families can have. There are four groups addressed in this text.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

First the wives. The wives problems in verse 18 are wives can become independent; they can live their own life. I don't know if you know this, the divorce rate in the United States, (if you only count the divorces that are contested, where not both people want this to happen) wives divorce their husband more than husbands divorce their wives. In fact, two-thirds of the divorces that are contested are instigated by the wives.

This isn't true just in the United States. In China, 70 percent of the divorces are instigated by the wives because the wives can seek to become independent, live their own lives. Not just in divorce but even in the context of the family, wives can seek to live their own lives and to have their finances separate, have the control of the family separate, kind of leave this guy out into the landscape.

You can sympathize with these wives because the husband's problem is that husbands can become selfish, not loving their wives but loving themselves instead. So who wants this guy, let's just kind of push him off to the side because he is so selfish and he is creating so many problems.

So wives should not become independent, husbands should not become selfish, children can become rebellious. In fact, this is so common I think this is almost expected by people. People think that when your children become older they will just become rebellious, we will plan for this, we'll have all the fun time when they are younger because when they are teenagers its going to be really bad. So children can become rebellious but they don't need to be, they are to be obedient.

Then of course fathers can become provoking and become like drill sergeants trying to mold the family into their image and dog-gone-it, it's going to happen whether you like it or not. They can exasperate their children.

These are the problems that tend to happen time and time again, for wives, husbands, children, fathers, but there is a prescription given. There are ways that the family should be conducting itself and first we are going to be looking at the wives. Look at how the wife should be conducting herself in relationship to her husband. Verse 18, "**wives be subject to your husbands as is fitting to the Lord.**"

Now when I say this I know it is not politically correct, I know that our community is not going to think this is a very good idea. They'll think, "shouldn't it be a fifty-fifty proposition not wives subjecting yourselves to your husbands, that doesn't seem right." Well we need to address this.

This is what it says directly but first we are going to have to look at what subjection is and isn't. Incidentally, this word "subject" is the same word used in Romans 13:1 that speaks of being subject to the governing authorities. We are to subject ourselves, they have a role and we should acknowledge that. Here's what it's not, it's not inferiority, it doesn't mean that wives are lesser people, that they are not as intelligent, not as capable, don't make as good decisions or any of those things. In fact, I think that certainly in some homes the wives are better able at making decisions and yet the Scripture still applies, the wives are to be subject to their husbands.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

It really has nothing to do with abilities, but it's not unlimited, it has limitations. Like other types of submission when there is an earthly role for submission to take place, God is the ultimate authority and His will cannot be thwarted. When He says something is sinful, the husband can't say we are going to do this, God's authority supersedes his authority in that way. It's not unlimited, it has limitations to it and the husband cannot command his wife to sin.

Also, it's not devoid of discussion at all, it includes discussion, it works best with discussion, it's not just do this and we go off and do it. What leadership works good in that setting? It doesn't work good in that setting, we need discussion, that's good.

It's not an excuse to get out of all things I don't really want to do but I don't want to tell people I don't want to do it. "Oh, my rotten husband, he is forcing me to do this." It's not an excuse.

In fact, it's not apart from agreement, there can be agreement in submission, believe it or not, it's a good thing. It is not merely an act, its not some outward act that we just do even though we don't like it. It is this, and this is what subjection is, it is an attitude, it is not just an act, it is not just something we are being forced to, it's an attitude and let me help you see this. In life there are many, many judgments that we need to make and of course you like me think your judgment, your opinions are very good opinions and when somebody doesn't agree with your opinion you think they're wrong because they don't agree with your opinions. So what do you do with this?

Well if you have something clear and determinative like the Scripture then you can say this is what the Scripture says explicitly for all people, dogmatically. But for most things we've got judgments to make. So when you have judgments to make I think you can submit your point of view to another's point of view. This isn't just in context of marriage, this is in context of life. We can defer and think well that's not the way I think is best but maybe the other person has a better way of thinking about it and we can even come to agree and have a good attitude in that.

Let me give you this illustration, it's a sports one, I'm into sports illustrations. Let's say you are a football team and you are the right tackle and a play has been called to run a sweep over to the right side and you think we'll we need a first down and we have been passing the ball, well if you are going to run a half hearted sweep then you are not going to really throw the block because you think the play isn't going to work. How far is that going to get your team? And if the whole team has this kind of attitude, boy are you in trouble. Well, better to have a good attitude about it and to think, well this isn't the plan I would call but I'm going to believe this is the right plan and we are going to run this plan with our whole heart because we are going to make this work. That's having an attitude that submits and defers.

This is for everyone, this isn't just for the people who are the wives or the children. All of us have a need to submit in the context of society. We all live in a government that demands things of us. We all have other situations that will have things being demanded of us and if we are just going to demand our will and our opinions be done then we are going to be really not fulfilling the Lord's will. It is an expression of faith.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

I love this passage in Matthew 8:1-13. There's a story of a centurion who in his life he spoke with Jesus and he said he was a person who had people over him and people under him and he understood the authority that he existed within and he saw Jesus as being the ultimate authority over all and he approached Jesus in that way. And having that kind of understanding Jesus said this about that man that He hadn't seen anyone of such great faith in all of Israel. This type of understanding that there is a structure that God has designed and we should function within this structure is an expression of our faith and trust in God because subjection really ultimately is to God. It is to God because He is indeed able to control it all. That's what subjection is.

Now I want to point out here when this passage was penned the people who were being written to didn't do what you did in marriage or what you might do in the future in marriage where you pick your spouse. You made a careful decision. You thought this was the person for me to marry. They had arranged marriages. This was the culture back then and it actually worked. In fact, I lived for two summers of my life among people that practiced this. The people I lived with didn't meet each other until the day they were married and it worked, believe it or not, it worked.

So you could think that this was for something 2,000 years ago but it doesn't work very well now. I'd say that you have even more of a reason to be willing to work with passage because you chose to put yourself in this situation. Somebody else didn't choose it for you. So it really should speak to you.

In our life, in our marriage, we have a husband and a wife and hopefully your choices have led you to have some commonality between you so that there is some common goals, some common philosophies so you don't have to have discussions and disagreements. I hope this commonality is great not small. I hope that when you made these choices you are not working off of different value systems that would not be the best situation. But how to get there from where you are now, whatever situation you are in, is to see the middle as being God. If God and His will is at the center of your life and your husband's life then you have a greater ability, a much greater ability, to be able to be in subjection without being in struggle and difficulties.

So seek towards that, and if you can't seek towards that and both are not participating in this, if you have a husband that is not willing to submit to the Lord, still the words are true, ***“Wives be subject to your husbands as if fitting to the Lord.”*** It is fitting in the Lord because, if we have died, if we have been raised up with Christ then we are willing to serve others and not just serve ourselves. As Romans 15:1-2 speak, as Philippians 2:3-4 speak, if we have this kind of attitude then we are able to see our service to others as being service to the Lord and our goal in life isn't to just get our agenda, our desires, our plans accomplished by hook or by crook, we can be willing to serve other people and not just please ourselves. That is fitting to the Lord. That's the prescription for wives.

The husbands have even more to deal with. The responsibilities of husbands to the wives is to love, ***“Husbands love your wives and do not be embittered against them.”*** There are some limits to subjection but there are no limits to love. This word love is the unconditional love, not just the warm, fuzzy feelings of love but the Greek word is for unconditional love. So the husband's responsibilities are indeed greater.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Ephesians parallels this with these words, ***“Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.”*** That is how great the love is.

Now embittered, ***“do not be embittered against them.”*** The term bitter normally refers to a bitter taste, something having a really bitter taste. But here it has the meaning of resentment, having a resentful attitude. And husbands can end up being resentful if they are selfish, so the antidote is love. To not be resentful is accomplished through love.

And it's accomplished this way, if we love we are not going to be seeking our own will, our own desires but we are going to be seeking to help and to serve the other person. And if we are seeking to serve and to help the other person then because our plans and our goals are not being accomplished in the way that we would have wanted them to be accomplished because it is not important to us as it is to love, then we are not going to be tempted to be embittered, we are going to be loving. Love is the antidote.

The interesting the parallel between wives and husbands is this, just as wives must trust God's work in their husbands when they subject themselves to their husbands, they have to trust that the Lord is going to work, so husbands must trust God's work in their wives also, because if you are going to love your wife and seek to serve her you are going to obviously need to be taking account her interest and desires. As you do that you are going to have to trust that the Lord is working in the midst of this, that he has you together in marriage and must be working in this to further her desires toward the ultimate goal of holiness, so that Colossians 3 can be manifested in your marriage. That the wife and the husband can be together giving themselves up to the Lord, seeking holiness, having God's Word dwell within them.

So we both are in the same boat, husbands and wives. We both are needed to trust that God is at work in the other person's life. We both are in the same boat that we cannot be seeking to serve ourselves, we must be seeking to serve the other person and we must be putting their interest first. But the husband's responsibilities are greater because this love has no bounds to it. The wife's subjection has some limits to it.

Now we are going to move on to the children. The responsibility of the children to their parents, ***“Children be obedient to your parent in all things for this is well pleasing to the Lord.”***

Children often ask a question, in many years of college ministry this is something we needed to deal with, that is “when does this command no longer apply?” When can I move past this and I don't have to be obedient to my parents anymore?

There is no age here, we have come up with 18 or 21 years old and this is arbitrary. There is no age related time for when this doesn't apply anymore. Children, we can say this much I think, children has a sense that means dependent rather than descendant. It's not speaking just of descendancy, it's speaking of dependency.

That's why in Genesis 2, at the end of the chapter, we see the male and female when they come together they leave their mother and father and they cleave to one another. But, at what time does this occur?

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Well we can look at some other things, we can look at biology we can say at a certain time a child is clearly a child. Before they are able to reproduce themselves, they haven't reached an age of maturity yet, you can see they are a child, there's no question about that.

But in the New Testament times people were getting married and having children at a very young age, much younger than they are today. It was more likely in mid-teens, maybe even earlier that many people were betrothed. So when is the time when this doesn't apply?

I would suggest this, this doesn't apply when either marriage takes place or when the person stops acting like a child. So if you don't want to be obedient to your parents don't act like a child. Here's how you don't act like a child, you take responsibility for yourself, you move out of the home, you have a job, you live your life. If you want to take that kind of responsibility then you have the responsibility and you are no longer required to be obedient to your parents. But while you are living at home, it doesn't matter if you are my age, if you are dependent upon your parents, if you are dependent upon them for your support then you are acting like a child and you should be obedient to your parents when they tell you to do things. If you don't like it you have an option, to move out.

Those who are to submit, those who are choosing to stay home, should see their submission as to the Lord rather than to a person. We are not just submitting ourselves to our husbands or to our parents or in Colossians 3:23 to our masters or our employers, we are to submit to the Lord, ultimately. We need to see this submission as to the Lord rather than to just a person. As a child matures, my humble suggestion to you is we should seek for less dependency. We don't want dependency, we want an ability for our children to live in their own decisions, for the Lord, maturely. We should seek for less dependency and give more responsibility.

Now I know you are saying "I give plenty of responsibility. I tell them to mow the lawn, I tell them to take out the trash, they're still irresponsible." That's not the kind of responsibility I'm talking about, I'm talking about the responsibility for their lives, to make their decisions, and of course they are going to make decisions that we are going to consider foolish, because it is not our decisions it's their decisions. Also, they are younger than us and most likely they are not going to have learned the things of life that we have learned but we still should help them to take more responsibility and give them that freedom.

If we don't do that then we are tending to do verse 21 "***Fathers do not exacerbate your children so they may lose heart.***" Here's the responsibility of fathers to their children. The responsibilities of fathers are to not be provoking them so they may not lose heart, or get discouraged.

This is addressed to fathers but it's addressed to fathers as head of the household. As head of the household and I think it applies beyond fathers, it applies to parents. Hebrews 11:23 actually uses this word "fathers" meaning "parents" in the context of Moses there so I think we can see this as being particularly to fathers who have the responsibilities for the household but it bleeds over into the role of the mothers also in not exacerbate or provoke the children because we don't want discouraged children.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

We want encouraged children, here's how you accomplish this, you protect yourself from provoking your children. The antidote for exacerbating your children is love. To treat them as you would have wished to be treated. As you look back and you can see what would have been best for you, what would be best for you is not that you were molded and shaped by the image of your parents into whatever they wanted you to be, but you were able to follow the Lord in your opportunities and to develop according to what you felt was best and to apply the wisdom of God in your life. That hopefully is the love that we are imparting to our children, to treat them as we would have wished to be treated.

Now I am intentionally leaving these areas with the wives and the husbands and the children and the fathers not highly specific for you because I believe that the Scripture isn't that specific for a good reason. So that you can apply the wisdom of your situation and God's word in your situation, as you would feel fits, and in that I think God will mature you. Better than me saying well this is how we do it in our family or this is how somebody else does it in their family. Better for you to learn to mature in this as you go through the process of applying this in your context. That brings more maturity.

The last thing we will talk about is the potential for the family. The potential for the family is great. First it's great because there is potential for maturity within the family. Luke 6:40 speaks of the pupil and the teacher. A pupil will not be beyond his teacher but when he is fully trained he will be like his teacher. We have a great opportunity in the context of our family to influence other people for God. In that as we have that opportunity we can mature them, we can develop them, so God can really have a great work in their life.

Hopefully you have committed yourself to the path of Colossians chapter 3 and you are seeking the things above and you are setting your mind on the things above and as you are doing that that's changed your life and you've been putting off sin and putting on righteousness and you are now eager to impart that to your children so they can have the Word of God richly dwelling within them. And you are able to impart that to others in your family. There's a great potential for maturity.

But you know what, there's also potential for immaturity, mediocrity. The potential for mediocrity exists if we do not apply these things in Colossians 3. Revelation 3:15-16 Jesus speaks in very strong words about mediocrity, He says, ***"I know your deeds that you are neither cold nor hot, I would that you would be cold or hot so, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."***

Mediocrity is not very tasteful to the Lord.

So this kind of cultural Christianity that goes along life, living for ourselves, dabbling a little bit in the things that are religious, however it serves us, however it serves our family, really is not very tasteful to the Lord. It is mediocrity, and if we are going to live in mediocrity in our family, we won't just produce mediocre kids, we tend to produce worse than mediocre kids.

Here's what tends to happen, it's like a vaccination, when you vaccinate a person against a disease you give them a little bit of the real thing so they can build up a resistance against that so they will not get the real disease.



## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

Well, if we are operating in this level of mediocrity, if we kind of dabble in the Christian faith and we keep doing this, what are we teaching our children? We are teaching our children that Christianity is pretty mediocre. It really doesn't serve us any better than lots of other things, just kind of half-baked. And so they will come to some conclusion about Jesus Christ based on insufficient data, wrong data, and they will think that's not for me, who needs that, it's not worth it.

So we will end up with not just mediocrity we will end up with something worse than that, we can end up with children who, apart from God's grace overriding this situation, will think "well, I think I understand this, I think I know what Christianity is all about and it's not worth it." Mediocrity, there's a potential for mediocrity, we should avoid that potential, we should seek for maturity and have a positive influence on our children.

When that happens, when we seek for maturity, when we seek to apply these things of Colossians 3 into our lives and we are indeed focused on the Lord being in control of our lives and having His way in our family, here's what happens. There's a great potential for ministry. John 12:24 puts it this way, the words of Jesus, ***"Truly I say to you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains by itself alone but if it dies it bears much fruit."*** And He applies that to man and so if we as individuals will give our life for the Lord we will bear much fruit. If we are going to be selfish and cling onto our life for ourselves we will not bear much fruit. We will fall into the earth, we will die, we will fade away. The same thing is true with the family. If a family is going to live selfishly for themselves, everything that benefits themselves, then their family is going to be meaningless, it's going to pass away, it's not going to have a ministry to serve other people.

Rather by following the plan of Colossians 3 we commit ourselves, we set our mind on the things above, what happens in the family? We will not be so caught up in the things of our children so they can exceed in all the little events that we get them involved with, their activities that they can be the best at this or have the greatest time at that. We can have the most super vacations that we could ever dream of, or we could have the greatest houses and the greatest stuff surrounding our lives. Those things will not be the emphasis of our lives.

What will be the most important things for us? What will be the most important things for us in the context of our family will be serving God and accomplishing His ministry through our family so that our children will learn to serve others as God has served them and to give their lives for other people. What greater things can we do for our children than to impart a heart to build others up in the context of our family. So our family can be fruitful and multiply ministry rather than be consumed with ourselves.

Whatever is true with our individual selves is true with our family. If we are going to live for ourselves we are going to reap destruction, if we are going to live our family, for our families end, it's going to disappear. Let's live for something more lasting, let's live for something more fruitful and give our selves as a family to the Lord.

Lets pray together. Lord we ask that Your will would indeed be done in our lives that we can indeed be having a heart to submit to You, not just as individuals but as a family. That we can be turned toward You with our whole heart and we can not be so caught up in what the world cries out for us to value.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

That we cannot be deceived and deluded in these things but that we can in the context of our family serve You. And in serving You, serve others. We pray that You will accomplish Your work in us by Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.