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SPEAKER

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The Power Behind Christian Marriage

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Colossians 3:18-19



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My name's Dave, I'm one of the pastors and get to teach you this morning and it's a joy to do so. If you're joining us on live stream, we say good morning to you. If maybe a guest just checking us out for the first time, we are glad that you are here with us. We've been walking through a series called Rooted, and in this series we've been looking through the book of Colossians to grasp what it means to be grounded and who this person Christ is. In chapters one and two, we dove deeply into that and observed that together. And then really chapters three and four we'll be showing how this person, Jesus, who claims to be God, if he is God, impacts all arenas and areas of life. We know that Paul wrote this from a prison in Rome and there's a people, there's a town called Colossae.

The people that lived there are called the Colossians. And so as a church planter went and planted a church there, he was overwhelmed with some of the things that were happening in this small town. And so he goes to Rome, finds Paul in prison. Paul writes this and then another brother brings it back. And this is what we have in our lap this morning, which is amazing, or on your phone, if you've turned it on. And so Colossians 3, we're going to be looking at today how the gospel impacts marriage, and the next week how the gospel impacts parenting and then how the gospel impacts the workplace.

And so, I know there's a lot of anxiety and angst ahead of us with the week, but as Daniel reminds us and I'll remind us again, that there is great hope in Christ. When you overcome sin and a grave and you are resurrected, I'm going to lean in and listen to that man. And so, let's pray together and dive in. Father, we love you. Thank you for today. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your grace and your kindness to us. And God I pray and ask that you would open our eyes once again to see and behold the wonder and the beauty of your Son. So work in our hearts this morning, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

So Colossians 3, notice these nice light verses this week. Verse 18, "Wives submit to your husbands as is fitting to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." If you would flip with me just two books over, if you go back to the left, there's Philippians right before Colossians, and then right before Philippians is a book called Ephesians. In Ephesians Paul writes to another church plant and expands on thoughts with marriage. And so in chapter 5:31, and following listen to these words. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. And the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, that each one of you love his wife as himself and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

So, a nice light topic today. The culture is not encouraged with these passages, and if you're not encouraged with these passages, please feel free to email me this week. My email is brian@pray.org. Okay? So feel free to reach out to me. Love to respond. So here's what COVID has done. COVID has disrupted lives. It has been dangerous and it is real, and we understand that many lives have been lost. Our hearts are heavy for that. And we also are heavy this morning because we've read recently as a church that COVID is destroying marriages. Studies show that the divorce rate since COVID hit back in March has skyrocketed 35%. One study showed that 20% of marriages that are five months or less, they've just been married for five months, 20% of them

have ended.

We know 2021 we'll actually probably see more divorces, but they can't get to the courts because COVID has backed up a lot of the court cases even, one article said. The New York Times, there's an article that came out that says this about what we as Christians would value so much, both the family and marriage. But this is what this columnist says. "As married couples spend months trapped in homes, the cherished institution of the nuclear family begins to look increasingly unworkable and out of date while marriage begins to feel more and more like a two-legged stool." This columnist goes on to say, "To be fair, people have been predicting the decline of marriage for over a century. It's an institution that always seems to be in crisis, never quite able to keep up with the shifting demands of a modern life. The pandemic did not create the conflicts. It just turned a chronic problem into a crisis."

This was written from a columnist. 16 years of marriage who was getting ready to do a Zoom call with a lawyer to end her marriage. So the pandemic, although serious and real, is not the greatest crisis. The greatest crisis is that you and I have sinned against a Holy God. That is the greatest crisis in the world. I remember my crisis of selfishness as I began to try to think through relationships. I was hanging out with a young lady named Julie about 25 years ago. I remember my perspective on relationships and marriage was extremely distorted because of my selfishness, because of my own sin. I remember on this particular day, as we were "hanging out," and this particular Sunday afternoon, a beautiful day, having a nice little tennis match.

And in the middle of the tennis match, everything stops right in the middle of the game and she walks rapidly to the net, I'm thinking, wanting maybe to embrace for a moment in the middle of this beautiful day. And as I got closer, I knew that wasn't going to happen. And she reminded me and asked me. Says, "I believe we need to have a DTR." And I was like, "Well, is that like a part of the tennis... Is that like tennis lingo for the match that we're playing?" Because I don't know what a DTR is. And she's like, "No, we need to define the relationship." And I'm like, "Like after the tennis match, or like right now?" And she says, "No, right right now." And I won't tell you what I said, because this is extremely stupid, but just know that the tennis match ended quickly right there and right then, and we left the tennis courts. And then, by God's grace, He brought a man into my life and helped me for the next year to disciple and mentor me to see what relationships look like through a biblical lens.

And we re-engaged in conversations and have been married now for 23 years, two months, and one day, which is a miracle. I'm shocked she said, "Yes," but she did. And what's amazing is that we've learned over 23 years is that marriage is much like a garden that needs daily, proper attention to produce healthy fruit. It's much like this picture of a garden where there's workers that are working it and water that is watering it and removing of the weeds and continuing to cultivate the preciousness of that which is planted in it. It's not like my backyard, which I only aerate once a year and throw some seed down and fertilizer, and then this has produced this mushroom. I don't plant mushrooms in my backyard. They just come. They come everywhere. One was the size of a car, it seemed like.

I was like, “Where did these things come from?” Where they come from, a ground that’s not cultivated. It comes from a ground where I only put feed, but no weed out. You got to weed and feed. You have to be on the defense and offense. You have to protect against some things and you have to pursue some things. And this is the way marriage is. If you are not tending the garden of marriage with the gospel of Christ, the garden of marriage will be tended by the weeds of the culture. I remember specifically growing up in a small town in Virginia, we had a large garden. It seemed to be the size of a football field, and my parents would testify to you this morning that I absolutely hated working the garden. They wanted me to work it like every single day. I absolutely hated it, but I loved to eat what was from the garden.

And this is the way many approach marriage. They want the benefits of marriage, they want to eat the good from the marriage, but they don’t want to work at the marriage at all. And the beauty of the gospel and how it informs marriage is, there is one who went into another garden. He, namely Jesus, went into a garden where He prayed for God’s will to be done and He leaned into the Father’s will and He leaned in in such a way where He wanted that cup to pass him that night before they would arrest Him and crucify Him the next day. But He, because He went into that garden, there is hope for you and I to tend and care for the garden of marriage. The gospel affects everything.

And so I want to show you quickly this morning simply three truths, how the gospel impacts our view of marriage and then how it influences how we do marriage. So this is our first point this morning. Number one, the gospel changes one’s perspective on the meaning of marriage. The gospel changes one’s perspective on the meaning of marriage. Now we live in a culture. We live in a culture where many are informed by reality shows about how relationships work, how love and marriage is supposed to work. Right? There’s one particular show that’s very popular among many young folks, maybe a few older folks, called The Bachelor or The Bachelorette.

And on this particular show, I don’t watch, but I’ve heard that there’s... Well, one, it’s not a reality show. Okay? So, a reality show displays things that are real. It’s not real for a man to stand and have 25 beautiful ladies step out of a limousine, and then you get to go on a date with every one of them, those dates consisting of a filet mignon and a hot air balloon over Paris, or something like that. That’s not real. That doesn’t happen. That’s not the way it happens. And so we’re informed... What’s interesting in researching this particular show, I came to find out this week that 83% of the relationships on that particular show have ended. So you have a 17% success rate if you want to go that route.

So what I want to do this morning is to try to help us see the gospel clearly and to see the meaning of marriage. It’s like an airplane. If you’re on this, but in this particular picture, if you’re on the boat in the river, you’re not quite sure where it’s going, but if you’re in the plane looking out of the window, you see clearly the direction where things are going. And the Bible’s like this. The Bible allows you to see the purpose, historically, holistically, the meaning of marriage. Or, like the miner who has the headlamp, right? The Bible is like that. Psalms tells us that the Bible is the lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. And it’s able to help you

take one step at a time to see with clarity what God has intended. And so, how does the gospel change one's perspective on the meaning of marriage?

First of all you have to understand, the gospel is good news. It's the good news that God is just and righteous and requires something from us that we don't have in us. He demands a penalty for our sin that then turns and He sends the one who actually pays for our sin, and His righteousness is given to us when we believe on Him and our sin is cast on Him. This is why we call it good news. This is why one pastor says it like this. "The gospel says you're more sinful and evil and weak than you'd ever dare believe, but more loved and valued and accepted than you ever dared hope." When Jesus comes and invades your heart, invades every area of your life, He begins to help you see things different.

We live differently. We hope differently. We love differently. The gospel opens our eyes to see with clarity why God designed even marriage itself. God loves marriage. He's the author of marriage. He's the designer of marriage. The Bible opens with a marriage and it closes with a marriage. It opens in chapter 2 with a marriage and it closes in Revelation 19 with a marriage. And Paul in Ephesians 5 is showing us the supreme meaning of marriage by saying this in verse 31. "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother," he's quoting from Genesis 2, "And be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." And then he says this. Now listen, lean in on this one, verse 32, "This is a profound mystery."

This is a profound mystery, but I'm talking about Christ and the church. One theologian and author, John Piper, writes it like this in his book on marriage. He says, "When God created man and woman and ordained the union of marriage, He did not roll the dice as to how they might relate to each other. He patterned marriage very purposefully after the relationship between His Son and the church, which He had planned from all of eternity." He goes on, he says, "Therefore, marriage is a mystery. It contains and conceals a meaning far greater than what we see on the outside. God created male and female and ordained marriage so that the eternal covenant relationship between Christ and His church would be imaged forth in the marriage union."

What is he saying? He's saying marriage is like an image. It's like a picture. It's like a model. It stands for something more than a man and woman becoming one flesh. It stands for the relationship between Christ and the church. This is it. This is the reality that it's displaying. This is the deepest meaning of marriage. Listen, it's meant to be a living drama on the stage of planet earth of how Christ and the church relate to each other. This is why marriage exists. It reveals the glory of God and the relationship between Christ and the church. Christ's love for the church shows how the husband's love for the wife should look, and the church's response to that love shows what the wife's response should be to the husband.

It's a glorious union that God has ordained, that has put on the earth to move people's hearts and eyes beyond themselves to see the greatness of who He is. One book called *This Momentary Marriage* says it like this. "The reason earthly marriages won't exist in heaven is because when the reality shows up, there's no need for the symbol to continue anymore. Gospel-centered earthly marriages are pointing us to a heavenly marriage

with the lamb of God.’

This is what Revelation 19 says it like this, “Hallelujah for the Lord God, the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage supper of the lamb has come.” It’s a banquet, the text explains, for this marriage of the lamb, this marriage supper of the lamb, when Christ and all of His followers are united in the end. And so listen, if the gospel changes our perspective of the meaning of marriage as a way of application, let’s celebrate. Let’s celebrate the glory of the gospel in marriage. And then also let’s come to Christ. Let’s come to Him for forgiveness and freedom, to be able to see what other things He actually changes as well in how you live.

Commit your life. If you’re not a follower today, if you’ve never trusted Christ today, we would plead with you and ask you to commit your life, to receive Him and confess Him as Lord and as Savior. He will change not only your eternal destination, He will change not only your heart to that of peace, but He will also change your perspective on how you see relationships and how He has ordained them. So the gospel, what does it do? It changes our perspective. It also compels wives. I’m going to unpack these two. So the first one is this.

The gospel compels wives to submit to their husbands, and then the gospel will confront husbands to love their wives. So let’s deal with the first one. The gospel compels wives to submit to their husbands. Let me say this upfront. Submission and love, it’s not based on just how well the other is doing to evoke the other to respond to that. It’s based on what Christ has done. That’s why we have to lean in, as wives and husbands, lean in first to Christ, not how the husband’s doing or how my wife is doing. We lean in. The gospel compels. The gospel compels and to submit. And to submit... Listen, it’s a negative word in the culture. It’s a beautiful word in the Bible.

It doesn’t suggest in any way that men and women, or a woman or a wife is inferior to a husband. No, the Bible was clear that men and women are created equal before God. Created in the image of God. In a marriage God has given distinct roles. He’s given these roles for mutual joy. The creator of the universe is not holding back by giving you this role, though He’s the author of this role. And listen, no other religion on the planet will esteem females and wives the way the Christian worldview does. God has made you. He loves you. And He’s laid out this role. And listen, your role in the marriage does not identify your worth in the world.

Get that this morning, right? You are made in the image of God. If you’re a Christian this morning, you’re a follower of Christ, your identity is in Christ, and so your worth is found there. These roles are actually for your joy. And so think about with me for just a moment how the gospel compels a wife to submit. How a gospel frees, in a sense. I know that sounds like they’re at odds with each other. There’s a freedom that comes in submission? I would suggest to you, yes, and I also would say this. There is a sensation. There is a feeling. There is this feeling of unbounded independence that’s really not true freedom in our culture.

You think about it like this. Think about it through the lens of this. Two folks jump out of an airplane, one is restricted by a suit and a tight vest on his back, straps around him. There's a parachute. It's weighty. It feels like there's a lot of weight there to have to carry. And as the skydiver jumps out, think about two skydivers jumping out and one restricted by the parachute and the other not. There's a sense, there's a sensation, there's a feeling that one has more freedom, and yet one is destined for calamity. And when you feel God's Word heavy at times like a parachute on your back, know life is coming. It gives life. It can be heavy at times, but it gives life. He's not a killjoy God. He's not trying to suppress you in any way. God wants you to experience the role that He has created in marriage for your joy.

So listen to think about this for just a minute, to think about submission. I've unpacked it in three words. The first one is this. To submit is to show respect. To submit is to show respect. And I would suggest to show respect to worthy men and weak men. Your role in that marriage, as a follower of Christ, the gospel, right? The gospel comes to you weak and weary, and he loves you. And he comes to you. So wives, as you come to husbands, some who are worthy of your respect, and some maybe that are not, I would say, still lean in. I would not suggest in any way whatsoever to follow a husband into sin, or to stay in a relationship that's abusive. No, not at all. But I am suggesting that worthy men and weak men, God uses the way you respect to do a massive amount of things in his heart.

1 Peter 3 says this, "Women submit to your husbands," even if he's not obeying the Word so he may be won by the way you respect and the way you live your life. God uses you to do this. To show respect is to affirm masculinity. This is why so many marriages, after years, they begin to fall apart because the husband is lacking the respect and the wife is lacking the love. And it's almost like there's so much tension, it's like, "Well, who's going to go first to reengage in that?" And I would suggest both at the same time. The husband needs this affirmation. He doesn't get it at the home, so he will find it in the marketplace. He will find it in another place.

So listen, wives, submit to your husbands means to respect. Ephesians 5:33 says, "Let the wife see that she respects her husband." And to respect means to encourage and affirm your husband. But to submit also means to receive. To receive the strength and leadership of worthy and weak men. She's glad... Listen, she's glad when he's not passive. She feels herself enhanced and honored and free by his caring strength, not to rule over her, but to serve her.

And so to submit is to respect, is to receive, but it's also to rejoice. It's to rejoice in God's design and the resources of the husband. The wives are a helper suitable for him. Genesis teaches this. In the first couple of chapters of Genesis, God saying, "I'm going to make a helper suitable." That's not a slam on females and wives. That's a compliment from God that He's giving you this role. This is a role that, as a gospel centered-wife would bring a nurturing strength and insights to make the husband stronger, the family thrive, and relationships richer.

I never forget our first three years of marriage, they were good, but they were a little rocky because we, with that first year of marriage, we tried to change each other. That second year of marriage, we realized we couldn't and we're stuck with each other, and then what you're going to do? And then the third year of marriage is when we leaned into these roles. We leaned in to this to say, "Let's trust God for His design." And it flourished. And it will flourish in your life as well.

Notice the text in chapter 3, verse 18, it says, "Wives submit to you husbands as is fitting in the Lord." As is fitting. What does that mean? It means this is proper before God. This pleases God. This is like the puzzle. You know when you do a puzzle, you dump all the pieces out and they're scattered everywhere and you start flipping them upside down? And then you take the box top and you set it right beside you because your reference point to put this together is what you see as whole. So your eyes are going back and forth. And so you see the box top and you see it in its entirety. And then you put the corners together, put the corners together, and then each piece starts fitting together in a certain way that makes the box top come to life almost.

And the Bible's like the box top in a sense. It shows you how life should be, and the pieces are just life. It's hard at times. You have to flip them over and move over and they bump a little bit, but when they are put together and when they embrace these God-given roles that He's laid out, it produces that which is a beautiful portrait as God designed. And so, listen, this morning, let me encourage you. Let me encourage you church Providence, church family, to be a church that affirms the biblical role of a wife. This is not a popular topic in culture. You take these few verses out of context you can do a lot of damage with them, but you keep them in context and there's a lot of beauty to them.

And so, let's be a church that affirms the biblical role of a wife. And then sisters, let me talk to you for just a moment. Sisters and wives, listen, let's draw strength, let's draw strength from the Savior's submission. Let's look at the Son of God and let's lean into the Son of God in His submission to the Father's will and the good that came from that, He can give you. He's been there. He knows what it feels like. And so He, although tempted in every way, is without, He's able to sympathize with us, Hebrews tells us. And when you lean in, sisters, when you lean into the Savior, He produces this incredible humility, this hope that this is His design. And even if they're worthy men or they're weak men, to stay a course, to live in such a way that would bring glory and honor to Him and good. Ultimately God will work through that within the marriage.

So listen to the gospel. It compels. It compels wives to submit to their husbands, but notice third and last that the gospel, the gospel confronts husbands to love their wives. Now notice, I didn't say the word compels. There's a compelling component from the gospel that moves husbands to live in a certain way. But notice verse 19 in the text, notice what Paul is doing in verse 19. He uses a little stronger language with the husbands. In 19 he says, "Husbands, love your wives," and he says, "And do not be harsh with them." Why did he say that?

Because he knew in the human heart of man, because of the fall in Genesis 3, there is the propensity for the man to be harsh rather than loving. And so he's commanding the husband here. He's instructing the husband here. It's confronting in a sense, in a loving way. And the gospel does this. The gospel comes that it confronts the husbands to... And it confronts us to realize and remember how we've been loved by God in Christ. And so to love is threefold. Let me give you a letter A first. So love is to pursue. Right? To love is to pursue. This is the way you can love your wife. You can be intentional with your wife, to seek to serve her rather than be... You could study her and learn her and anticipate her next move. To live with her. At 1 Peter says, "In an understanding way." It's to connect with her, emotionally and mentally with her.

Listen, one of the texts in Ephesians 5 that's controversial oftentimes in culture, when it says, "Wives submit to your husbands." They leave it at that. You don't put that verse on the coffee mug, right? But the rest of the verse, Ephesians 5, goes on to say, "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church." And then it tells you how He loved the church. He said He gave himself up for her. And so, your love, husbands, looks as if you're laying down your life for her the way Christ has laid down His life for us. You're dying to self. And this should be an irresistible invitation for your wife to follow, to desire that.

I remember our first few years of marriage were fun in so many ways. And as we reflect back now, this particular moment, it was not that fun because we began to speak with each other on a daily basis, which is good in a marriage, to try to process emotions. And so the conversation went like this. Jules would ask me how am I doing? How am I feeling? And I would say, "I'm feeling great." One word, simple answer. And I go, "Maybe I should ask her how she's..." "How are you feeling?" And then, a little bit longer answer, and that's okay. Nothing wrong with that, the emotions I want to express and I'm listening.

And then the next day it would happen again. "How are you feeling?" "Same way I told you yesterday, I'm feeling good." All right? Simple, kind of. And then, "How are you feeling?" And it'd be a different answer. And then the third day, "How are you feeling?" "Well, I told you I'm the same way. The first two days, I'm still good. It's all good. This is good." And then she would use another word. And I was like, "Man." And as I began to learn that I need to be intentional in pursuing, I went out on a journey to discover some writings that would help me with this because I wasn't good at it.

And so I found a list of 100 feeling words. Some I had no idea what they meant, but I used them anyway. And that first year marriage, as we began to have conversation, I kept those words in front of me, back in... We would put them in our phone today, but back in the day, there was this big notebook that people used called a day-timer. And in the front of that, it was the very first thing that I saw every single day. And what God did was He used it to knit us together in a deeper way, not just mentally, but emotionally as well. And it enhanced the marriage and it began to take off and soar and not just survive, but thrive.

So, listen, husbands, to love is to pursue with intentionality. To love is to provide for, to provide, and this is holistic. This isn't just financial. This is holistic. This is spiritual, emotional, financially. Yes, there's a benevolent responsibility to biblical masculinity that wants to lean into being a provider. Does this mean that the wife doesn't work? No, not at all. Proverbs 31 tells us, there's a beautiful picture of a wife that works hard and makes things and sells things and supports the family. But there's a benevolent responsibility to biblical masculinity that causes men and husbands to lean in. You set, men, the tone and the trajectory for your wife and family. You set the tone in the home for these things.

You're the one... Can she open the Bible? Absolutely. But you take initiative. Open the Bible, grab her hand, get on your knees and cry out to God to work in your marriage. Listen, to love is to pursue, is to provide, but it's also to protect. A husband's willing to suffer for his wife. She's prized. This doesn't make her feel bad. It makes her feel honored, to protect her spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Listen, middle of the night there's a racket downstairs on the back deck, 2:00 AM in the morning. I'm sleeping really hard. I don't lean over and say, "Sweetie, can you go check that out if you don't mind? I'm kind of tired right now. The big stick we use to hit people is downstairs." No. No, it's an honor to protect and defend and go get the stick and take somebody out outside. Right?

Listen, to love, to love. Oh, listen, we've been loved, have we not? There was another stick. The cross the Savior was hung on, and there was great protection that came from that stick. Listen, listen, let's be a church. Let's be a church that affirms the biblical role of a husband, worthy and weak, leading out of the strength that God's provided. And brothers and husbands, let me lean into you for just a minute. Let's draw strength from the Savior's love. Her response should not dictate your love. The gospel's response should dictate your love. You have been loved when you were not lovable. God sent His Son to die for your sins and so when you lean into the Savior's love it frees and fills you up with a unique love. It's not conditional. It's gospel.

So let's remember the Savior in these days. Let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we give you thanks today for the opportunity to look at this Word, to listen to this Word. God, we pray and ask that you would solidify these things in our hearts and minds, and that God, you would strengthen marriages even now, God, that are in this room or listening online. That, God, you would do a work, a miraculous work, God, of healing and hope, God, for future marriages that are coming. God, would you give perspective and clarity around those things as well? God, we love you and we thank you, in Jesus' name. Amen.



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