

# Colossians

WHY WE NEED JESUS

May 19, 2024

Pastor Bruce & Laurie Johnson

Colossians 3:15-4:1

“Marriage: Love and Respect”

## SUMMARY

Because St. Paul’s letter to the Colossians is so packed with theology, some Christians find it a difficult read. However, it is a highly structured letter. Four broad themes emerge in its four chapters:

- The Supremacy of Christ Chapter 1
- Connected to Christ Chapter 2
- Living for Christ Chapter 3
- The Fellowship of Christ Chapter 4

Chapter 3, Living for Christ, can be further divided into four sections:

- The Christian and Christ 3:1-8
- The Christian and the Church 3:9-17
- The Christian at home 3:18-21
- The Christian at work 3:22-4:1

The trouble many people have with Colossians chapter 3 is the “Wives, submit” verse, Colossians 3:18. It has not just been often misunderstood but often misused. People have been hurt by it. What’s more, the Church has often made things worse, not better. So, how can we properly approach this passage?

Fortunately, Paul’s letter to the nearby Ephesian church is a big help. In Ephesians 5:21-33, we find longer and more detailed advice for married couples. The second passage will help us understand the first. Additional help comes as we keep in mind the grand description of Jesus at the beginning of Colossians 1:15-23. The Christ who rules over all things also needs to reign supreme in every aspect of our lives, including how husbands and wives treat each other. Paul points back to this in the middle of chapter 3, giving us a threefold admonition about looking to Christ always: “the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (3:15), “the message of Christ dwell among you” (3:16), “And whatever you do...do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (3:17). All this is the background to Paul’s practical advice for wives and husbands in 3:18-19.

The Greek word used here for “submit” is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 15:28 to describe how different persons of the Trinity relate to one another. God the Father and God the Son are coequal. Yet God the Son eternally submits to God the Father. So, equality and submission can happen at the same time. If this is true of God, this can also be true in human relationships.

The parallel passage in Ephesians 5 is introduced with this command: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21). This said not just to husbands and wives but to all Christians. We should love others enough not to stop insisting on always having our own way. Instead, we can learn to yield.

In a deep and mysterious way, a wife’s yielding to her husband is like how we are all called to yield to Christ. The wife becomes an example to her husband in yielding (as we are all called to yield). A husband’s love for his wife is like the way Christ loves “the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). The husband becomes an example to his wife in loving (as we are all called to love). A marriage of coequals is envisioned here with both parties yielding and loving one another.

## **QUOTES/THOUGHTS FROM THE SERMON:**

“If the Son is simultaneously equal with the Father and submissive to the Father, then equality and submissiveness can co-exist also in human relationships.”

-Richard Charles Lucus (b. 1925)

“Paul has exhorted husbands and wives to reciprocity.... To love, therefore, is the husband’s part, to yield pertains to the other side. If then each one contributes his own part, all stand firm. From being loved, the wife too becomes loving; and from her being submissive, the husband learns to yield.”

-St. John Chrysostom (347-407 AD)

Love is “the choice to will the good of the other.”

-St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD)

## **NOTES:**

## **QUESTIONS**

- For Christ to reign supreme in my daily life today, what needs to change?
- What am I holding back?
- By observing my actions and attitudes, what image of Christ and the church are my neighbors likely to form?
- What is one way I could love my spouse better?
- What one change could I make?
- When have I yielded to my spouse in order to honor that person?
- When has someone ever gasped and said what a wonderful job I had done?
- How did it make me feel?
- What daily act of love and charity could I begin in order to love others well?

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER**

Consider using Philippians 2:3-5 as a guide for prayer. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”