

House Rules for YOUR House

Series: Seeing the Invisible

Colossians 3:18-21

Introduction: Back in the 1930's a plant called kudzu [show picture] was brought to America from Asia to help with erosion, because it grows extremely fast, up to 1 foot a day!

If you have seen kudzu you know, it looks innocent at first, just a few leafy vines growing on the side of the road. But give it time, and it will take over everything. And I mean everything. Trees, power lines, shrubs and plants in your yard, abandoned cars, slow-moving animals, and old people; if something remains still long enough, kudzu will completely cover it.

And it doesn't just grow, it connects. One vine connects to another vine and that vine connects to another vine, and before long, it's everywhere.

As frustrating as kudzu is for property owners, it can teach us something profound about how relationships work. Our lives should always be growing, connecting, and linking with other people.

Kudzu doesn't require permission to grow, it just grows. And our relationships are the same way. They're either growing healthier or not.

Here's what we're going to see in God's word today: **The quality of your relationships reveals the roots of your discipleship.**

That is what Paul is talking about in Colossians 3, as we continue our series: **Seeing the Invisible**. Last week's message was 'House Rules for God's House.' Today's message is, **"House Rules for YOUR House."**

Just so you know, Colossians 3 marks the turn in the letter from doctrine to discipline, since "then" (or "therefore") links the doctrinal section of the letter with the practical section. Paul's teaching is that believers are called upon to become in daily experience what they are in Christ, because **the new life of obedience comes from being united with Christ.**

If your life is rooted in Christ, it's going to show up in the places where you are most tested and that's in your relationships. Let's read it.

Colossians 3:18-21 *"Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged."* [NIV]

LET'S PRAY

Walt Disney was a dreamer. His crowning vision was Epcot 'Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow.' He envisioned the perfect city of 20,000 using all the most modern advances in technology.

One problem, Walt Disney died before his dream was ever realized. His dream was so big and complex and outside the box that no one else in the Disney Company had an idea what to do after Walt was gone. What Walt Disney intended as a living breathing perfect city turned out only to be an entertainment center. Disney's world would only become a place to visit.

Jesus left a blueprint for His church. He intends for the church to be a living breathing, expanding organism that would permeate and transform the whole world.

The problem is that as time went on, rather than a community of loving, passionate followers of Christ dedicated to demonstrating the power of Christ in a dark world, they began to miss the transforming power of Christ.

A young serviceman and his family were living in a hotel near the military base where he was temporarily assigned. One day his little girl was playing house in the lobby when a lady asked, "Isn't it too bad you don't have a home?" The little girl said, "Oh, we do have a home, we just don't have a house to put it in yet!"

Too many people live in a house but it's not a home, much less a godly home. Right off the bat, we see God's definition of a family: a wife and a

husband. God defines marriage as relationship between a man and a woman.

We live in a day where children grow up in broken homes, divorce is rampant, homes where there is child and spousal abuse, and neglect.

Homes in the world are under spiritual, political, philosophical, and demonic attacks.

Satan's first attack was on the home. He deceived Adam and Eve and turned them away from God, and ruined the relationships between husband and wife and between them and God.

There's a great poem that defines the Christian Home! It goes: Where family prayer is daily said, God's Word is regularly read, and faith in Christ is never dead, that is a Christian home.

Before we dive into the roles Paul lays out here, I want you to understand why he addresses them so directly. In the first-century Roman world, there was a strict hierarchy, where the man ruled with absolute authority. Women and children had little to no voice in that culture.

So, when Paul begins addressing wives and children directly, he is doing something extremely countercultural. He's dignifying them. He's elevating them. He's saying, ***"In Christ, your life matters. Your obedience matters."***

More importantly, Paul reframes these roles around Jesus, not just social norms or power structures. Every command in this section is tied to Jesus.

What does he say to the wife? ***'As is fitting in the Lord;'*** husbands, 'love your wife, in Ephesians Paul says, ***'as Christ loves the church;'*** Children, obey your parents in everything, ***'for this pleases the Lord.'***

In this part of the letter, Paul is redefining relationships from a kingdom perspective.

The Bible says that what we do and say should be with the approval of and in the authority of Jesus and for His glory. And that applies especially in the home. What takes place in the home can be a form of worship!

Let me read you a good bible definition of worship. It's found in verse 17, ***"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."***

Key Take-Away for wives, husbands and children: As you live out verses 18-21 this week you, will be worshipping the Lord?

Paul was rewriting the household playbook, saying, it's no longer, **"Top-down authority,"** from now on, it should be, **"Christlike humility."**

That's how Paul begins...He says a Christian home has:

I. A Submitted Wife

[Col. 3:18] ***"Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."***

The word "submit"-hupotasso in the Greek means to voluntarily place oneself under the leadership of another, not out of weakness but out of strength. This word is a military term that refers to strategic order and cooperation... not inferiority.

For those who know or who have served in the armed forces, 'rank' has to do with order and authority, not with value or ability.

A. A Submitted Wife Trusts God's Design for the Home

In our world today, "submission" is almost a bad word... for many it sounds regressive, or even offensive. But Paul is not talking about cultural patriarchy, he is talking about spiritual partnership.

In this context, Paul isn't giving men a license to control, he's inviting women to reflect Christ through their willingness to trust God's design for the home.

In Ephesians 5 Paul talks about mutual submission in marriage. He says [in v. 21-22] we should be ***"submitting to one another in the fear of Christ."***

So, submission is not about being silenced or sidelined, it's about contributing to the health and harmony of the marriage by choosing unity and trusting God's order.

B. A Submitted Wife Chooses to Submit

This word '**submit**' is in the present tense which indicates that the wife is to continue to submit herself to her husband.

The verb submit is in the middle voice. It means "**place yourself in submission.**" You have been sitting down outside because you had no choice. Now you have a choice, this act of will rather than this legal requirement. Paul was after a heart attitude, a spirit of humility by choice.

Richard Foster says, *"[Paul] made decision makers out of those who were forbidden to make decisions."*

Wives are to submit to their husbands not because he deserves it or is superior to her, but because it is God's delegated line of authority.

C. A Submitted Wife Knows Her Limitations

The restrictions of her submission - "as is fitting in the Lord."

As is fitting: aneko, an-ay'-ko; to attain to, i.e. (figurative) be proper, convenient, be fit, the right thing to do.

Some of you might be thinking, "Pastor, time out; what if my husband isn't following the Lord? Am I still supposed to submit to him?" Here's how the Bible answers that question:

[1 Peter 3:1-2, NIV] *'Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.'*

In other words: In Marriage, God calls wives to have a respectful, God-honoring posture towards her husband, EVEN if he is not saved, with the hope that one day, her example may lead him to Christ.

If your husband is not a believer, the last thing he needs from you is a sermon! Proverbs 27:15, ***"A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike."***

Drip. Drip. Drip. You will never nag your husband to Jesus any more than you will drag your husband to Jesus. The best thing is to live for Jesus in front of him.

When a wife submits to her husband, it is an act of worship, motivated by love!

Submission is not absolute. Here is what that is NOT saying:

Biblical submission does not require a wife to follow her husband into sin. If you are married to someone who's demanding you to do something immoral, illegal, or contrary to God's word, the Bible says, you are not obligated to obey him.

God's authority always comes first. [Acts 5:29] says, ***"we must obey God rather than man."***

Biblical submission doesn't condone abuse or moral compromise. The Bible is 100% against all types of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

Submission starts with God. If you want to know what submission looks like, look at the cross.

Anne Atkins, in her book Split Image, says, "Before we can hope to be good husbands or wives, we must learn to be good Christians. We must all become self-sacrificial and submissive."

The biblical principal of submission (by design) works best... when you have a husband and wife that love one another and serve one another... and both husband and wife are fully committed and submitted to Jesus.

When a husband is loving like Jesus, and a wife is submitting as to the Lord, marriage becomes a dance, not a dictatorship.

A wife's biblical submission is not a picture of weakness; it is a picture of worship. It says, "Lord, I trust Your way, even when it stretches me."

A Christian home has a submitted wife, and secondly,

II. A Sensitive Husband

19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh toward them.

When I say sensitive, I do not mean sissy. Nor do I mean that he is sensitive and is easily offended or hurt. A sensitive husband is a godly husband.

He is sensitive to the needs of his wife and children. He is sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We cannot keep ANY of God's commands in our own strength.

Just as the wife is to continually submit to her husband so too the husband is to continually love his wife.

A. A sensitive husband demonstrates godly love to his wife!

Paul uses the word agapao-a deep, sacrificial, Christlike love.

The type of love that Paul is referencing here is the same love that Jesus demonstrated when he stooped to wash the dirty feet of his twelve disciples. It's the love that stood silently before accusers... it's the love that walked willingly to the cross...that's the type of love he's calling us husbands to demonstrate.

Love isn't just a noun. Love is also a verb. Christ did not just feel love for us; He demonstrated his love to us.

When Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives," he is calling men to a radical standard. One that lays down pride. One that listens before

speaking. One that says, "I will die to myself every single day for your good."

Agape love is a selfless and unselfish love, it is a giving and forgiving love, it is a sacrificial and sufficient love.

Husbands, are you sensitive to the needs of your wife? The husband is not to seek to have his wife fulfill his needs, desires, comfort, and interest; but he seeks to meet, nurture, and nourish his wife.

B. Husbands are not to be harsh toward their wives.

Here are synonyms for harsh or bitterness[KJV] to get a better sense of why Paul is commanding husbands to stop being bitter towards their spouses.

Synonyms: acrimonious, afflictive, antagonistic, begrudging, biting, cruel, grievous, gut-wrenching, harsh, heartbreaking, merciless, overbearing, painful, resentful, ruthless, savage, sharp, sour, stinging, sullen, vexatious, with a chip on one's shoulder.

Now look at the "flip side" which is what husbands should be like.

Antonyms: agreeable, appreciative, friendly, gentle, grateful, mellow, mild, pleasant, sweet, thankful.

STORY: I heard about this young bride that had a bitter argument with her husband. She called her mother to gain a little sympathy.

During the conversation, the mother reminded her daughter of a happier moment when she declared her husband was, "Mr. Right."

The bride said, "Yea, but I had no idea that his first name was "Always."

Husbands, Paul is warning us here (and he's saying) you have got to guard against the stuff that is going to choke out your marriage: Do not let ***unspoken frustration, unresolved conflict, or unrealistic expectations*** take root in your relationship. Husbands, love your wives.

This kind of love does not come naturally. That's why it must be rooted in Christ. If you try to love your wife out of your own strength, you'll run out of gas. But when you're rooted in Jesus, when you abide in Him, when you sit under His Word and seek Him in prayer, His love will flow through you.

C. A sensitive husband listens to his wife.

Illustration: During a marriage retreat the speaker devoted an entire session to discussing the differences between men and women.

When it came to communication, the lecturer gave statistical data that suggested women speak about twice as much as men.

He noted that the average man speaks roughly 12,000 words a day and the average woman doubles that with 24,000 words a day.

Upon hearing this information, a smug husband turned to his wife with a smirky smile and asked, "I wonder why it takes you twice as many words to communicate?"

She replied, "Because I have to repeat everything twice before you hear it!"

A Christlike husband doesn't demand submission, he demonstrates sacrifice. Think about your car's alignment, for a second. When it's off, you drift. It pulls to the right. It pulls to the left. It wears things down much faster. Marriage works the same way. Christ-centered alignment keeps the vehicle of your marriage moving forward together.

If you are a husband, and you are out of alignment with Christ, you will not be able to keep your family straight. And just like that car, everything will start to rattle. The ride will become rough. The passengers will start getting sick. And if nothing changes, eventually the whole thing will break down.

Husbands, ask yourself-does my love reflect Jesus? Am I present or distracted? Am I protecting or provoking? Am I building my wife up in the Word, or am I tearing her down with my tone? None of us are perfect.

The question is: What direction are you pointing your marriage (and family) towards, by the way you love... and the way you lead?

Now Paul is going to turn his attention to the kids... A Christian home has a submitted wife, a sensitive husband, and...

III. Sound Children

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

That is a high calling not just for kids, but for families raising the next generation of Christ-followers.

Charles Spurgeon was speaking to a group of parents one day and he said, ***"Train up a child in the way he should go, but be sure you go that way yourself."***

We are not just raising our kids; we are raising God's kids. So, as parents, we need to lead in a way that honors Him.

Obedience isn't just about following rules. It's about learning to live under authority in a way that honors God. Children who learn to obey their parents, are also being trained to obey God.

That is the deeper purpose of parenting. It is not about control, it is about character formation.

In Jewish culture, honoring one's parents was central to the covenant. It is part of the Ten Commandments. And Paul reinforces that same truth to the early church: obedience is not optional. It is foundational. It is the soil where trust... and responsibility... and spiritual maturity... begin to grow.

Kids, every time you choose to obey your parents with the right attitude, you are not just making them happy, you're making God happy.

[Ephesians 6:1-3] ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. Honor your father and mother-which is the first commandment with a promise-so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land."***

I want you to notice that these verses contain both a command, and a promise. The command is-Children, obey your parents. Honor your mother

and father. That means listening, and showing respect, and following their guidance; not just when you feel like it, but "in everything."

And if you do that, what is the promise God gives us? This verse says, "Things will go well with you, and you will have a long life in the land."

When Paul wrote these words to the church at Ephesus, he was referencing two Old Testament passages: [Exodus 20:12] and [Deut. 5:16].

Paul brings this Old Testament passage, and he universalizes it as a biblical principle... not just for Jews, but for Gentiles and all followers of Jesus. It's not a guarantee for long life, but it is a promised principle that says obedience leads to blessings... disobedience leads to consequences.

Parents, we must reinforce the "why" behind the rules. We must point our kids to Jesus as the ultimate authority and rewarder of obedience. This is not about rigid discipline, it is about raising disciples.

[Wives-Submit in a way that honors the Lord. Husbands-Love in the way Jesus loves. Children-obey in a way that pleases the Lord.]

IV. Fathers Discipline in a way that Builds Relationships.

This is where Paul singles out dads [in v. 21] and says to us, "***Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.***"

The word "embitter" means to provoke, or to irritate, or to push so hard that the child feels like they can never measure up.

You have to remember, when Paul wrote these words, the church was living in a world where Roman fathers had the legal right to disown or even kill a disobedient child.

But notice, Paul writes specifically to Fathers who loved the Lord, and he called them to something better... something radically different than the rest of the world: **Give 'em SPACE and give 'em GRACE.**

Grace has always been a radical response... especially for those living in the first century. Roman law granted absolute authority to fathers. They

could punish without question, they could discipline without dialogue, they could rule their home without restraint.

So, when Paul showed up and said, "Don't provoke your children," he was introducing a gospel ethic into a power-driven world... and he tells us,

"Dads, don't parent from a pedestal. Parent from a place of grace."

Let me give you two reasons WHY:

(1) Because discouraged kids often become distant adults. If you want to drive your kid away... exasperate and embitter them... talk down to them...and make your kids feel incapable of ever measuring up.

(2) Because the voice children hear from their earthly father oftentimes becomes the voice they associate with their Heavenly Father. If we want our kids to know God and walk with God, we have a responsibility of demonstrating to them, a life that's been changed by God.

We are not to provoke our children:

by overprotecting them, showing favoritism, by depreciating their worth, by setting unrealistic goals, by criticism, by failing to discipline, by being inconsistent, or by failing to encourage them.

Rules without relationships lead to rebellion.

This does not mean we do not enforce rules in our home. What that means is your discipline must flow out of relationship.

This verse is not about removing corrections, it is about injecting compassion. It is about reflecting the Father heart of God when we interact with our kids. When God disciplines us, it is always out of love.

There are times when we look at our kids in frustration, and say, "BECAUSE I SAID SO... THAT'S WHY!" ... but we should say, "Because God says so... that's why"... then you can say, "and it's also because I'm still paying for your cell phone." Amen!?

Fathers must be there for their children, take time for their children, and invest in their children. We are to lead our children and family and not abdicate our responsibility.

STORY: Little Billy was allowed to sit in his father's place at the dinner table one evening when his father was out of town.

His slightly older sister, resenting the arrangement sneered, "So, you're the father tonight. All right: how much is two times seven?"

Without a moment's hesitation, Billy replied nonchalantly, "I am busy. Ask your mother!"

We were made for more than just coexisting in the same space. We were made to reflect Christ in our homes: As a husband. As a wife. As a child. As a parent.

Let me close with a little story: There was a family that decided to build the ultimate tree house. I mean, this thing had rope bridges, electricity, bunk beds, a working doorbell, everything. The dad was an engineer, the kids were mini-contractors, and the mom was the forewoman in charge. Every weekend they worked. It took them months to complete. But when it was finished, it was not just a treehouse, it was a monument to teamwork.

One afternoon, the family invited the grandparents over to see it. The grandfather stepped in, looked around, and said: "This is impressive... but y'all know this tree is dead, right?"

When they checked it out, they realized, Grandpa was right! All that work. All that effort. Built on something that could not hold it.

That is what happens when we build our relationships without Jesus at the center. You can decorate your marriage. You can renovate your parenting style. You can engineer the perfect family schedule. But if it's not built around Jesus, the house will not stand.