

# You Were Raised Right

Studies in the Book of Colossians

Text

Colossians 3:17-4:1

Topic

When each of you put on the new man in Christ, your home life will be blessed by mutual submission

Title

*“Your Submission, Should You Decide to Accept It...”*

“Cosplay” is short for *costume play*. It is a performance art in which participants called cosplayers wear self-made costumes and fashion accessories to represent a specific character. If you’re familiar with the Comic-con conventions, you’ve seen cosplayers in their natural element.

Then there’s LARPing. It stands for, Live Action Role Playing. The participants in a LARP physically portray characters in a fictional setting, improvising their characters' speech and movements.

I've missed the last few Hanford Christmas parades. Does that group that dresses-up in *Star Trek* costumes, with their shuttlecraft, still participate?

In last week's study, we were told to "put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (3:10). We are to put on Christ *as if we were choosing our costume*.

Cosplay and LARPing fall far short of our 24/7 choices to walk with Jesus appropriately dressed as the new man.

Paul is going to show us what it looks like when we've got on the new man. He'll do it by describing the live action roles we are to play in our homes.

Reading this passage, and its counterpart in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, one overruling trait emerges. It is **submission** - specifically, **mutual submission**.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 You See What Submission Looks Like With Those In Your Family, and #2 You See What Submission Looks Like With Those Outside Your Family.

## #1 You See What Submission Looks Like With Those In Your Family

(3:17-21)

James Hibberd is the TV editor for *The Hollywood Reporter*. Commenting on television families, he said,

We have moved from what's most ideal to what's most entertaining. During the golden age of television, the focus was on these families that everyone would like to have. With the advent of reality television, we introduced the dysfunctional family in the 1990's.

He probably chose the 1990's because one of television's greatest dysfunctional families, *The Simpsons*, debut in December 1989.

We had a few dysfunctional families before them, notably the Bunker's in the 1970's *All in the Family*.

And don't forget the 1950's *The Honeymooners*, in which Ralph Cramden was always lovingly threatening to physically abuse his wife.

We are so familiar with the dysfunctional family that it has become the new normal. We need to quit thinking that way.

Paul gives us an episode in the lives of the *functional* family. This is what your family could be, if everyone in it were playing their biblical role submitted to Jesus.

I know what you husbands are thinking. You've read ahead and see that the text says *wives* should submit - *not* husbands.

That's not really accurate, guys. The overall context demands mutual submission. And the parallel passage in Ephesians is prefaced by, "submitting to **one another** in the fear of God" (5:21).

One language scholar pointed out the following:

The commands given to husbands call for a response on their part that will make it easy for wives to submit; that is, husbands are to love their wives as "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." Furthermore, they are to love their wives "as

their own bodies,” even as they would love themselves.

Let me say once again that we are looking at the functional family - the ideal Christian home. We are seeing what is possible when we have on the new man and assume our roles with submission to Jesus, and to one another.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

This obviously speaks to your mutual submission to Jesus. But it can also serve as a sort of self-exam:

- Your “words,” and your “deeds” - can you say that they are done “in the name of the Lord Jesus?”
- Do you speak, and do you act, “giving thanks to God the Father through Him?”

It doesn't matter what your spouse said and did; or your children. This verse is for each of us individually, to measure ourselves.

Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

The word “submit” would be the same word used to describe relationships in the military. It means *to be in order under*.

People join the military and, once enlisted, they have put themselves under its order of rankings. They learn and perform their roles and responsibilities.

If I may say so, it’s an awesome thing to see the military in action when everyone is in order and under their proper command.

Break ranks, however, and the enemy floods in to destroy.

Ladies, when you marry, you are *enlisting* in marriage and are voluntarily putting yourself under the authority of “your own husband.”

Did you know that? If not... It doesn’t matter. It’s still true.

Which is one reason why you ought not marry a nonbeliever. Marriage can be hard enough without the added burden of being unequally yoked. Don't do any 'missionary dating,' thinking you're going to save the person.

This "is fitting in the Lord." That means it has been God's plan from the beginning.

It was God's plan both *before* and *after* Adam and Eve sinned. Adam was created first, then Eve. He was to be her head; she was to be his helper. After they sinned the roles remained the same. It's the way the home was designed by God.

Whenever the word "submit" is used I think people tend to hear words like "inferior." The woman is *not* inferior to the man; the man is *not* superior to the woman. It's a matter of assuming your proper roles in the home.

A good wife, a submissive wife, may have more competency than her husband in lots of areas. They both recognize that, and they should set up the management of the home in various ways that show that.

I shouldn't have to tell you that you are not required by God to submit to sinful behavior. Submission doesn't mean it's OK to be physically abused.

Submission does not mean putting the will of the husband before the Lord's will.

It does mean that you are called upon to help your Christian husband. It does mean you are to look beyond him and his failings to your Lord and do what pleases Jesus.

Bottom line: The Christian home was designed by God to have a husband as the head and a wife as his helper. When things aren't sinful but still not going smoothly, ladies you are to look past your earthly head to the Lord and do what pleases Him.

What pleases Him is to have a disposition to follow a husband's authority, and an inclination to yield to his leadership.

Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

You may not see the word ‘submit’ here but it is more than implied. Jesus commands husbands to love their wives. It’s an order.

The “love” commanded here is to be continuous and at all times and in all situations. Here are words that describe the kind of “love” that is being commanded: sacrificial, giving, holy, redemptive, nourishing, cherishing, forgiving, cleansing, and sanctifying.

You recognize that as the love Jesus has for you - even though you don’t deserve it.

Love like that has nothing to do with whether or not your wife is submitting to you. You look past her to the Lord and love her this way for Him.

While we were yet sinners He died for us. He looked past us to His Father. He did it as a man, not as God. He did it by the enablement of the Holy Spirit. So can we; remember, we’ve put Him on as our costume.

“Do not be bitter toward them.” I would suggest that bitterness results from thinking your wife is failing in her role:

1. First - Maybe she is. We've already addressed that. Your response is not to be conditioned on her failings.
2. Second - and more commonly - maybe your leadership is the underlying problem.

One author expressed it like this:

The first [thing I want to say] about the meaning of a wife's biblical submission; namely, it is a happy response to a husband's biblical leadership or, as Ephesians 5:23 calls it, headship. And the point of starting here is that, when men are doing what God calls men to do in a relationship and they are doing it rightly, biblically, most women love it and are happy to respond to it supportively.

Poor leadership in any context will result in conflict. Always look to yourself first.

Just when you think you might have some of this figured out, kids come along and for the next several decades you've got them to deal with.

Colossians 3:20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

The “children” in this situation are young children, not yet legal adults or married.

The word “obey” can be translated, *to hearken at the door*. It describes a knock at your door that causes you to immediately stop what you’re doing and go open it.

Children are to obey parents “in all things.” Everything. Their friends, their music, their interests. Everything.

They “obey” because “this is well pleasing to the Lord.” It may not seem pleasant to them. They do it for the Lord. By obeying their parents they are submitting to the Lord.

Youth is not an excuse to disobey. The Holy Spirit doesn’t make distinctions when it comes to age. The Bible is full of examples of young people serving the Lord by His enabling:

- Daniel did. Taken captive by the Babylonians, even as a young man, a teenager, he determined in his heart to please the Lord.

- So did Samuel. He heard the Lord's voice at a very young age.

This presupposes that you are evangelizing your kids. You are introducing them to the Lord and to the things of the Lord. Get them saved from the youngest possible age. Salvation is job one for you as a Christian parent.

Colossians 3:21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

“Fathers” can be translated *parents*. This certainly applies to both parents, but in the context of the father being the head of the wife it falls on the husband especially to be certain the children in the home are not being provoked.

“Provoke” means *to stimulate to anger* or frustration. It would include, but not be limited to, things like making unreasonable demands, or not listening to your children, or being inconsistent dealing with them.

It would certainly include all of the ridiculous threats you overhear in the grocery store.

It really means that you need to invest a great deal of time and energy getting to know and understand each of your children as a unique individual whom God has given to you to nurture and grow.

Paul was concerned that children would become “discouraged.” It means *to lose heart*. Don’t do things that would discourage your kids. Their life is going to be tough enough without you discouraging them. Sacrifice yourself for their sake. It’s what you signed-on for.

You know what will really discourage kids? Divorce. Going forward, from wherever you are in life now, hate divorce the way God does.

Jesus isn’t asking you to do anything He hasn’t done Himself. He submitted to His earthly parents. In The Gospel of Luke we’re told Jesus, “went down [from Jerusalem] with [Joseph and Mary] and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them” (2:51).

God in human flesh subjected Himself to two average, ordinary, inexperienced parents.

As an adult, Jesus always submitted to His heavenly Father. He looked past the people and the problems to His Father and lived to please Him.

That, then, is the functional family. Truth is, every family IS a little, or a lot, dysfunctional, because we still choose to keep on the old man, rather than putting on the new man.

And that's where it gets confusing. One, or both of you, or the kids, are walking in the flesh. Your response ought to be to continue in your role as the new man... But how? And for how long??

- The “how” is in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- The “how long” is that there is no other way; at least, no other biblical way.

If you have problems in your home, it's from a lack of submission to Jesus, and mutually to each other. There's no other ‘fix’ except to repent, and submit.

What if you're a Christian woman married to a nonbelieving husband? I'm sure you've memorized First Peter 3:1-6. It begins with submission:

1Peter 3:1 Wives, likewise, be **submissive** to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

Proper, godly submission is always God's counsel. It will look different in different homes; but it remains the only spiritual solution.

Start where we started this section - with verse seventeen. Examine yourself, then submit to the Lord, and to one another.

## #2 You See What Submission Looks Like With Those Outside Your Family

(3:22-4:1)

In the context of this letter Paul *never leaves the house*. When he discussed “servants” and “masters” he was talking about household slaves.

About half the population of the Roman Empire were slaves. You were either born of slave parents, or sold yourself into slavery to pay debts, or you were captured during a military conquest and enslaved.

For our purposes we can apply these principles to the workplace.

You notice immediately that Paul spent way more time on this subject than on the family. It might be because one of the men who delivered this letter to the church at Colossae was Onesimus. He was a slave who had run away from his master, Philemon.

The church at Colossae met in the home of Philemon. Everyone would know the situation with Onesimus.

As providence would have it, Onesimus encountered the apostle Paul and was saved by the message of the Gospel. Paul found out Onesimus was a runaway; Onesimus found out that Paul knew Philemon.

So Paul sent him back with this letter, and also wrote the letter to Philemon we have in our Bible. In it Paul urged Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother in the Lord.

Colossians 3:22 Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with

eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

Since we know the story of Onesimus it is better to see these as involuntary “slaves” rather than voluntary “bondservants.” If such conduct was required by slaves, how much more should we, as free employees, do for our earthly employers?

“Masters according to the flesh” would include owners and their foremen. For us it’s our boss or bosses, our supervisors, etc.

Does the Bible condone slavery? No. One scholar put it like this:

Commanding Christians to free their slaves would not have been legal, nor would it have worked as, by state law, some of those slaves would still not have been free. Christians were commanded to love others as Christ loved us. That meant that people could no longer be treated as slaves, but Christians would then become the servants of all, as Christ was.

What follows is a checklist. Think of it as a job review.

- “Not with eyeservice” means not just when others are looking but all the time. It means to not keep your eye only on the clock.
- “As men-pleasers” means you’re not scheming to fool your employer into thinking you are a harder worker than you really are. *You just work hard.* Show-up early; leave late.
- “In sincerity of heart” speaks to your motives for working hard. It is the right thing to do.
- “Fearing God” is a reminder that your work speaks to others of your relationship with the Lord. **They see what kind of Lord He is by what kind of worker you are.**

Colossians 3:23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

You look past “men,” including your masters (bosses). You are working for Jesus and thus should do everything “heartily.” It means not just working hard but doing so with a right attitude, with ‘hearty good will.’

Colossians 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

This was really something precious to hear if you were a slave. Slaves had no earthly inheritance to look forward to. But in Heaven God was storing-up for them a great “inheritance” - a mansion of their own, for example, as well as rewards for their faithful service on the earth.

Imagine hearing this as a slave for the first time. You’d leave the Sunday night service, which was your only break in the week, and know that from then onward everything you did was “to serve the Lord” and not your earthly master. It’s liberating.

Colossians 3:25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

This is a very interesting and informative verse. Paul was saying that God will show no “partiality” to slaves at the Reward Seat in Heaven.

In other words, He won't be inclined to reward a slave more because he or she had such a terrible life on the earth. He will reward everyone on the basis of their faithfulness.

Wow. It hammers home the point that I am to look past my circumstances and the people in them to the Lord and serve Him.

Colossians 4:1 Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Bosses have a 'Boss' in Heaven. They, too, must always be looking to the Lord to do "what is just and fair."

At home or at work it comes down to this:

- In your house, can you say with real confidence that you are submitted to the Lord and serving in your role?
- On your job, can you say with real confidence that you are submitted to the Lord and serving in your role?

- For that matter, in your church can you say with real confidence that you are submitted to the Lord and serving in your role?

The American family is dysfunctional; and, for the most part, we celebrate its breakdown as if it were a comedy.

Put on your costume... Live-Play your role. Let's show the world the Lord Who loves them so much that He submitted to the Cross.