

“When the Wife Says No”
Colossians 3:18-19
(Preached at Trinity, October 21, 2018)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Chapter 3** Paul describes the wonderful transforming grace of the Gospel. Christians have been united with Christ we are one with Christ. We are described as the Body of Christ.
2. In **Verse 1** Paul reminds us that we have been raised up with Christ. We now live above this present world. Paul says:
Colossians 3:2 NAU - "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."
3. There is no part of our life that is not impacted by our union with Christ.
Colossians 3:17 NAU - "Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."
4. This is particularly true with regard to how we interact with other people.
Colossians 3:12-13 NAU - "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."
5. In the final verses of **Chapter 3** Paul turns our attention to the effect of the Gospel on domestic life—how we live within the framework of family. Paul divides it into three orders or groups:
Wives and husbands, Children and parents, Slaves and Masters.
6. So far, I've addressed the first two—wives and husbands. I described what is called “complementarianism.” Complementarianism is the Biblical teaching that men and women have different, but complementary roles. The Bible describes these distinctions most clearly in the in marriage, in the home, and in the church.
7. As I pointed out, Paul's charge to husbands and wives in Colossians is very brief and concise. He is focusing upon the chief duties for husbands and wives.
 - A. We've looked at the duty of wives to submit to the leadership of their husbands. "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."
 - B. We've looked at the duty of husbands to sacrificially love their wives. "Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them."
8. I've tried to be careful with this sensitive subject, trying to maintain the intent of God's charge to husbands and wives. I've stressed the danger of wives seeking to usurp the leadership of their husbands and the danger of husbands failing to properly discharge their duty before God.

9. Last week I turned our attention to the role of husbands, stressing his duty to sacrificially serve his wife as provider and protector, even denying himself for her. He must know her well—her strengths and her weaknesses. The danger is for a man to load his wife with greater responsibilities than she is equipped to handle. The result is undue stress that will affect her physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
10. Sin makes every human relationship and every human interaction difficult. Sometimes, good intentions can bring about behavior out of tune with the Biblical mandate. One error results in another. In some circles today there has been an unbalanced emphasis upon the husband's headship. It is a good intentioned reaction against the rise of feminism, but has resulted in a hyper-patriarchy.
- A. In the extreme cases, the father has absolute dominion. No one else is allowed to teach each his children. Pastoral leadership is seen as irrelevant.
- B. The wife is granted little opportunity for self-expression. She must obey her husband absolutely. I know of one pastor that declared the proper interpretation of **Ephesians 5:24** - "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything," should be interpreted absolutely. It means the wife must even vote for the same candidate as her husband.
- C. In the book, "Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood" George Knight writes: "The delicate balance that must be maintained is that of the husband's leadership in a situation in which two equal image bearers of God are involved. The husband must honor his wife and respect her views, opinions, feelings, and contributions about the issue at hand, and must do so in a way that takes into account her strengths and weaknesses. After all, the wife is given to the husband to be his chief 'helper.' The husband and wife should seek to come to a mutually satisfactory decision after discussion and through prayer and seeking the principles of God's Word, and they should do so under the leadership and guidance of the husband, who should initiate the process. In a world of sin in which both husband and wife are beset by the limitations sin brings to our understanding and to the evaluative and decision-making process, there will be times when a consensus may not be reached. In this situation, it is the husband's responsibility to exercise his leadership role and make the decision. The wife needs to submit to that decision."¹
11. In my sermon three weeks ago I gave two exceptions when a wife might go against the direction of her husband—
- A. If he asks you to do something in opposition to God's commands, that is, something intrinsically evil.
- B. If he does something or asks you to do something that will put you or your family in danger.
12. The first is obvious. Peter's words must be our own: **Acts 5:29 NAU** - "We must obey God rather than men."
- A. An example would be if your husband demanded that you get an abortion. Or if he prohibited you from worship or having any interaction with a local church.

¹ *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), Page 349.

- B. A Biblical example would be Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias devised a scheme of deception presumably to enhance his reputation in the church. Sapphira was condemned for participating in her husband's sin.
Acts 5:1-2 NAU - "But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ² and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet."
Acts 5:9-10 NAU - "Peter *said* to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out *as well*." ¹⁰ And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last"
13. The second is less obvious and must be dealt with with particular care. If the husband does something or asks his wife to do something that will put her or her family in danger. This is not a subjective situation. It must be a true danger.
- A. One of the basic rights endued to us as human beings is that of self-preservation. Fleeing from the wrath to come is one of the basic elements of the Gospel. We have a right to self-preservation. There are times we give up our right to self-preservation, such as in martyrdom. Does a wife give up her right to self-preservation when she gets married? Does she have a right to defend herself and her children from those who threaten harm, even if the perpetrator is her husband?
- B. I used an illustration of which I've been asked to elaborate. I used an example of a man who comes home and announces he's going to liquidate all of the family's assets and move to Alaska to become a fir trapper. (My mind was filled with images from a TV show on Alaskan trappers)
- C. Illustrations can be difficult because the preacher may have one thing in view while the hearer receives it differently. The preacher presumes the illustration is making his point, when in reality it is not.
- D. My intent was to give an example of an action that might prove deadly to the family, not to give an exposition on the subject of vocation.
14. The Alaskan wilderness is a brutal, unforgiving environment where winter temps in the interior can drop to 50 below zero or more. Experienced trappers understand the nature of frozen rivers, the wildlife, and how to survive in such brutal conditions.
- A. The point I was trying to convey was for a novice to attempt to survive a winter without any knowledge of the Alaskan wilderness, without any experience in acquiring meat for survival, and without any suitable lodging, it would most likely prove fatal. No man in his right mind would attempt to bring his wife and children into such an environment. My intention was to give an example of a situation where a wife might resist such a plan. If he persisted on such a plan she might encourage him to try it alone for a winter.
- B. In 1896 gold was discovered in the Klondike region of the Yukon that resulted in a stampede of prospectors from Seattle and San Francisco. Over 100 thousand tried to reach the Klondike. Only 30-40 thousand succeeded. Many died in their pursuit of gold. The Canadian authorities finally had to require prospectors to produce a year's supply, almost a ton of food to prevent starvation. This was obviously not a wise situation to bring along a wife and children.

15. Perhaps that illustration was not extreme enough to make my point.
- A. What if a man decides to arm his three 8-12 year-old children with assault weapons so that they can fight with him in his militia.
This would be a time for a wife and mother to move her children to safety. There are tragic examples of children being used in suicide terror attacks—and their fathers are persuaded they are doing the will of God.
 - B. Or what if a wife or her children become the victims of abuse. My counsel would not be for her to submit to her husband and pray for his repentance but for her to take her children and flee.
16. A good Biblical example is Abigail in 1 Samuel 25.
- A. She was married to an unreasonable man by the name of Nabal. David sent 10 young men to Nabal to seek supplies. Nabal insulted David and his men and refused to give them anything. Nabal's actions put his entire household at risk. **1 Samuel 25:13 NAU** - "David said to his men, "Each *of you* gird on his sword."
 - B. Nabal's servants came and told Abigail. **1 Samuel 25:17 NAU** - "Now therefore, know and consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household"
 - C. Was it incumbent upon Abigail to submit to the decision of her husband come-what-may? Abigail's decision was to go against her husband and take action. **1 Samuel 25:18-19 NAU** - "Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred *loaves* of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded *them* on donkeys. ¹⁹ She said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal."
 - D. The Bible praises Abigail for her wisdom and prudence, even though she went against the direction of her husband. **1 Samuel 25:32-34 NAU** - "Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, ³³ and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand. ³⁴ "Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light *as much as one male.*"
17. These are the two reasons a wife might say no to her husband:
- If he asks her to do something that it intrinsically evil
 - If he asks her to do something that would prove detrimental to her safety or the safety of her children.
- For the believing wife, in both of these cases she should seek the counsel and leadership of her elders.
18. So, returning to the subject of vocation.

- I. The husband has been appointed by God as the provider of his family
- A. God appointed the primary roles after the fall
1. God told Eve her primary role was in the home – she was the child-bearer. Her primary role was caring for the home. We can see this with the excellent wife of Proverbs 31.
Proverbs 31:14-15 NAU - "She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. ¹⁵ She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens."
Proverbs 31:21 NAU - "She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet."
Proverbs 31:27-28 NAU - "She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. ²⁸ Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband *a/so*, and he praises her"
 2. Adam's primary role was in the field
Genesis 3:17-19 NAU - "Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground"
 3. I'll deal with work in greater detail in **Verse 23**. Work is to be seen as a good thing. It is God honoring. Sloth is condemned in Scripture.
Proverbs 19:15 NAU - "Laziness casts into a deep sleep, And an idle man will suffer hunger."
2 Thessalonians 3:10 NAU - "if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."
- B. The man is to carefully choose his vocation
1. A young man should seek counsel as he determines his vocation
 From his pastors, from older men, from his parents
 2. Changes in vocation or even relocation must be considered carefully.
 After marriage, such decisions should be discussed and considered between both husband and wife.
 3. Often the Holy Spirit will stir the heart of both the husband and the wife.
 - A. In such cases both are excited about the decision and the prospect of using it in service to Christ with husband as leader and the wife as helper.
 - B. This is particularly true in ministerial pursuits. When I've had the privilege of working with pastoral candidates, I've always included interviewing the wives. If the wife expresses disapproval of her husband's calling it merits slowing down and taking time to explore her concerns.
 - C. While vocational decisions are ultimately the husbands, the wife's opinions and concerns should not be dismissed.
 4. What if the vocational change seems poorly considered?
 - a. It's not as extreme as moving to the Klondike but perhaps extreme, none-the-less.
 Most likely, it isn't a situation of danger, just concern.

- b. Your wife appreciates stability and security. If you've demonstrated a stable character she's learned to trust you. If you've often shown irresponsibility and rash ill-considered decisions she may have cause for concern.
- Perhaps you have an unsettled heart, or a pattern of recklessness that you need to repent of.
 - Perhaps you have a prideful heart that prevents you from seeking counsel that is also sinful
- C. A word to wives regarding your husband's decisions
1. Concern does not permit a denial of your husband's leadership. Perhaps you can encourage him to seek counsel from his pastors or others.
 - a. In my ministry I've had as many come to *inform* me of a decision as I've had those who come sincerely seeking counsel.
 - b. I've heard people making foolhardy decisions declare, "The Holy Spirit has spoken to me." Or, "God has opened all the doors for us. It must be the right thing."
 - c. In cases of great concern, it isn't usurping the authority of your husband to seek counsel from your elders.
 2. Pray for your husband and discuss family decisions with him. But at the end of the day, your husband will bear accountability for his decisions. Pray that God will give your husband wisdom and bless your family and protect him from ill-considered decisions.