

My father always told me what he wanted for us most was to be people who loved Jesus. He didn't care if we went to college, or what profession that we would choose. More than anything, he wanted us to be people of character who knew and loved Christ. Because he knew that was the most important thing. This was always helpful for me. Because I knew that no matter what twists and turns life throws my way. No matter how my life turns up. The purpose of life was to please Christ.

This is true for all of us. Our primary purpose in life is to love and pursue Christ. We may have different things we do. We may have different backgrounds, jobs or roles. But we all have the same mission.

Our passage this morning is the household codes. These are instructions for wives, children, husbands, and everyone. They can be controversial and debated. They can be overemphasized and people get way too in the weeds on what submission looks like or debates over slavery. But I want us to take a big picture view. As we look this morning, I want us to see that each of these instructions is actually the same.

I. Serve God with future-focused faith no matter your role in the world.

We only have one point this morning.

Because I want you to see that each of these instructions comes from the same place.

Men, women, children, husbands, wives, workers, and bosses.

Every single person, no matter their role or circumstance is called to the same thing.

There is some nuance in how it works out.

But all of us are commanded to serve God in faith.

Our work, our role is ultimately about God.

And all of us are to serve Him.

Whatever role we find ourselves in.

Single, widowed, or married.

Workers, bosses, or retired.

Parents or children.

Whatever we are, we all are to serve God in faith.
And we do so looking towards the future.
That is the big picture.
That is what all of us must do.
No one can escape that and no one gets an out.

It means that none of us get to check out.
We don't get to skim the verses and only read the ones that apply to us.
Don't nudge your spouse or kids.
Don't think you get to escape because you are single or retired.
We have different goals or roles.
All of us are working towards the same thing.
All of us have different circumstances.
We all find ourselves in various roles and situations and families.
And so there will be some differences in some particular ways that we do this, but the core is all the same.
So let's take a look at some of the different ways that all of us are to serve God faith, no matter our role.

Verse 18, **"Wives submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord."**

The first role that is addressed is wives
The wives are called to submit.
Now this is a contentious verse.
But remember wives, to serve God with future-focused faith no matter what you're role in the world is.

In one of the ways that that works itself out is that wives are called to be willing to submit to their husband's.
That the general heart and attitude is one of willing to not be in charge.
We often want to jump towards women's roles.
Or we want to talk about men and women and how marriage should work.
But this does not have to do with a wives duty to a husband.
This is about submitting to Christ and God's word.

I'm gonna deal with her husband's in a moment, but for now I wanna remind you it is something we do for God.

Remember contextually this would not have been new.

This wouldn't even have been that distinctly Christian.

But when the Colossians receive this letter, they're living in a Roman culture that is profoundly patriarchal in which women have very little power or influence.

God does not say submit because you are a woman.

God says submit to me and for me.

Submit in faith towards the future.

Now this has been abused.

This is an abusive husband's favorite verse.

This is a controlling husband's favorite verse to mean that you're not allowed to have an opinion and you can't disagree and you don't get to say what you really think and you don't get to make decisions

So there are some who use the Bible as a weapon to abuse into manipulate to harm their wife that's wrong.

I don't want you to hear that and I want to be clear. That's not what this is saying.

However, just because some people abuse, the Bible doesn't mean that it's not true.

So we still have to work to understand what does it mean.

This is gonna look different in every marriage.

It's gonna look different in every life.

The main idea is wives is a willingness to not have your way.

To lay aside our desires for Christ in faith.

Verse 19, **"Husbands love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."**

Husband's now it is your turn

What is funny as how often we quote these verses and do it.

We tell wives you submit husbands you lead.

That is not what Paul says. It's not what God's word says and it's not what it says here in Colossians three.

It says wife submit, husbands love.

This would've been radical and counter cultural.

Because in the ancient world husbands were not expected to love their wives.

Husbands were expected to lead they were expected to be in charge.

But love was not necessarily a significant part.

There were many different household codes like this that are their philosophers and ethical teachers taught.

None of them had any instructions to husbands that they should love their wives.

But this is what Jesus calls us too.

I think sometimes that we as husbands can get the wrong idea or we can place the wrong emphasis on what God's word says.

Most problems in marriage are rarely that husbands have not been leading well and it is often that they have not been loving well.

But we are to love.

That everything we do that every decision every leadership move is made in love to Christ.

And goes on to say, do not be harsh with your spouse.

You cannot be loving, and you cannot obey the scripture if you were always dictating and telling your spouse what everything will be.

That is not the kind of love that Jesus calls us too.

There's a harsh selfish love.

What are the things that I tell my boys all the time because I asked them hey, why did God give us strength?

And I've asked them enough if they know that the answer is to help those who are weaker.

Husband you are to use what God has given you to love your wife.

And if you're not loving well, don't tell me you're leading well cause you're not.

Honestly, anytime somebody comes to me and they wanna talk about how men are supposed to lead.

I think they've already missed it.

Jesus didn't come and save us on the cross so we could be great leaders he came and he loved us and that's how we love.

And we love because we recognize our wives are not ours.

Right that we love them even if our wives are difficult or we do not understand.

We love, even if our wife disagrees with us and we wish we could just make her do what we want.

That we love because the wife that you have been given is a gift from God to you.

She's a believer. She is your sister in Christ and a daughter of the king of heaven, and she has been trusted to your care and so the way that you love her is ultimately about whether or not you were loving Jesus.

Marriage becomes something beautiful when husbands love, which makes wives want to submit, which makes husbands want to love more.

The question shouldn't be, "who makes decisions?"

It should be, how can we love each other and treat each other with faith?

Verse 20, **"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this please the Lord."**

Now we get to children.

And they also have a role.

So kids that are in here listen up.

God has a job for you.

God sees you he cares about you he made you intentionally.

He has a purpose for you.

Right now, your purpose is to obey your parents.

That is not fun. It is not awesome.

But most of the things God calls us to are not.

And God says, obey our parents in everything.
Selfishly, I wish he hadn't said in everything.
Because then we could get to pick and choose when we want to obey.
But when we are children, part of our role is to obey and submit to our parents.

And we do this not because our parents are awesome because our parents are right, but we do it because it pleases God.
Every time you obey your parents, even though you think they are foolish or wrong really you were obeying Jesus.
And really you are pleasing Jesus.

We usually think of young children when we read this.
In the Biblical context this really would've been any child that is still living in the home, whether they are married or not, or whether they have their own children or not.
There was still an expectation in that culture that they would submit and obey their parents.
And our modern American culture that is wild and we don't know what to do with that and we don't like it and we're glad that that doesn't apply to us.
But it is even to them Paul doesn't say he just obey until you're 18.
He says obey your parents because it pleases God.
Not because of our parents, but because of Christ.

Verse 21, **"Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged."**

And this is one that's convicting for me.
Because we are not to provoke our children.
We are not to intentionally anger or children or to make things difficult for our children.
No, this actually doesn't mean only fathers.
Even though he's addressing fathers, he is including mothers in this as well.

He particularly addresses the father because ultimately it's their responsibility.

But as parents, we should not provoke our children.

What it means by provoking is making someone resentful or bitter.

Then we should be parenting in such a way that we are being sensitive to the spiritual character of our children.

And we are being sensitive to their emotional state.

That doesn't mean children are in charge and they get to decide or dictate how the house goes based on their behavior.

It just means that we need to work that as parents that we treat our children as human beings made in the image of God.

Gentle parenting is a big thing now and there's some stuff that's overboard but the core thing that's great about it is recognizing this child you've been given is made in the image of God and they are a person they should be treated like it.

Into that as Christians, we say yes and God calls us to care for that person well.

Obedience is hard, but we do need to help them obey.

To not try and discourage them.

Now there will be moments that we make our children angry, and there will be moments that they are resentful and bitter and upset.

And that's just parenting. You can't get away from it completely.

But we need to ask her ourselves as we are putting demands on our children as we are trying to raise them to say am I just provoking them to anger?

Am I causing them to be discouraged?

Am I treating them like Christ?

Because these are human beings and trusted to to us from God, and we need to serve God with faith in the way that we do it.

We need to serve God and faith that one day will stand before Jesus and I have to give an account for how we raise our children.

Verse 22, **"Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord."**

Now, the Bible is not endorsing slavery.

It allowed it for a time.

But the whole trajectory of the Bible was one of saying slavery was wrong and unjust.

But even though this entire system was unjust, they were to obey.

This can create a conundrum.

But what I want us to see is this.

Obeying Jesus, even in an unjust system is good.

Even when everything around you is wrong.

Even if you have no control over what is happening.

You doing the right thing matters to God.

I felt this while serving at a super unhealthy and ungodly church.

Everything bothered me, but I could not do anything about it.

I did not even know what to do.

But what I knew I could do was just obey and serve God.

To not worry about upholding this system, but just upholding God.

So, we do not work well to please people.

We do not do it for awards and promotions.

We do it with sincere hearts because we fear God.

And because we fear Him more than anything else.

Not just to seem busy.

But we do our best to serve God.

We do our best in faith.

Even if He leaves us and has placed us on the lowest end of the totem pole.

We do what is in front of us.

And we do it in faith.

Not for a paycheck or a raise

Verse 23, **"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,**

This means everything.

It all is for God.

Whatever it is we find ourselves doing.

We can do it with our full hearts.

And we can do it trusting that God is watching.

He cares.

It matters to Him.

This is the heart of the passage.

It is what He has been saying over and over.

Whatever we do, we do it in faith.

We don't do it for a spouse, family, or boss.

We do it for Jesus Christ.

Verse 24, **"knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."**

Many people would work hard for an inheritance.

They would put up with an abusive father or cranky aunt.

All because they are hoping to inherit something.

They want the money.

The problem is these earthly inheritances don't always work out.

People give decades of their lives to a company to see it given to someone else.

Or the inheritance all fades away.

But Christ's inheritance is sure.

If you work for the Lord, there is an inheritance.

You can receive it.

You do not have to doubt or wonder if it is real or if it will come.

And it is better than pieces of green paper or 1's and 0's in a bank account on a computer screen.

It is an inheritance that will never rust or fade.

And inheritance that can never be stolen or taxed.

And it is the reward of all those who serve the Lord.

The inheritance is life everlasting.

The inheritance is the new heavens and new earth.

The inheritance is the world that will never fade.

The inheritance is all our tears will be wiped away.

The inheritance is the resurrection from the dead.

The inheritance is being in a world with endless love.

The inheritance is being with Christ forever and ever.

And the inheritance is so much more than this.

Every great ending of a story.

Every happily ever after,

Is just a mere echo of the grandeur that awaits us.

Listen, you are serving the Lord.

Whatever it is we do.

Whatever job you find yourself doing, paid for or not.

It is not for you.

It is not for your family.

It is not for your business.

It is not for a company you work for.

It is not for the government or your nation.

Everything that we do ultimately is serving Jesus Christ.

All of our service.

From the small service of cleaning our rooms and making our beds.

To the larger acts of service when we sacrifice our time and finances to help the poor and downtrodden.

All of our work.

Every bit of it is serving Jesus Christ.

This is one of the reasons I am passionate about ordinary obedience.

This is why I think our mundane and seemingly ordinary lives are so significant.

Nothing you ever do.

No task you ever complete.

No matter how seemingly empty.
No matter how dumb or misguided.
We do them all to the glory and service of Jesus Christ.
Every dish you wash.
Every weed you pick.
Every flower you grow.
Every piece of laundry you wash and fold.
Every piece of trash you pick up off the ground.
Every expense report you fill out.
Every boring meeting that should have been an email you sat through.
Or every grandkids event you went to even though it was dumb and your grandchild barely did anything.
All of that is done for Christ.

Every single thing you ever do.
And so, this should encourage us.
It should change the way that we view our chores.
It should change the way we view our work.
It should affect the way we parent.
It should affect the way we act as grandparents.
It should affect the way we think through our retirement.
It is never meaningless.
And it is never just for someone else or just for us.
All of our work is for Christ.

So, whatever you find yourself to do.
Whatever role God has placed you in.
Recognize that you are there to serve Christ.
Whether you are serving in some grand or small way.
The work I do as a pastor preaching right now is a service to God.
And so is the work I do changing Quinn's diaper.
Everything that you do is service for Christ.

And we can do all of the work knowing that God will reward us in the future.

Every single thing we do in faith.

Everything we do in service to Christ.

All of it with faith in the future will be rewarded.

No matter what our work is.

Included the work we do as children.

Verse 25, **"For the wrong-doer will be paid back from the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality."**

This is also the flip side of the promise.

There is a reward when we work in faith.

And there is a punishment for those who do not.

Those who do wrong.

Those who mishandle their roles.

Those who do will face justice.

Whatever role God has given you.

There are people we have to serve that do wrong.

There are people in our marriage who do wrong.

There are people who are our parents who do wrong.

There are our children who may wrong us.

And I don't just mean sin against us in small ways.

I mean those who wrong us in significant ways.

Most common we can think of bosses or employees.

People who are under or over us.

And they may not do what is right.

They may be terrible bosses who mistreat us.

Maybe an abusive parent or spouse.

Even when we do the right things.

Even when we do all that we are supposed to do.

Even when we serve the Lord in faith, things could go wrong.

People could do a terrible job.

But God is going to hold them accountable.

He will pay them back for exactly what is going on.

This should set us free.

We do not have to feel responsible that we need to make things right.

It is not up to us to make those in other roles do what they should.

We do not have to change giant organizations or make sure our company does things the right way.

Sometimes, all that we do do.

Sometimes all we can control is whether or not we will do what is right.

All we can do is serve the Lord in a small way.

We can love parents who are cruel in the best way we can.

We can honor Christ in a marriage that is ending.

And we can trust that God will hold people accountable.

He will do what needs done.

He will not allow wrong-doers to get away with wrong.

He will not let them escape.

They will be paid back.

God is just.

There is no escape.

Those who seem like they get away with things will not.

And the longer their punishment takes to get there, the worse it will be.

On one hand this should encourage us to be sure that we are not doing wrong.

That we are serving God and treating those around us well.

But it also means we can trust God.

He will handle those around us who do wrong.

4:1, "Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven."

It is a little strange that it ends with masters.

But i think it is fitting.

After warning wrong-doers will be punished, then the instructions come to those in power.

It may be helpful in our own contexts to read this as bosses.

Or to understand this is the role of anyone who is in charge.
Anyone who has power in a situation, family, business, or any place.
If you have people under you who serve you.
Then you need to treat them with justice.
You need to treat them fairly.
It is not optional.
It is not about being a great boss.
It is the Christian expectation of our behavior.
We do not do things to make money.
Our job is not to be the most successful or have a legacy.
Our job is to be faithful.

And we do this knowing that we all have master.
We all are under Christ.
And If He is our master, we are accountable.
We will have to answer to our boss for how we treat the people He has entrusted to our care.
As a Pastor and our elders will have to stand before God one day and be accountable for every soul who is a member of our church.
We all of us will have to answer to God for those under us.
That should fill us with some fear.
That should make us be careful and evaluate our behavior.
It should not make us want to boss people around.
It should not make us want to push everyone hard and make it difficult for fun.
It surely shouldn't push us to rip off the people under us or mistreat them.
Because we should recognize these are people made in the image of God.
They are His.
How we treat them reflects on what we think about God.
We must always treat others with justice.
And justice according to God and His Word.
Not justice according to us.
And how does He treat us?

The gospel is that Christ treats us far better than we deserve.
He does not fire us or get rid of us when we fail.
If this is how Christ treats us, then how should we treat others?
Ultimately we should do out in light of the gospel.

And our faith should be future focused.
The hope of the gospel is that this life is not the end.
It is a rehearsal for the life to come.
But our choices here matter.
How we live is far more important than what we accomplish.
And so, whatever we have to do.
Whether meager or significant.
Whether we are a child who needs to obey.
Or someone retired who is looking for how to spend our time.
What matters is living in faith.
That this day matters.
It will matter into all eternity.
If we live in light of the cross of Christ.
If we live following Jesus.
Whatever you do in faith towards the future Christ is making, will be redeemed.

And the good news of the gospel is that all of our failures can be forgiven.
That it is never too late.
None of this means that when we sin or mess up our roles that we've ruined our lives or God's plan.
Jesus came to die for those with no faith.
He died for those who were a mess.
And He can redeem and restore all the wrong we have done.
If we will trust in Him and Him alone.

So, whatever your role is this morning. Serve God with a future-focused faith.