

St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.

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Worship This Week Feb. 26, 2023

WELCOME & Prayer –

PRAISE SONGS – Jesus is the name we honour, Spirit song

YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART –

SONG – This is my commandment

RECEIVE OFFERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS – Bible study

GOD IS MY WITNESS –

PRAYER –

SCRIPTURE – Colossians 3:18-19

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord.

19 Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

MESSAGE –

Those watching and listening who are regulars here will know that I preach through entire books and letters in the Bible, start to finish, every verse and each word. I've found it to be a powerful experience when we allow scripture to speak in its entirety. That means we don't leave anything out.

Sooner or later, we run across a passage that doesn't seem to fit how we view the world. It's seemingly at odds with our values and culture. The pastor can have one of several reactions when encountering a passage such as this.

I could dismiss it entirely and say that it must have been a temporary rule and no longer applies today. Times were different then.

I could say this particular statement about marriage was not in line with Christ's teaching and witness. Some have suggested that this line was included by Paul as a concession to Roman culture. After all, we know that Jesus was an egalitarian. In a world in which women were seen as subhuman by many, Jesus treated women

as equal to men. Mary and Martha were just as important to Jesus as their brother Lazarus. It was a radical thing, almost scandalous, for Jesus to talk to that woman at the well. He spoke to women not just as fellow human beings but as intellectual equals.

Another reaction would be to ignore it entirely, in the same way many in the church disregard scripture which clearly and universally describes marriage as between one man and one woman. You conclude that that it was written for a different day and age and you leave it out. Many churches do that.

One way to leave it out is not to preach through entire books of the Bible. Instead, they pick and choose scripture to fit what they want to say.

In many churches today, the minister follows something called the Revised Common Lectionary, where the weekly scripture is chosen for them. The lectionary is compiled by a committee of representatives from 23 denominations, including The Presbyterian Church in Canada. There are some denominations where the ministers are required to preach from this. The lectionary is powerful in one sense because on any given Sunday, millions of pastors around the world will be preaching the same text to hundreds of millions of people. Another plus is that if you follow the lectionary, you get a good sampling of scripture, from Genesis to Revelation.

But it's impossible to preach through the entire Bible in a three-year cycle. So what's being left out? Well, some of what's on the cutting floor includes the most controversial verses. Colossians 3 is perfect example. This chapter of Paul's letter is in the lectionary, but it ends with verse 17, where we left off last week. Verses 18 to the end of the chapter will never see the light of day in many congregations. The defenders of the lectionary will say they cannot include everything because it's not practical. True, but they're selective about what they leave out. What's telling in this situation is that Paul's words here in Colossians are echoed almost word for word in Ephesians 5:22. And that verse is also left out of the lectionary. I don't think that's a coincidence.

Or we could actually deal with it. We are commanded to pay attention to the entire Bible. We are invited to read it, learn from it, proclaim it, teach it and live by it – in its entirety. Who are we to ignore sections which aren't pleasing to our ears? (Or reinterpret them – but that's another matter entirely.)

Truth be told, a part of me wondered, what if I ignored this and skipped right over verses 18-19 and picked up at verse 20 – would anyone notice? But I'm not one to wimp out.

The offending word here is "submit." Nobody wants to submit. Whether it is to the LORD, or to the government, or to our parents or spouses. We have this idea that submission means the other person always gets their own way, they can dominate and control us, that we are somehow less important. But this is far from the truth.

I remember a wedding we attended many years ago. At the reception, during the speeches, married couples were invited to share words of advice to the young couple. As you can imagine, it was a mixture of wisdom and humour. First, advice to the husband: bite your tongue, allow her to help you choose your wardrobe and – very important – the thing about the toilet seat. Then advice for the wife: give him some space, don't be controlling etc. And then one voice shouted out "Submit!" Not a male voice – a woman. There was a loud gasp from another woman in the crowd. And then stunned silence. Whether the advice was honest or sarcastic doesn't matter. The reaction told the story. Submit is an ugly word.

What does submission really mean in this context? And a second question, is submit the best word – is there another word we can use that doesn't change the meaning?

To understand the meaning and message of these verses, we need to break it down one word at a time, look at the various pieces, then put it back together.

“Wives” means just that – a woman who is married to a husband. It can’t be translated as spouses, something gender neutral. Paul was specifically referring collectively to one woman married to one man. Paul is not talking about females in general.

“Submit” means “to subject oneself, to obey; to submit to one's control; to yield to one's admonition or advice: absolutely.” That’s the dictionary definition. Keep in mind that language changes all the time. Our understanding of a word may be different than what the speaker or writer is trying to communicate.

On that note, could the word be changed to something more palatable without losing its meaning? One possibility is “yield.” At an intersection, one driver yields to the other because if you both proceed at the same time, there’s going to be a crash. Another word is “defer.” We use this when we elect or make a decision to put something off, or put it aside for now. There’s a choice in the matter.

My sense is that what is most troubling about the word “submit” is the belief that it means wives are expected to do that or are commanded. That is not what Paul is saying. In fact, wives are invited to make that decision for themselves. If a wife is to submit to her husband’s authority then it has to be voluntary; she must be willing. Her husband cannot force her. Neither can the church.

We live in a very individualistic culture in which we are told by secular authority that we are masters of our lives and no one should tell us how to think and live. Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, clearly instructs us to worship God, love, submit and obey the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That’s the vertical (top down) relationship. Then there’s the horizontal relationships, between people. Paul tells us we are to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5:21. Have respect for one another. Recognize that that we are all created in the image of God, each with different gifts, talents, callings and responsibilities on this side of the Kingdom. The emphasis is on what’s appropriate – what’s spiritually and physically healthy. There’s a Godly order in the spiritual world and submission to God by all created in His image is essential. It's foolish (if not insane) to think I know better than the One who created the universe and for whom nothing is impossible.

We understand and accept that. But what about that word within marriage?

This section of Colossians is focused on the family, the essential foundation of society. The family is the natural and spiritual representation of our world. Life comes into the world through a man and woman (husband and wife) and children are raised to do the same. We love and care for one another. Each generation raises the next and then cares for the ones who came before them. **It's about care** – self care, childcare and elder care. Submission here is not for the wife to *obey* her husband. Huge difference. Submit means to recognize that there needs to be a natural order. (Obey is what children are commanded to do – something we will get at in next week's text.) On a practical level, it means husbands and wives submit to one another first. They make decisions together. The husband submits to the wife in whatever area of life she is more gifted and talented. (Perhaps she knows more about car repair and construction.) And the wife in turn submits to her husband where he's more capable. (It could well be that he's a better cleaner and cook.)

Submit comes to play only when there is a disagreement. Where there is an impasse, the husband needs to have the final decision. In this sense, it's like any place where there's hierarchy. The person at the top sometimes has to make an executive decision even though the people ranked lower are more intelligent or wise.

And the direct message by Paul is that submission is only to be within the context of marriage. Women are not to submit to men in general. If that was the case, women would just be second class citizens, and that is clearly not what Jesus modeled in his ministry.

Let's move on.

"Husbands" which is the male partner in a marriage between a man and a woman. Emphasis on male. And not men in general. There's a difference.

"As is fitting" is key. It implies what's appropriate in this context or situation. More specifically: "now that you are in the Lord." This section of Paul's letter concerned how to live with one another now that you understand and accept

Christ. This is so important. The direct and obvious reference is to your new life in the church in which “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 3:28). We are in this together. And we have different roles and responsibilities.

“Love your wives and never treat them harshly.” We know there are different types of love. This is the love between people – “to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of.” This is very important in this context. This implies someone taking great care of something or someone very precious. All you want is the best for that thing or person. It fits with Paul’s instruction about how husbands should treat their wives. Harsh means “to embitter, exasperate, render angry, indignant; passive, to be embittered, irritated.”

Men need to feel respected by their wives, and women need to feel loved by their husbands. There is no problem for the husband to be the head of the household if he puts the welfare of his wife and children first and is the husband is also completely submitted to God. If the husband and wife are submitted to God, the marriage has a greater than average chance of thriving. The husband is the head of the family in the same way Christ is the head of the church. The husband is to be the protector of his wife and their children.

Having said all this, even with the substitution of the words “defer” and “yield” I’m aware that this is not in tune with our culture. This is a world which has pretty much abandoned God’s holy laws. We think we know better.

As our friend Paul told the Corinthian church (1 Cor 1:19-25)

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart. Where is the one who is wise? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? . . . 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

When a wife doesn’t willingly choose to submit, yield or defer to her husband in certain situations, she’s not putting God first. At the same time, when a husband

puts his own wants and desires head of his wife and children, he falls short as a follower of Christ.

The advice to submit/yield/defer comes because of our selfish human nature.

On that note, there are limits to submission/deference and yielding. If the husband asks the wife to sin, no go. When the husband is medically incapacitated, mentally ill, drunk or high, the deal is off. Same if the husband is violent and physically threatening, commits adultery.

Submit/yield/defer does not mean a woman can't be a physician, a lawyer, CEO or politician. Or an auto mechanic for that matter.

There are influential women in ministry. They are wealthier and more powerful in the church than their husbands. Have you heard of Joyce Meyer? She's the founder and leader of a massive church ministry with more than 400 employees. It's more like an empire. She has a corporate jet. She's a commanding presence on stage. When she opens her mouth, you listen. Joyce has written a lot about what it takes to have a healthy, happy marriage. Her husband Dave is a quiet guy who's always in the background. If you didn't know any better, you'd think she ran the marriage and family like she rules the empire.

Here's what she wrote about this verse: "Basically; a woman is to respect and reverence her husband. This does not mean she behaves like a vegetable never having an opinion, or being afraid to voice it if she does. Marriage is a partnership, but ultimately someone has to make a final decision when two people don't agree. Sometimes he will make the decision you do not agree with and you will respect him. Sometimes he will allow you to win out of love for you; its all part of compromising and marriage."¹

If husband and wife love and cherish one another, respect each other's differences, enjoy each other and wholeheartedly submit their marriage and their family to God, then the need for the husband to break a deadlock will not happen

¹ <https://extraordinaryjani.wordpress.com/category/daily-devotionals/joyce-meyer/> accessed Feb. 20, 2023

that often. If ever. The couple will just know what to do. Both of them will be in sync with God and each other.

When we are in sync with God, in submission to the Holy Spirit of Christ, life is better. Our problems won't be eliminated. In fact, we even have more troubles because the enemy takes notice when we are ignoring him. But we will have strength that comes from the Creator's power. We will have peace the passes understanding. We will experience joy that brings light to the darkest corners of our prisons.

Again, it's about being in sync with God. When a husband gives all power to God and when a wife recognizes his submission, then the family unit becomes a place not only where God's will can be done, but where Kingdom power can bring people to life in a way that is beyond words.

HYMN – 410 Joyful Joyful we adore you

BENEDICTION – May you dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of this life and in the world to come.

NEW PRAYER

Ukraine: One year after Russia's attack, we pray that the war will end in peaceful coexistence. Until that happens, we pray for protection for Ukraine and its people and for other nations to continue to come to its aid.

Sandra Pegg: Making progress in her recovery from pneumonia – still in hospital but no visitors please.

CONTINUE TO PRAY

Health and healing –

1. Jennie Atherton, Becky Desjardine, Bill Eves, Margaret Follows, Ron Mason, Bette Northcott, Tom O'Neill, Cherie Pegg, Mary Whitson, Sandra Whitson
2. Waiting for surgery: Dan Shaw
3. Anyone seeking or undergoing treatment for addictions
4. Anyone wrestling with anxiety and depression
5. Karen Northcott – thanks for good biopsy results but continue to pray.

There are many whose names are not listed here – God know who they are and what they need.

Seniors and shut ins – Alan (Curly) Clark and Norma Latimer at Riverview Gardens, Jim Lusk and Ross Fuchs at Oaks Wallaceburg, Joyce MacTavish at The Waterford Home in Barrie, Bill Lozon at Copper Terrace, Aubrey Butler at home.

Session – Mark Labadie (clerk and representative elder), Cindy Brewer, Sheila Eves, Andrew Neely, Mark Richards and Julie Shaw.

Board of managers – Wendy Weston (chair), Paul Vandenbogaerde (treasurer), Will Brewer, Ross Fuchs, Linda Malott, Jenn Mason, Von Parking, Mark Richards, Jodie Rich, Dan Shaw and Mike Wicks.

WHAT'S UP:

We had a total of six people (five returnees and one new) at week two of **Bible study** today. It's down from the 11 we had last week – weather was a factor! Join anytime. Every Thursday at 2:30 p.m. It's all about the Person and Work of The Holy Spirit. Co-led by Pastor Andy and Pastor Rob Elka from Evangel Pentecostal Tabernacle.

We received a card from **Joyce MacTavish** to her church family – “Thankyou to all at St. Andrew’s for your best wishes and prayers. I appreciated it so much. I am settling into The Waterford home in Barrie and trying to get stronger with exercises from a physio and granddaughter Meghan (chiropractor and rehab). Our family is well and busy. I have 11 great-grandkids! Hoping in warmer weather to get to a local Presbyterian church (Westminster). Seeing family more often now. Blessings. Joyce’s prayer – “Praying God’s strength and power to witness in Dresden – that you all would not tire, but under Andy’s leadership the Spirit will lead with wings like eagles.” Isaiah 40:28-31. (Joyce’s mailing address: 3 Moore Ave., Victoria Harbour, Ont. L0K 2A0.)

Presbytery is restoring regular visitations and St. Andrew’s Dresden is first on the schedule. You should be receiving a questionnaire from presbytery via email. Or pick one up in person at church. A three-person team will be at the church Saturday March 11 from 9-11 to meet separately with the board, session, anyone from the congregation and then with the minister. It’s designed to be a routine checkup every three years. That said, if there are any concerns PLEASE share them. Presbytery’s primary job is to care for its congregations.

DATES

Feb. 26 – 3 p.m. Ministerial Celebration of Praise at the Christian Reformed Church. Pastor Andy leads prayer.

Feb. 27 – Church board of managers

March 1 – We provide childcare for Connect the Block at Dresden Area Central School. More volunteers welcome! 5-8 p.m. Dinner included.

March 6 – Session 7 p.m.

March 11 – Presbytery visitation, 9-noon at church.

March 19 – Annual Congregation Meeting in the Rutherford Hall following worship.

March 25 – Renewal Fellowship annual meeting in Welland or livestream. Register via Eventbrite or see Pastor Andy

GIVING:

E-transfer to pcvan1313@gmail.com. Bring envelope on Sunday or if you have a key, leave it in the treasurer’s mailbox. Mail it to the church, PO Box 93 Dresden. N0P 1M0. Put it in the mailbox at the home of treasurer Paul Vandenbogaerde. 1313 North Street, Dresden.

Telephone number 519-683-6194

GIFT CARDS – You pay face value for the gift cards and the church buys them at a discount through Chatham Christian Schools. **Next deadline February 26.**