

Christ-Centered Family Life

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[0 : 00] Good morning. You'll be turning in your Bibles, please, to Colossians chapter 3. Colossians 3, we're resuming the household codes that Paul had given to the church in Colossae. He had also given a very similar set of codes to the church in Ephesus, and we'll look at those as well. But Colossians chapter 3, I'm going to start reading verse 17 through 21.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh to them. Children, obey your parents in everything. This pleases the Lord.

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Let me pray. Lord, thank you for this morning. Thank you for the ability to read your word.

[1 : 00] And if you look at these practical verses, which are short and succinct, Lord, I ask that you help us, give us wisdom, insight. Help us to know how do we apply the fact that we've been united to Christ and that we've been seated with Him in the heavenly places.

How does that affect our life and our family? And it would help us to see that, to live out of our union with Christ. In Jesus' name, amen. So like I said, we're resuming our look through the book of Colossians.

And if you look, this section here is really the rules for Christian households or the household codes that describe how God's plan for society and for family functions.

In June, we looked at verses 18 and 19, husbands and wives. We talked about the parallel passage in Ephesians chapter 5. And if you recall, we saw that both husbands and wives are called to difficult, if not impossible, work.

The wives are called to submit to their husbands. Husbands are called to love their wives to the same extent and manner that Christ loved the church. And today we're looking at a passage that also is parallel, where both parties are called to difficult, if not impossible, work.

[2 : 20] In verse 20, we have Paul's command for children to obey their parents in everything. And then in verse 21, we have the command for fathers to not provoke their children unless they become frustrated or discouraged.

We'll look at these two commands here in Colossians, but like last time, we'll spend some time in the book of Ephesians because it's so parallel. It shows a lot of the same concepts, but provides more detail and nuance.

I said that these commands are difficult, if not impossible, because like all of you, I was once a child. And like many of you, I'm a father. But I'm a father that's prone to impatience and anger, frustration, distraction, selfishness, unrealistic expectations, partiality, laziness, and many more sins that my children could attest to.

So as I preach this, please know that I'm preaching this to myself. As I've studied this week, I've been keenly aware of the many times I've sinned against my children.

And most of them know this sermon's coming because I've used this passage in an apology. I say that because I've seen the ways that I've fallen short as a father.

[3 : 37] I get reminded of my Heavenly Father. He was none of those things that I struggled with. He was not impatient or selfish or partial or lazy. I'm getting ahead of myself.

Paul has addressed husbands and wives in the book, in this chapter. Now he moves into children and parents.

And the context of these commands in the whole book chapter of Colossians 3 is union with Christ. He opens the chapter with, If you've been raised with Christ, set your minds on things that are above, where Christ is.

Seated at the right hand of God. So he's saying, you've been raised with Christ, if you've been seated with Him, live out these things. And he goes through the whole list of things that a Christian is supposed to put off.

All these things that a Christian is supposed to stop doing, that aren't appropriate for a Christian. And then he lists things that a Christian is supposed to put on. All the actions, all the things that a Christian should do.

[4 : 39] Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Now he's getting into the ways that a Christian home should function. In these verses, he's going to talk about how a child should interact with his or her parents.

And how parents should interact with their children. So we'll look at those passages in that order. We'll look first at children and their parents. And we'll see God's command to children.

God's command is, children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. The parallel passage to it is in Ephesians chapter 6, verses 1 through 3.

It says, children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise. That it may go well with you. And that you may live long in the land.

And kids, guess what? This part of the sermon is for you. You have your own little kids' sermon. If you have got a sermon notebook paper, or you've got a piece of paper, or even the back of a notebook, I want you to take it out.

[5 : 49] And I'm going to ask you to write some things on this paper. Write your name at the top like you would do in school. Your name, maybe the date if you want to. But write your name, and then I want you to write part of these two verses.

The first one, write the words, obey your parents in everything. Obey your parents in everything. The second one that's below it, write, obey your parents in the Lord.

So we've got these two verses, obey your parents in everything, and then obey your parents in the Lord. Both verse 1 of Ephesians 6 and verse 30 of Colossians 3 make a similar statement.

Kids, obey your parents, then they give a reason. The reasons are because it's right, and because it pleases the Lord. The Apostle Paul was pretty clear, right?

Children should obey their parents. And then he gives us the reasons for obeying. So kids, take your notes, and add these phrases.

[6 : 58] After the first phrase, write, because this pleases Jesus. Because this pleases Jesus. After the second sentence, write the words, because it is right.

So you should have the phrase, obey your parents in everything, because this pleases Jesus. And below that, obey your parents in everything, because this pleases, sorry, because it's right.

Obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. So Paul goes on in Ephesians 6, and he talks about the fifth commandment. He says, honor your father and mother.

This is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land. So Paul interrupts this quote of this Old Testament command to say this is the first commandment with a promise.

The fifth commandment is the first commandment. The fifth commandment is the first one in the list of commandments to give a promise. So kids, I'm going to ask you to write another line.

[8 : 03] Write, honor your father and mother. Honor your father and mother. Paul gives the commands to obey our parents, and then he gives reasons.

It pleases Jesus, and it's right. And the reason he says it's right, it's a good thing, it's a correct thing, it's a right thing, is because one of the ten commandments that God's given us is to honor your parents.

So maybe draw a circle around the word write, right? It is right to obey your parents. And then a circle around the word honor your father and mother. And then connect them, because Paul's making the connection that obedience to your parents is right, because it's obedience to God's command.

It's right because obeying and honoring your parents is obeying and honoring God. What about the promise that Paul was talking about?

Remember when God gave the ten commandments? They had just left Egypt. They were traveling to the promised land. Whole families traveling. Mom and dad and kids all traveling to this promised land.

[9 : 13] And God gave Moses these ten commandments. Four were commandments about how man should interact with God. Six commands about how people should interact with each other. Six ways that they should live together.

The first command for interacting with each other is the fifth. Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you in the land, that you may live long in the land.

So God's giving a promise to people who are traveling to this land, honor your father and mother so that when you get there, you will live long. So God gave a promise.

Honor your father and mother because it brings blessing. So we're almost done writing. But add another, add the promise after the phrase, honor your father and mother.

So write the promise because it brings blessing. Your whole sentence should be, honor your father and mother because it brings blessing. It's not a magic blessing.

[10 : 12] You're not going to get candy and money and a new cell phone when you obey your parents. The command says it will go well with you.

You will live long in the land. So he's saying obedience to your parents actually gives you blessing, gives you a long life. And it may come as a shock to you kids, but a lot of the commands and the rules that your parents give you, they give you because it's a blessing and it's a benefit.

When we say no dessert, it's too close to supper, we want to bless you with good food and a healthy body. When we say do your chores, clean your room, do your homework, we want to bless you with an orderly house, functional house.

We want you to become a smart, responsible person who can one day live with their spouse. There may be times when it's less clear. It may not make sense why your parents are committing you to do something.

Your parents aren't perfect. We'll see that in just a moment. There are ways parents can mess up and sit against their kids. It can make them angry and frustrated. But in those cases, you can't possibly understand why would my parents have me be doing this?

[11 : 30] Why would my parents ask me to do this? It doesn't make any sense. I don't understand. I want you to remember the first thing we wrote down. Obey your parents in everything, because this pleases Jesus.

Your obedience, even if you don't understand the reason for the commands or what your parents are asking, pleases Jesus. Now, I want you to look over the verses on the screen, what you've written down, and I would like you to give yourself a grade.

From zero to 100%, A+. How would you say you do at these commands? Write your grade next to your name. As you're doing that, I want to introduce you to somebody who scored 100%.

This person obeyed their parents in everything. In Luke chapter 2, we're told of Jesus. He was visiting the temple with his parents.

And he went down to the temple, and he's talking, and they left. And they expected him to be with them, with family members, and they couldn't find him. They went back and looked for him.

[12 : 46] Luke chapter 2, verse 46 says, After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress. And he said to them, Why were you looking for me?

Do you not know that I must be in my father's house? And they did not understand the saying he spoke to them. And he went down with them and was submissive to them.

He was obedient to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

So Luke tells us Jesus was submissive to his human parents. The all-wise, all-powerful Jesus obeys God's commands so well that he obeys his fallen human parents.

[13 : 52] The author of Hebrews tells us some of Jesus' time on earth in Hebrews 5, 7. It says, In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death.

And he was hurt because of his reverence. Listen to this. Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

That's really what we read in our catechism today. So, Jesus took that test and he got 100%. Jesus was submissive to his parents in every aspect.

So I want you to take your paper and write Jesus' name at the top. And then 100% nice and big on your paper. So it says, Jesus 100%.

Look at the grade that you gave yourself. Maybe you've not written it down the one you have in your head. If you did give yourself 100%, you should talk to your parents and get a more accurate grade.

[15:02] But here's the important question. What grade would God give you? What grade would God give you if he said, My rule is obey your parents, honor your parents.

If God saw, and he has, all the ways that you've talked to your parents, the ways you've thought in your head towards your parents, the attitude that you've had and no one was watching, what grade would God give you?

If we're honest, it's an F. Every single one of us who have been a child, and that's every single one of us, have fallen, have failed. We've gotten a zero. We've all fallen short.

No person here has passed. When we talk about this thing called the gospel, when we talk about the gospel, it's really the good news of God's grace. It's Jesus taking away our sin and giving us his righteousness, his 100%.

So I want you to take your pen or pencil and draw a line between your grade and Jesus' grade and write these words above it. Jesus offers a trade.

[16:07] Boys and girls, this is the good news of the gospel. Jesus offers a trade. He offers you his 100% so that when the Father grades at the end of the world, he sees Jesus' version of the test, not yours.

You passed not because you were good enough, you had failed, but because Jesus was perfect and trades his perfect for your failure. That's really the simplicity and the power of the gospel.

Do you believe that Jesus offers this trade? Do you believe he died and he rose again so that your sins could be covered and paid for so that his righteousness, his righteous record could be imputed or legally assigned to you?

If so, that's great. If you believe and haven't been baptized, talk to your elders. You can start that process. If you do believe and you have been baptized, remind yourself over and over and over again, even when we take the Lord's Supper shortly, that Christ died for you.

Christ traded your failure for his righteousness. The command is still there though, isn't it? Being forgiven for not keeping it doesn't mean we can ignore it.

[17:25] God cares deeply that children honor and obey their parents. As you leave today, kids, and interact with each other throughout the week, to your parents throughout the week, repeat this verse over and over again.

Children, obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord. Kids, when you mess up, when you don't obey your parents in everything, remind yourself again and again that Jesus offers a trade and apologize to your parents.

Seek their forgiveness. But it's not just children that need to be reminded of this good news. It's not just children who don't keep the words that Paul has written here.

Parents have their own struggles that Paul lays out in the next verse when he addresses fathers. In Colossians chapter 3, 21, he says, Fathers, do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.

And then Ephesians 6, he says, Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Paul specifically calls out fathers in these passages.

[18:37] He could have said parents. He used parents in the first before, talking about obedience. Well, we certainly can apply the teaching here to both parents, and we will do so.

The Holy Spirit inspired God's, Paul's words, and the use of fathers in both of these verses. In Greco-Roman and Jewish culture, the fathers were responsible for the education and discipline and training of their sons and daughters.

That's largely not the case today for the majority of families, Christian or not, children are taught in school or they're homeschooled. Even in our family, Sarah does the majority of education, teaching during the school hours.

But I'm not convinced that Paul's addressing fathers just because they were more culturally involved. I think Paul's addressing an area that men can easily fall into. Certainly women can too.

But I think fathers have a tendency to provoke children, and that has a significant impact when it happens. So I think fathers have this because of their influence.

[19 : 41] They have a tendency to provoke and discourage their children. We have the propensity to provoke to anger. And our provocation to anger in our children leaves a lasting impact.

Again, not diminishing in any way that women or mothers can do this too. The applications and takeaways we'll look at apply to both. Moms aren't off the hook. They don't have the excuse to be angry at their children.

Don't have free reign to provoke their children to anger. But I'll be using father in this audience and in this passage this morning just like Paul did. Paul has similar statements in both Colossians and Ephesians.

There's a negative command in both. In Ephesians, he provides a positive command to fathers. The negative command is do not provoke your children to anger lest they become discouraged.

The positive command is to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. What kind of things would provoke a child to anger? I asked this at a dinner table and got all sorts of answers.

[20 : 53] Andrew Lincoln says, the negative command forbids, amongst many other things, excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, unfairness, constant nagging and condemnation, subjecting a child to humiliation and all forms of gross insensitivity to a child's needs and sensibilities.

So, in many ways, a lot of those things would border on child abuse. There are things that would obviously aggravate and anger a child. Actions of severe discipline or condemnation or public humiliation.

But there are other ways to provoke a child to anger that are probably more subtle. These things provoke a child to anger. Daddy, Daddy, Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, Dad, finally you look up from your phone to see the child asking your attention.

I think one day historians will document the decline of family life and see that cell phones and tablets and computers had a bigger impact than we were expecting. You can be distracted by a book or what's on TV, but, and I'll confess that I'm guilty of this, you can be putting the kids to bed and trying to watch a video on YouTube.

You can be trying to make supper with them while trying to catch up on your Instagram feed. You can be playing a project, a video of that project that you want to complete while your kid is trying to read to you and slowly and subtly provoking your child to anger.

[22 : 44] What about intentional busyness with work, pushing family and child away so that you can get work done, working and hustling to make money but missing events, dinners, and time together.

Maybe it's subtle, like it's, again, in the way that you talk, the way you talk about them in front of other people, or the way you talk about your wife, or talk about them with your wife, bringing them down verbally, insulting them, calling them stupid or other names.

Maybe it's as simple as laziness. Maybe you're just too busy and too tired to answer their questions, to help them with their projects or homework, to help them think through a problem.

If your answer is always, ask mom, you're probably provoking your children and your wife to anger. Paul's statement in Ephesians is two-sided, as we've said.

There's the negative command to not provoke our children to anger, but then there's also the positive command. He says, don't provoke your children to anger, but instead of that, feed, nourish, raise, and rear your children in the discipline and training and instruction of the Lord, really, of Jesus.

[24 : 06] Think about it this way. There's a constantly, there's constantly before us as fathers and parents the option to provoke, to push our children into anger or to nourish and lead them.

Provoking them to anger pushes them away from the discipline and training of the Lord. Provoking our children to anger pushes them away from the discipline and training of the Lord.

The ESV simply translates the phrase provoke to anger, but it has the sense of provoking to a sense of exasperation. In verse 21, it says, do not provoke your children unless they become discouraged, exasperated, frustrated.

So fathers, there's a real danger that harsh, provocative parenting, instead of making a child ready for the world, instead of making a child that wants nothing to do with the faith that you proclaim.

Paul is saying, fathers, raise your kids in a way that you avoid provoking rebellion, provoking frustration, provoking a distaste of the Christian life and the Christian walk.

[25 : 22] Avoid provoking your children in ways that exasperate the attitude. Now, I can imagine that there are some kids who are thinking about this week or today and they're thinking, I got angry.

and my parents said something that made me angry and therefore, I must be right. I knew I was right. My parents made me angry by making me drink milk instead of Pepsi for breakfast.

They're provoking me to anger. They need to say things that don't make me angry. That's not the point. There will be plenty of good, right things that a parent will say that will make a child angry.

go turn the TV off, go play outside, help your brother pick up toys, help mom make supper, or go in to bed early so that we can get the church on time tomorrow.

Those may provoke anger in children. That's because the anger is already there in their heart. It wasn't there because you provoked it in your own sin.

[26 : 28] They want their comfort and their own definition of fear. That's not the anger we're talking about provoking. We're talking about the anger in the heart of the child that makes him think he can never do anything right.

The anger in the heart of a child that makes her think they're never fully accepted by mom and dad. They're never proud enough. They never acknowledge what I've done.

They never say that I'm doing a good job. It's always correction, correction, correction. Douglas Moo in his commentary says, Paul does not want to see the children of Christian families disciplined to an extent that they lose heart and simply give up trying to please their parents.

How do we do that? We need to discipline, right? We're told even here in Ephesians to bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. There are three important things I think.

We need to have and use the instruction of the Lord. That's a big part of our discipline. We need to apply Jesus' teaching to our parenting. We need to apply and teach it.

[27 : 43] We need to teach loving those that sin against us even when it's our own children. Number two, we need discipline with the end in mind.

Discipline with the end in mind. Hebrews 12 says that God disciplines us so that we may share in His holiness. God's goal is to make us holy, not to get revenge or retribution.

Number three, we need to give them the grace that we want for ourselves. This is so important. If you're a Christian, you know you're a sinner. As a father, as a husband, you know you sin against your family all the time.

A faithful Christian reminds himself of the gospel, reminds himself of what we said in our catechism reading this morning, that we need a human substitute that can take away our sin and need a divine substitute that can bear the wrath of God.

A faithful Christian reminds himself and herself of that daily, remind themselves of the forgiveness offered in Christ. and a faithful father raising his family in the discipline and instruction of the Lord reminds his children of the grace of the gospel.

[28 : 56] He reminds them as he spoke just a moment ago that Jesus offers a trait that looks like unconditional love. Love for your child even when they mess up.

A reminder to them of the gospel. Let them come to you without fear of condemnation or rejection just like you want to be able to come to Jesus and not be rejected.

Remind them that Jesus died for sinners. The law condemns. Remind your kids that Christ set us free from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

Remind them that Jesus came to save sinners. The antidote for harsh overbearing as well as passive and distracted parenting is the proclamation to yourself and to your kids that Jesus died for sinners and there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

It's love for your children as fellow image bearers. It's a confession and apology to them for ways that you have had higher standards than they could ever achieve.

[30 : 09] in the times that instead of presenting the gospel to them you condemn them further with your words. See we have an example of a good father.

We have an example of a perfect father and God the father. Sometimes we fail to know the frailty and weakness of our children.

We fail to understand that they can't do the things that we ask them to do but not God. Psalm 103 8 tells of his care and his love.

It says the Lord is merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounded in steadfast love. He will not always chide nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

[31 : 14] As a father shows compassion to his children the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame he remembers that we are dust. Our perfect heavenly father disciplines us with love.

Proverbs 3 12 says the Lord reproves him whom he loves as a father of the son in whom he delights. We've already read this but Hebrews chapter 12 7 through 9 again it is for discipline that you have to endure.

God is treating you as sons for what son is there in whom the father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline in which you have already all participated then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Besides this we had earthly fathers who disciplined us and when we respected them shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live. Jesus also in his parables tells the story of a good father in the parable of the parable son.

The son left and asked for his inheritance and the father gives it and he goes and he wastes it and he spends it and he literally comes back destitute. In Luke chapter 15 starting in verse 17 we pick the story up and it says he came to himself and he said how many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread but I perish with hunger I will rise and go to my father and I will say to him father I have sinned so he's going to repent to him I have sinned against heaven and before you I'm no longer worthy to be called your son treat me as one of your hired servants and he rose and came to his father while he was still a long way off his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him and the son said him father I have sinned against heaven and before you I'm no longer worthy to be called your son but the father said to his servants bring quickly the best robe and put it on him put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it let us eat and celebrate for this my son was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found and they began to celebrate doesn't that again look like that unconditional love that allows a sinful child to return in conclusion what is

[33 : 39] God's desire for our family we've read that God has committed children to obey their parents and we've read that God has committed fathers to not put the children to anger but to raise and nurture and instruction and discipline of the Lord as I was preparing this sermon this week this passage from Malachi kept rolling around in my head because of the similarity I think with the fathers and sons but Malachi 4 5 and 6 says behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes and he will turn the hearts of their fathers to their children and the hearts of their children to their fathers thus I come and strike the land with the decree of utter destruction and then Luke 1 tells us that when Elijah was talking the Elijah that's mentioned in Malachi is really John the Baptist Zechariah is standing serving the Lord and an angel appeared before him and he was troubled verse 13 of

Luke 1 the angel said to him do not be afraid Zechariah for your prayer has been heard your wife Elizabeth will bury the son and you will call his name John you will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth he will be grateful for the Lord you must not drink wine or strong drink and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb listen to this he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just and to make ready for the people sorry and to make ready for the Lord a people prepared it's God's desire the relationships between fathers and children be restored restored he wanted his relationship with his children restored he sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Messiah Jesus Christ he sent Jesus so that those who were far off who were sinners who needed to be forgiven who needed to have their sins cared for and taken care of he sent Jesus to bear that sin disobedient disobedient children need

Jesus and fathers that provoke their children to anger and exasperation need Jesus children and parents both need Jesus and one day because of God's care and love and discipline we will be like him finally forever let me close us in prayer Lord I thank you that you've given instructions on how you want a house a family to operate and because of the sin in our hearts it's difficult we're prone to

disobey our parents and we're prone to be harsh and to exasperate our children and to lose our temper and to raise our voice Lord I thank you that you sent Jesus even as we seem to bring the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to the children Lord I ask that you help us as a body as people as fathers as children as husbands and wives to live out the ways that you have called us to live in this passage may we be a testimony of your goodness and grace in our hearts may your word be strengthened and the gospel be empowered to go out because the house and the people in it the family function as you've designed
Lord thank you for the ability to hear your word to be reminded of your truth and to see Christ Jesus name amen our last hymn is hymn 131 children of the heavenly father song reminding us of God's compassion God as the perfect father So do you pr