

God's Goals for the Home: Husbands and Wives

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[0 : 00] for us. A seven-year-old girl had just seen the movie Cinderella, and she was testing her grandmother's knowledge of the story. The grandmother said, I know what happens in the end. The girl said, what? The grandmother said, Cinderella and the prince lived happily ever after. The girl shot back and said, no, they didn't. They got married.

That little girl had come to think in terms, living happily ever after and being married are not necessarily synonymous. That's sad, isn't it? And hopefully no one in here thinks like that. Marriage was designed by God at the beginning of creation to be that special kind of relationship that will enable us to live happily ever after. I want you to look at how the scripture defines God's design for marriage. It's in Genesis 2, 24. It says, therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. You can see in that that God designed marriage to be the closest of all human relationships. God intends for marriage to be an intimate, mutually fulfilling, and rewarding relationship between one man and one woman.

That is God's goal for marriage. That's God's goal for your marriage. Now, over the past seven weeks, we've been looking at some of God's goals for us as Christians in terms of developing Christian character. We've been looking at that in Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 through 17. Well, I want us just to continue on in this section of Colossians and look specifically at some of God's goals for us at home, and at work. Today, we're going to look at God's goals for the home, husbands and wives. Next week, Lord willing, we'll look at God's goals for the home, parents and children. Then the third week, God's goal for Christians at work. But God's goal for every marriage, your marriage, is that it be an intimate, mutually fulfilling, and rewarding relationship for you as the husband and for you as the wife. As I said, Genesis 2, 24, that's the foundational passage. That describes the kind of foundation that must be laid in order to experience that kind of marriage. So I want to begin there. I want us to think of this in terms of God's design for marriage. Look at it again. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. I want us to look quickly because this is not the main point of the message, but I think it's very important. Foundational. Three foundational principles. I've adapted these from Chuck Swindoll.

[3 : 36] Number one, the principle of severance. First thing, foundation for marriage. Leave your father and mother. He's talking to both husband and wife. All of this goes both ways. In order for a new home to begin properly, you've got to leave your father and mother. And that means more than just moving out, moving out on your own. It requires that both husband and wife cut the tight, emotionally dependent strings that held you close to your parents. Where you found your, what you might call basic support and security really as you grew up. When we get married, we are establishing a new family, a new home.

And God's design is that our spouse will supply that basic support and security, not our parents. Now, it's important to understand that when we come together as husbands and wives, we start that new home. Your spouse is the most important person in your life. We all still need other relationships.

We all need friends. We need family. And hopefully, ideally, these other relationships will include our parents. Hopefully, we can enjoy as a married couple, a close and healthy relationship with both sets of parents. Doesn't always happen. A lot of different reasons. But ideally, leaving father and mother doesn't mean forget about them. In a good, healthy Christian home, there can and should be healthy, healthy relationship with parents. But I want to make it clear. Our relationship with our spouse should be the closest and most important relationship in our life after our relationship with the Lord.

That's the principle of severance. Look at the next one. The principle of permanence. Hold fast or be united. The old translations cleave. The word translated, hold fast, refers to the strongest of all

unions.

[6 : 15] Sort of like being glued together or being welded together. Now, this requires that we think of our commitment to our spouse. It's permanent. It's until death separates us. That means we've got to work together to solve problems. And every marriage has problems. It's not wrong. It's not admitting a weakness to say, we've had our issues. We have things we have to work on. In fact, the person who says, my spouse and I, we have never had a disagreement. We never argue about anything. They lie about other things as well. Now, this principle of permanence. The idea is when problems arise, we're committed to working on the problem. When we're hurt, we're committed to dealing with it, healing the hurt.

When we're disappointed. We're committed to hang in there and just get over it. Now, to do this, it requires a lot of patience, doesn't it? It requires a lot of love. One word, don't forget, perseverance. A marriage that's going to be permanent, like we're talking about here, truly one, well together, cleaving together. You're in it for the long haul. You've got to learn to persevere, hang in there with one another. Now, this third principle, the principle of unity, this little phrase, become one flesh. We need to think of one, becoming one flesh in two ways here.

It describes the physical or sexual union, which is a very important part of marriage. It also describes an emotional and spiritual union. Now, some people might even use the word soulmate here. And that's good. That should be the goal. A biblical word is companionship. Companionship is one of the main reasons God designed marriage according to Genesis 2.18. Look at this. Then the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone. That's the first thing in all of creation that God says it's not good. Or the first thing that God says that it's anything but good.

It's not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper fit for him or suitable to him or corresponding to him. God created human beings with a need for companionship.

And such companionship, the story goes in Genesis 2. That kind of companionship, that need can't be met with an animal, with a dog, certainly not a cat. That need can only be met by another human being. And for most people, God intends for that need to be met in a marriage relationship, and I must say in this day and time, with someone of the opposite sex. That is the only God-designed marriage. A biological man, a biological woman. Phrases that were never necessary until recently.

[9 : 57] Now, if you want to experience the blessings of an intimate, mutually fulfilling, and rewarding marriage, pray and work to that end. It's not going to happen automatically for anyone. We've got to work at it. We've got to seek God's help and do it God's way. And just as a reminder, put your spouse first. Put your spouse first. Put your spouse first before your parents and before your children.

Some people, that could just be a whole message in and of itself. But I want you to understand, if the closest human being in this world to you is one of your children and you're married, that is not healthy. You are wrong.

I will debate you just from this passage. The most important human being in this world to you, the one who should be first in your life, is your spouse, not your child. And if it is your child, you're teaching your child how to be a poor spouse themselves.

You want this kind of marriage that God designed it to be. And everybody does if you're married. You want that kind of relationship. Intimate, mutually fulfilling, rewarding. Put your spouse first. Be more committed to making your marriage a success than anything else in your life. There's a lot of people who will do whatever it takes to be successful in a career, to be successful in making money.

[11 : 53] But they will do as little as they can toward making their marriage a success as God spells success.

Number three, share your life with your spouse. Truly seek with God's help to become soul mates. That's the foundation for Christian marriage.

What we see in Colossians 3 that we're going to be looking at a little bit later on is how God intends for Christian marriages to function. But before we get there, let's do a very quick review.

God's instructions for Christian relationships, period. Or Christian relationships in general. That's what we've been looking at for the past several weeks in chapter 3, verses 12 through 17 of Colossians.

What we've been looking at applies to the way we treat people who we go to church with. How we treat people in some ways in general.

[12:53] But especially what we've been looking at about developing Christian character should apply to how we treat people in our home. Our spouse, our children, our parents.

I want you to look at verses 12 through 14 one more time. It'll be on the screen. This is a command. This is instructions to all Christians. Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts.

Kindness, humility, meekness, or gentleness, it's often translated. And patience. Bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Home should be our practice field for developing such Christ-like character qualities.

Now, let's look at how God intends for Christian marriages to function. God's instructions for wives, verse 18.

[14:08] Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting to the Lord. We're going to start with a word that's already caused some women in here. Your blood pressure to rise.

We're not going to dodge it. The word submit. And I want to begin by pointing out what the word does not mean. Because there are some men in here who do not have a clue what biblical submission means.

And so we're going to look at this first. Submission number one does not mean obey. Paul tells children in verse 20 to obey. Obey their parents.

He tells slaves to obey their masters in verse 22. But he does not use the word obey in describing how wives should respond to their husbands. Some people have the idea.

The wrong idea. The wife's supposed to obey her husband. No. Not. Number two. Submission does not mean inferior.

[15:12] Both men and women are created in the image of God. We've looked at that countless times from Genesis 127. All people are created in the image of God. That means all people are of equal worth and value and dignity and whatever other words you want to put in there.

Husbands and wives are completely 100% equally created in the image of God. 100% equal. Both men and women are equal in Christ.

I want you to look at what Paul says in Galatians 3.28. There's neither Jew nor Greek. There's neither slave nor free. There's no male and female.

For you are all one in Christ Jesus. He is writing to the church. We saw something similar in Colossians 3.11.

He is writing to the church. And in the church, we are all united to Christ. We're all equal brothers and sisters.

[16:16] There is no hierarchy in the church in terms of because of a certain race or socioeconomic level or gender.

None of that makes you more important or less than someone else. All Christians are equal children of God just as all Christians are created equally in the image of God.

One more thing. Submission is not absolute or unqualified. I want to make this real clear. A wife does not have to submit to a husband who would lead her or her children into sin or abuse.

I want to repeat that. A wife does not, should not submit to a husband who would lead her or her children into sin or abuse. The Lord's own apostles.

Early church leaders. They set this example for everyone who is under authority. They were under the authority of the civil governmental leaders.

[17:32] The Jewish leaders. And they were ordered. Stop preaching in the name of Jesus. No longer preach. Talk about Jesus.

Well, here's how they responded. Look at it on the screen. They said, we must obey God rather than men. In any place in life.

When someone who is over us tells us to do something that we know would be sin against God, we should not do it.

It would be wrong for us to do it. Because we're always called to obey God rather than men. And that includes a Christian wife. A Christian wife should not submit to a husband who would say or do something to cause her to sin against God.

To cause harm to herself or her children. It's important for us to understand what submission does not mean. But it is also important for us to understand that submission does mean something.

[18 : 43] So let's look at it. A wife should submit to her husband's leadership because she recognizes this is God's intended structure for the home.

Every institution must have leadership. There's got to be some type of leadership structure. Well, God has ordained the husband to be the leader of the home.

Now that's just the way God ordained it to be. That we don't get a choice in that. It's a part of God's created order.

And we as Christians must accept that's God's created order. But that does not undermine in any way the fact that both husband and wife are equal before God and equal in Christ.

For example, God exists as three persons. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three persons are equally God. That's the doctrine of the Trinity.

[19 : 55] But Jesus repeatedly said throughout His earthly ministry that He submitted Himself to the Father. He said things like He came to do the Father's will.

Because Jesus submitted Himself to His Father does not make Jesus any less than fully God. A wife who submits to her husband is still His equal in every way.

It's also important for us to understand the way this word submit here is written. It's talking about a voluntary kind of submission. And it can be, as sometimes is translated, wives, submit yourselves.

This means, husbands, you're not to demand that your wife submit to you.

Do not go home today, men. Look at your wife on the way home and say, did you hear what he was talking about today? He was talking to you. If your husband says that, he's an idiot.

[21 : 09] He got it all wrong. But it does say to you, wives, submit yourselves.

By the way, husbands, we'll look at this in detail in a moment. God intends for you to so love your wife that she gladly chooses to submit to your loving leadership.

We're going to come to that again, but I need to throw it in here as well. The main reason a Christian wife will choose to submit to her husband's leadership is given in this verse. Look at it. Submission is a part of being faithful to the Lord.

Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. It means what is proper or right as a Christian. Submitting to a husband's leadership is a part of a wife's commitment to the Lord.

Now, I want to just be real honest here. For some wives in this room, your husband may not be worthy of you submitting to his leadership.

[22 : 20] He may be lazy. He may shirk his responsibility. He may not be willing to make decisions. You may be smarter than him.

He may not be worthy of your submitting to his leadership. But I want you to think, he's not the one that you're really ultimately doing it for.

You're doing it as a part of your service to the Lord. Part of being faithful to him. Now, the key for making God's structure, what we're looking at in the home work and work well, is a husband's love. So let's move on now. God's instructions for husbands in verse 19. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. The best commentary on this is what Paul said in Ephesians chapter 5. In Ephesians 5, Paul expands on this statement, husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. I want to show you just one verse, Ephesians 5, 25.

[23 : 34] Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave his life.

We're talking about a self-giving, sacrificial love. We're talking about a love that is focused on seeking to discover and meet the needs of your wife regardless of what it costs you.

That's the kind of love we're talking about. Now, notice the last part or second part. And do not be harsh with them. Most likely, Paul is issuing a warning to husbands not to resent the fact that they have a God-given responsibility to love their wives.

And he warns them this way because in that day, in the first century, husbands didn't have responsibilities. Husbands had rights.

It was a man's world in every way. Men in Paul's day, they weren't used to be told.

[25 : 00] They had responsibilities in the marriage and a responsibility to love and not be harsh.

But Christianity changed all that. Paul put all of his emphasis on a husband's responsibility to his wife, not his rights.

We, men in this room, as a Christian husband, we are supposed to major on loving our wives in a self-giving, sacrificial kind of way.

We are not men, husbands. We are not just leaders. We are to be servant leaders, just like Jesus taught and modeled for us.

The emphasis of these verses of the husband-wife relationship is all about responsibility, not rights. Husbands. That's what husbands and wives, that's what we need to think about.

[26 : 14] We need to think about our responsibility. What we're called to do. What God wants us to do. What we're to give.

Not just be thinking about what we are to get. A home is on shaky ground if a husband and wife is constantly thinking about insisting on their rights.

Getting their way. God intends for us to focus on meeting the needs of our spouse through loving service and sacrifice.

And when we do that, our needs will get met in the process. I don't know what's going on in anybody's home in this building right now.

But I want to say to you, it'll be better. If you will think about that person that you live with and call your husband or your wife.

[27 : 19] Really and truly seek to know them. Who they are. What makes them tick. Look for their needs.

That you are able to meet. And give of yourself, your time, your heart. Seeking to meet their needs. As a way of honoring God.

As a way of expressing your love to them. And I have no doubt. That if you do that consistently.

With the right attitude. You will find. That your needs are being met. In the process. A spouse who is the object of their spouse's.

Love and attention and service. They are going to give back. They are going to try to outdo. In love.

[28 : 21] That kind of spouse. Now. Let's think about this. How it's going to play out at home. What would it look like when husbands lovingly lead and wives submit?

Well, Tim Keller points out how God gives us a lot of freedom. For working out how. How practically. How practically. Husbands and wives live out their roles in the home.

Look with me at what he says. He says. While the principle is clear. That the husband is to be the servant leader. And have ultimate responsibility and authority in the family. The Bible gives almost no details about how.

That is expressed. In concrete behavior. Therefore. Every couple must work out how that will be expressed. Within their marriage.

Christian husbands and wives can be faithful to God's structure for the home. In a variety of ways. There is no one size fits all for how you do this.

[29 : 23] In this room right now. I have no doubt that many couples. Are following these guidelines. But we do it in.

Different ways. There's one way that will not work. And that's for the husband to think. He should make all the decisions.

I know of one husband. He told his wife early in their marriage. That he was the king of the home. And that he would be making all the decisions. The wife took his crown.

And beat him within an inch of his life. I've got some scars to prove it. I did have to learn a lot of things the hard way.

When we first got married. A husband who thinks like that. And there are guys who think like that. But a husband who thinks like that.

[30 : 20] Is not a leader. He is an insecure moron. And I'm as serious as a heart attack. A man who thinks like that. I'm the boss.

I'm the dictator. I'm in charge. I'll make the decisions. I'll let you know what's what. You are a fool if that's the way you think. You are insecure.

You have all kinds of problems. And you're causing all kinds of problems. In your home. You are an ungodly model. To your children.

And to any other children. That you have any kind of influence over. I won't say that as strongly. As I can possibly say it. Because there are some Christian men. Who don't.

Do not have a clue. As to what the scripture actually teaches. Who do more harm than good. To the kingdom of God. In the name of Christ. That kind of attitude.

[31 : 17] A wise husband leader. Recognizes. That his wife has knowledge. Wisdom. Experience. And the ability to think. And reason.

Just like he does. A wise husband leader. Knows. He does not know everything. Therefore a wise husband. Will value.
His wife's. Input. Input. On all the decisions. That affect. Their lives. And a wise husband. Will follow the lead.
Of his wife. When he knows. She has more knowledge. Experience. Expertise. Wisdom. About this matter.
Lisa and I. Have been making joint decisions. Like this. For over 41. Years. And this worked well. Sometimes. She knows more.
[32 : 14] About a situation. Than I do. And I trust her. To take the lead. Every now and then. I know more. And she trusts me. To take the lead. But there is.
One way. A husband. Needs to always lead. And that is. By taking responsibility. Take responsibility. For the decisions. You jointly make.
Even if your wife. Sort of let out in it. And it didn't turn out well. If you're a real leader. You're not going to blame your wife.
When things don't turn out well. If you're a real leader. You'll think in terms of. We were right. Or. We. Were wrong. God's goal. Was for your marriage. To be. An intimate. Mutually fulfilling.
[33 : 12] And rewarding. Relationship. And by God's grace. And only by God's grace. It can be. By God's grace.
With the help of the indwelling. Spirit. Who lives in you. If you're a Christian. You can enjoy such a marriage. By following God's design. And God's structure. But the final thought.
Remember the key ingredient. In all relationships. Is love. Paul says. And above all these. Put on love.
Which binds everything together. In perfect harmony. Let's pray together. Father. Show us now. What we need to do. As individuals. To experience. The kind of home. That. You want us to have.
[34 : 17] And we want to experience it as well. Help us father. To confess sin. To you and to our spouse. Help us. Help us to truly repent.
Change our mind. Where we need to. Change the way that we're. Acting. Living. Treating that. Spouse. Help us father.
To put our spouse. First. First. Help us. Lord. To be committed. To our marriage.
And it being everything. That you want it to be. Help us father to. Put forth the effort. Every day.
To share life. With. Our mate. And truly. And truly. Become. Grow in. A relationship.
[35 : 18] That is. Intimate. That is truly. Fulfilling. Help us father.
To understand. Our role in the home. The structure. That you have ordained. For the home. Help us father. To. Be faithful.
There. Help husbands. To be loving. Leader. Servants. Help wives. To submit. To choose.
To submit. To their husband. As a part. Of. Their commitment. To you. Father. Show each one of us. How we should respond.
Help us to do that. Right now. Before you. And help us to have some. Heart to heart discussions. With our mate. If we need to. On the way home.
[36 : 18] We're at home. This afternoon. And let's just. In an attitude of prayer. Listen to the Lord. And respond to him. I'd be happy to pray with you. Here at the front. During this time.
But. What's most important. Is obeying the Lord. As he speaks. Let's do that. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.