

THE DASH

“Glorifying God in the Brevity of Life”

Part 5

ENGAGING the Audience

Psalm 90 is prayer by Moses. In Psalm 90:12, Moses asks the Lord to...

“Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.”

Prayer

Making the CONNECTION (*Savin’ Me* video by Nickelback)

It’s kind of ironic, isn’t it? A secular rock band reminds us of a truth that God revealed to His people several thousand years ago.

Our days are numbered!

Listen carefully to Psalm 139:16.

“Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.”

You have a number. I have a number. Everyone here this morning has a number. We cannot add a year, a month, a day, an hour, a minute, or a second to this number.

When our number expires, our dash will be complete. One dash might represent forty-five years. Another dash might represent seventy-three years. Still another dash might represent sixteen years.

Regardless of how many years our dash represents, the very second our number expires, the one and only thing that will matter for those of us who know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior is this – **“How did we steward the life God gave us?”**

A Call to Stewardship

Our lives are entirely about stewardship – and I’m not talking about money. In God’s eyes, stewardship isn’t about giving 10% of your income. Stewardship is about giving 100% of your life for the glory and fame of God and His kingdom.

Stewardship is about managing and investing *all* the gifts we've been given by God – health, time, talents, intellect, spiritual gifts, relationships, and the Gospel – for the glory of God.

As redeemed followers of Jesus Christ, one day we will all stand at the Bema Seat Judgment and give an account for our lives. When we stand before Christ, it won't matter how much wealth we amassed, how much power we wielded, how many corporate rungs we climbed, how much popularity we enjoyed, or how many degrees we earned.

What *will* matter is whether or not we were faithful stewards of the resources, time, talents, skills, and relationships God entrusted to our care.

When our dash is complete, will we hear those wonderful words of Christ?

“Well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Master.” (Matthew 25:21)

One of my great passions as your pastor is that you would manage and invest the life you've been given for the glory and fame of God and His kingdom.

Stewarding Our RELATIONSHIPS

This morning, we bring our stewardship series to a close. To be sure, we could have spent several more weeks exploring other wonderful gifts God has called us to steward for His glory. We could have explored the importance of stewarding our bodies, our tongues, and our spiritual gifts to name just a few.

Yet, my aim over these five weeks has been to explore what I believe the Bible reveals as the three greatest gifts God has entrusted to our stewardship – the **Gospel** of Jesus Christ (The Word), **time**, and our **relationships** with Christ and people.

In week one, we explored our call to steward the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In week two, we explored our call to steward time. For the last two weeks, we've been exploring our call to steward relationships. Our text has been Colossians 3.

Today, I want us to look at Colossians 3:18-24.

“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Slaves, 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. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and

not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."

Up until now, Paul has given specific principles that are all-inclusive and apply to every relationship we have – whether a spouse, parent, child, friend, or coworker. Now, in verse 18, Paul shifts gears and addresses some specific relationships. In these verses, Paul addresses marital relationships, children and parent relationships, and our workplace relationships – namely, relationships between employer and employee.

Paul brings this chapter to a close by focusing on three specific relationships – marriage, family, and work. In each of these three relationships, God gives very specific stewardship instructions. More to the point, God gives a single stewardship principle for each of these key relationships.

MARRIAGE

To begin with, let's look at how God expects husbands and wives to steward their marriage.

In verses 18-19, Paul writes...

"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."

The single greatest human relationship is the one man and woman share as husband and wife.

Marriage is the first human relationship that God created. It is the only relationship where two people's commitment to each other is described as "one flesh." Furthermore, marriage is a holy relationship that is meant to testify to the submissive and sacrificial love that Jesus Christ displayed for His Bride – the Church.

In Paul's eyes, marriage is the supreme human relationship. All other relationships are secondary. Thus, just like he did in Ephesians 5, Paul addresses marriage before he ever discusses the family.

If you are married, don't miss the significance of Paul's order. Notice something women, Paul doesn't address the parent/child relationship first. Notice something men, Paul doesn't address the employer/employee relationship first.

If you are married, God's design is clear. From a human standpoint, your spouse comes first – not kids and not jobs. If your spouse is not your first relational priority, all your other relationships will suffer.

Now...let's look at two specific imperative commands Paul gives to wives and husbands.

Godly Submission

Interestingly, like he does in Ephesians 5, Paul begins by exhorting wives to submit to their husbands. In verse 18, Paul says...

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

I was reading a story this week about a married couple who were celebrating 60 years of marriage. At the party, their family and friends wanted to know how they managed to stay married so long.

The husband responded,

"When we were first married, we came to an agreement. I would make all the major decisions, and my wife would make all the minor decisions."

When the husband was done, his wife immediately jumped up and said,

"And in 60 years of marriage we have never needed to make a major decision."

According to a 1998 Gallup Poll, 69% of Americans disagree with the following statement – *"A wife should submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband."*

It would not be reckless to assume that in the last ten years, this percentage has only increased.

In the Greek, the verb **submit** means to "willingly relinquish one's rights." Put a little differently, submission means to "voluntarily give up one's independent rights to another believer and to God-ordained authority."

Let me be honest with married women this morning. Your single greatest temptation as a wife is going to be the temptation to overtake your husband's role as the spiritual, emotional, and physical leader of your marriage. This temptation is a major result of Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden.

In Genesis 3:16, God said, **"To the woman He said, 'I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'"**

Many people have misinterpreted this verb “desire” to mean a physical desire. This is not the correct interpretation. The Hebrew verb used here has nothing to do with a sexual longing for your husband. Eve already possessed a physical desire for Adam. Literally, this verb means to “seek control over.” One of the consequences of original sin is that women will have the fleshly desire to seek control over their husbands. Control is without a doubt the single greatest relationship temptation a wife faces in her marriage.

One of the greatest lies Satan has convinced women to believe is that submission equals weakness and inferior value. That’s not true! Our culture will also tell you that submission equals weakness and inferior value. Yet, the Bible doesn’t tell you that. In God’s economy, **submission does not equal inequality.**

Wife, do you want to be a faithful and godly steward of your marriage?

Then, you must willingly and joyfully place yourself under the servant leadership and God-ordained authority of your husband. Many Christian women need to quit emasculating their husband by usurping his divinely appointed role as leader of their marriage and home.

Wives, listen carefully! Contrary to what many women believe, the biblical key to loving your husband is *not* sexual intimacy. The key is to respect him by joyfully surrendering to his divinely appointed role as your leader.

The health of every other relationship in your life starts right here. Will you joyfully submit to your husband?

Christlike Love

In verse 19, Paul says...

“Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”

God’s Word is clear. Husbands have been called by God to love their wives with Christlike love. Listen carefully to Ephesians 5:25-28...

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives...”

Men, this is an imperative command God is giving us. God wants us to take immediate action. It is time that Christian men start loving their wives like Jesus loved His Bride – the Church.

How did Jesus love His bride? Selflessly! Humbly! Sacrificially! Jesus joyfully gave up His life so that He might present His bride before God the Father holy, pure, and without blemish.

Guys, is your love for your wife selfless? Humble? Sacrificial? Are you joyfully putting your wife before you, daily presenting her before her Father God with holiness and purity?

This is our greatest calling in life, men! It's far greater than work. It's far greater than hobbies. It's far greater than our favorite sports team.

Men, if we fail here, every other relationship in our life will suffer.

Now...look carefully at how God commands us to love our wives. Notice that Paul links our love for our wife with our "words." Don't miss this! **The key to unlocking our wife's heart is through our words.**

A husband must touch the heart of his wife with his words long before he ever touches her body. Husband, would you like to unlock the amazing heart of your wife? According to God, the key is our words.

Paul warns us as husbands not to be harsh with our wives. This word harsh means "to turn sour and bitter." It means to exasperate. How many women have turned sour and bitter toward their marriage because of the way their husbands communicate with them? How many women have become exasperated by the way their husband talks to them?

Men, listen carefully to what God says thru Solomon...

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1

Guys, what happens when our wives get angry? Arguments and fights ensue. Listen again to what God says thru Solomon...

"It is better to live in a desert land, than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman." Proverbs 21:19

Husbands, listen carefully! Contrary to what many men believe, the biblical key to loving your wife is *not* expensive jewelry, big homes, fashionable wardrobes, or exotic vacations. I don't know a single Christian wife who wouldn't gladly sacrifice all those things in return for a husband who loves her thru Christ with his words.

The health of every other relationship in your life starts right here. Do you love your wife like Jesus loved the Church? Are you opening your wife's amazing heart with loving, tender, affirming words and conversation?

FAMILY

Now that Paul has covered the most important relationship, he moves on to address the family.

Paul says...

"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."

Obedience

Children, listen carefully! Whether you are twelve, sixteen, twenty-five, or forty years old, God's call on your life is clear.

In giving the Ten Commandments, God says...

"Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, that your days might be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord our God is giving you." (Deuteronomy 5:16)

The word obey means to "attentively listen to and submit."

I want you to notice something about the 5th Commandment – it is the only one of God's Ten Commandments that is accompanied by a promise.

There are two wonderful promises linked to this command – long life and prosperity. God promises a long and prosperous life to the child that heaps respect and honor upon his father and mother.

Children, the success or failure of your future is directly related to how you respect or disrespect your father and mother. Heap respect and honor upon your parents and you will enjoy a long and prosperous life. Heap disrespect upon their shoulders and your life will lack godly success and longevity.

Until a person gets married, the single most important relationship is the relationship they enjoy with their parents.

How are you stewarding your relationship with your parents?

Fatherly Love

In verse 21, Paul writes...

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

In writing to the Ephesians, Paul says...

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

Here's what is very interesting to me parents, when commanding children to obey their parents, Paul includes both mothers and fathers. Then, when he begins discussing parenting, he focuses solely on the father.

Men, listen very carefully. **God's divine design for children is that they are led, disciplined, and discipled by their fathers.** This does not imply that mothers have no role in the discipline and discipleship of their children – they do. Yet, mothers are primarily nurturers and caregivers. Fathers are primarily disciplinarians and disciplers.

Just like in marriage, the responsibility of leadership falls squarely on the shoulders of men.

When combining what Paul says in Ephesians and Colossians, it is clear that God commands fathers to play a primary role in the discipline and discipleship of their children.

Fathers, we when abdicate this role to our wives, I believe God's Word clearly teaches us that we provoke our children to exasperation, anger, and discouragement. Our children, whether boys or girls, have been divinely hotwired with the desire to be disciplined and discipled by their fathers. This is God's way and God's design.

Listen up men! Being a godly disciplinarian and discipler of your children demands great intentionality, time, and selflessness. Children are provoked and discouraged when their fathers are absent from their lives. In many cases, rebellious children are fatherless children – whether the father is in the home or not.

Men, if you are a father, outside of your marriage, no other relationship is more important than the one you have with your children. God has ordained you, not your wife, to be the primary disciplinarian and discipler of your children. By abdicating this role to your wife, you are disobeying God's plan and provoking your children to be angry and discouraged.

How are you stewarding your relationships with your children?

Closing Thoughts

Make your dash count!

Manage and invest your life for the glory and fame of Christ and His Kingdom. This is your divine calling in life.

An athletic company markets a slogan that says – “Life is short, play hard!”

Let me recommend a different slogan – **“Life is fleeting, steward wisely!”**