

Sermon Series: “Biblical Family Portraits” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 2/21/2010

Title: “Household Rules of Engagement”

Text: Colossians 3:18-24

Intro.: *Illus.: Rules of engagement – not rules of war but rules of peace*

Theme: Although we live in a family-unfriendly culture, as believers in Jesus Christ we live with the advantage of his love and the power of his attitude available and planted within our hearts and families.

Acknowledging the challenges to healthy family life and building a defense against it

- Our culture’s *antiestablishmentarianism* seeps into our homes and families
 1. Breeding a culture of contempt and disrespect but also missing out on the blessings God’s has laid down for us
 - a. **Illus.: Win the battle but lose the war**
 2. Having a spiritual healthy respect for Jesus authority and presence in your lives
 - a. In marriage relationship as Christ’s headship for family’s spiritual life is lived out (**Colossians 3:18-19**)
 - b. In parent/child relationship so that you pass on and not wear out the faith (**Colossians 3:20-21**)
 - c. In slave/master – teaching Christ-like work ethic regardless of who is the boss (**Colossians 3:22-24**)
 - d. *Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. 1 Peter 2:18-19*
- Carefully handling the fragile personalities we are entrusted in our home
 1. Paul’s words like “**don’t begin to be harsh v.19**” (*get rid of edge*) and “**don’t begin to provoke v.21**” (*don’t irritate*)
 - a. **Illus.: Selective Hearing**
 2. Respect each other in your home as God’s precious creation and God’s precious redemption
 - a. Guarding the worth-fulness in each other so that we don’t **lose passion** for living (**vs. 21**)
 - b. Quickly forgiving and letting go of the sin because it already has been paid
 - c. *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3:13*
- Rooting out self-serving action
 1. Paul squarely identifies when selfishness is at the root of our home activity (**vs. 22**)
 - a. *Eye-service* – doing for appearance sake or only when someone’s looking – integrity=when no one looking
 - b. *Yes-manism* – “*Speaking the truth in love.*” **Ephesians 4:15** soften truth with grace/love by telling what need to hear
 2. Sincerity in what we say and do
 - a. Mean what you say and say what you mean (**singleness of heart vs. 23** = not figuratively cross fingers/tongue)
 - b. **Illus.: Honey—Deer!**
 - c. “Respect” (fear) your “real master” by respecting his representatives
 - d. *If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 1 John 4:20*

Rules of engagement for Christ-filled home and family life

- To enjoy Christ’s blessing and prosperity in your home/family/life requires surrendering control at the door– to Christ
 1. Even in a tough relationship, keep on giving because our life/worth/future/well-being is secured in God’s promise
 2. *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3:3*
- Establishing a Christian home is about relationship not location or circumstance
 1. **Illus.; House Built for Dysfunctional Families**
 2. Invest in building eternal relationships with each other in Christ more than any other enterprise or goal that you set
 - a. *Real life is not measured by how much we own . . . a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God. Luke 12:15, 21*
 - b. *You know that your real master will give you an inheritance as your reward. It is Christ, your real master, whom you are serving. Vs. 24*
- Two great commands for a believer’s life apply, also, to a believer’s home – Love God, first, and love each other
 1. “*No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love has been brought to full expression through us.*” 1 John 4: 12

Rules of Engagement

In military or police operations, the rules of engagement (ROE) determine when, where, and how force shall be used. Such rules are both general and specific, and there have been large variations between cultures throughout history. The rules may be made public, as in a martial law or curfew situation, but are typically only fully known to the force that intends to use them. The ROE should comply with the generally accepted martial law. **(Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.)**

Win the battle but lose the war

Clovis Chappell, a minister from a century back, used to tell the story of two paddleboats. They left Memphis about the same time, traveling down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. As they traveled side by side, sailors from one vessel made a few remarks about the snail's pace of the other. Words were exchanged. Challenges were made. And the race began. Competition became vicious as the two boats roared through the Deep South. One boat began falling behind. Not enough fuel. There had been plenty of coal for the trip, but not enough for a race. As the boat dropped back, an enterprising young sailor took some of the ship's cargo and tossed it into the ovens. When the sailors saw that the supplies burned as well as the coal, they fueled their boat with the material they had been assigned to transport. They ended up winning the race, but burned their cargo. God has entrusted cargo to us, too: children, spouses, friends. Our job is to do our part in seeing that this cargo reaches its destination. Yet when the program takes priority over people, people often suffer. How much cargo do we sacrifice in order to achieve the number one slot? How many people never reach the destination because of the aggressiveness of a competitive captain? ***In the Eye of the Storm* by Max Lucado Word Publishing, 1991, p. 97-98.**

Selective hearing

A concerned husband goes to see the family doctor: "I think my wife is deaf. She never hears me the first time I say something. In fact, I often have to repeat things over and over again." "Well," the doctor replies, "go home tonight, stand about 15 feet from her, and say something. If she doesn't reply, move about five feet closer and say it again. Keep doing this so we can get an idea of the severity of her deafness." Sure enough, the husband goes home, and he does exactly as instructed. He stands about 15 feet from his wife, who is standing in the kitchen, chopping some vegetables. "Honey, what's for dinner?" He gets no response, so he moves about five feet closer and asks again. "Honey, what's for dinner?" No reply. He moves five feet closer, and still no reply. He gets fed up and moves right behind her—about an inch away—and asks one final time, "Honey, what's for dinner?" She replies, "For the fourth time, vegetable stew!" **Submitted by Aaron Goerner, Utica, New York**

Honey—Deer!

My husband and I were driving toward our rural home when I spotted three deer about to cross in front of us. Noticing that my husband wasn't slowing down, I reached over, gently touched his arm, and said, "Honey ... deer." He still didn't slow down, so I repeated more firmly, "Honey ... deer!" Suddenly, he hit the brakes, veered, and managed to miss all three. After I caught my breath from our near-miss, I asked him why he hadn't paid attention when I warned him. "Warned me?" he said. "I thought you were being romantic." **Patricia Beecher, Horseheads, New York. Christian Reader, "Lite Fare."**

House Built for Dysfunctional Families

The Ledbetter family likes to spend time at home together--just not in the same room. So they built a 3,600-square-foot house with special rooms for studying and sewing, separate sitting areas for each kid, and a master bedroom far from both. Then there's the escape room, where Mr. Ledbetter says, "Any family member can go to get away from the rest of us. The Mercer Island, Washington, industrial designer says his 7- and 11-year-old daughters fight less, because their new house gives them so many ways to avoid each other. "It just doesn't make sense for us to do everything together all the time," he says. After two decades of pushing the open floor plan--where domestic life revolved around a big central space and exposed kitchens gave everyone a view of half the house--major builders and top architects are walling people off. They're touting one-person Internet alcoves, locked-door away rooms and his-and-her offices on opposite ends of the house. The new floor plans offer so much seclusion, they're "good for the dysfunctional family," says Gopal Ahluwalia, director of research for the National Association of Home Builders. The approach isn't for all architects. William Sherman, chairman of the department of architecture and landscape architecture at the University of Virginia, says all the cut-up spaces make families more isolated and lonelier than ever. "People don't even gather in the same spot to watch TV anymore," Mr. Sherman says. "It's sad." **June Fletcher, "The Dysfunctional Family House," The Wall Street Journal (3-26-04), pp. W1, W8**

Colossians 3:18-25

¹⁸Wives, place yourselves under your husbands' authority. This is appropriate behavior for the Lord's people. ¹⁹Husbands, love your wives, and don't be harsh with them. ²⁰Children, always obey your parents. This is pleasing to the Lord. ²¹Fathers, don't make your children resentful, or they will become discouraged. ²²Slaves, always obey your earthly masters. Don't obey them only while you're being watched, as if you merely wanted to please people. Be sincere in your motives out of respect for your real master. ²³Whatever you do, do it wholeheartedly as though you were working for your real master and not merely for humans. ²⁴You know that your real master will give you an inheritance as your reward. It is Christ, your real master, whom you are serving. [GW]