

Christ In The Home – Husbands

Colossians 3:19

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I want to back up to start in Colossians 3:18 before we get to our text.

Verse 18 says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” Then our focus is on verse 19: “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.”

When Jesus Christ comes into a person's heart, the Bible says, “Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” You become a new creation in Christ. And we're learning in Colossians that that new life means we put off the old and we put on the new. It's a picture of taking off the old life, of taking off a soiled garment. You take off your dirty clothes and throw them in the hamper. Then Paul says to “put on the new man which was created according to God.”

When Jesus Christ comes into your heart, He also comes into our homes, and He brings four things. First, He brings His presence. We see four times, from verses 16-20, the phrase “the Lord.” In verse 16, it says, “to the Lord”; in verse 17, “of the Lord Jesus”; in verse 18, “in the Lord”; and in verse 20, “to the Lord.” So what we need in our marriages is “the Lord.” We need to bring the Lord Jesus back into our relationships.

Secondly, He brings a new pattern. Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.” And the wives are to be subject to their husbands. So in our text, in verses 18-20, we have wives submitting, husbands loving and children obeying. This is the picture or the pattern in the Bible of what a marriage is supposed to be like.

Thirdly, we have His purpose. In verse 17, Paul says, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” All that we do, we do in the name of the Lord. That means that what we do is for His glory, for His honor and for His praise. So your marriage is to bring glory, honor and praise to the Lord.

And fourthly, He brings His power. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul commands us to “be filled with the Spirit.” That's the Holy Spirit. The greatest and most important ingredient in your marriage is to “be filled with the Spirit.” If you want to have a marriage that God wants you to have, if you want to be a submissive wife and a loving husband, you must “be filled with the Spirit.”

So Christ comes to bring His presence, His pattern, His purpose and His power into our marriage relationships and then into our homes.

Paul gives us God's word to wives, to husbands, to children and to parents, in verse 18-21. We're looking at wives and husbands now.

First, I want to make two things perfectly clear. Number one, the emphasis on this whole passage is on duties and not on rights. What's wrong in our culture today is the whole focus is on our rights. We have women's rights, gay rights, animal rights. It's all about our rights, and no one is talking about our responsibilities.

But in the Bible, where it talks about the roles of wives and husbands, it talks about what you should do; these are your responsibilities or duties. We don't even like to hear the word "duty" anymore.

Second, the duties are shown to be reciprocal. If the wife is to submit, the husband is to respond in love. If the children are to obey their parents, the parents are not to provoke the "children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." So there is reciprocity in these relationships.

Now in verse 19, we have God's instruction to husbands. "Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them." It's very short, simple and concise. But it contains two commands. The first command is positive: "Love your wives." The second command is negative: "Do not be bitter toward them." So there are only two main points in this imperative or command to husbands.

First, some elementary things before we break this verse down. Number one, this directive, "Love your wives," radically elevates women. We have the so-called "women's liberation movement" today. But that is actually bringing women back into bondage, because it's rejecting God's view and model for women.

In the culture when this verse was written, it was radical. When the Colossians read what Paul had written, "Love your wives," this was a novel thought. A man would have a few sheep, a few donkeys, a few oxen, a few cattle and a few wives. It was no big deal. She was an object, like chattel. In the Greek culture, she was despised and oppressed. Nowhere in the culture was there the concept of a man loving his wife. So when Christ and Christianity came along, it elevated women and womanhood to its rightful place.

Second, this directive is a Greek, present tense imperative. That means it's a command and it's in the present tense, which means you are to continually keep on loving your wife. And what God commands us to do, God enables us to do.

People come up with all these reasons why they can't love their wives, why they can't submit to their husbands. "I can't do what God tells me to do." God never commands us to do something without giving us the ability to do it, if you'll trust Him and step out in obedience and faith. Husbands should love their wives at all times and in all situations.

And we need to remember that love is not just an emotion or just a feeling. Warren Wiersbe said, "Love is not a passing emotion; it's a continual devotion." Love always seeks the highest good of the person loved. So if you don't feel love for your spouse, you need to love them anyway. Love is an action word, a verb; it's what you do. That's why God can command it,

because it's not just an emotion. Husbands, if you love your wife, seek her highest good. You love her by giving yourself to her and seek what's best for her, not what's best for yourself.

The Greek word translated "love," in verse 19, is the word "agape." Our English language is so limited; we only have one word for "love." We use it on a broad spectrum. We say, "I love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches," and "I love my wife." But obviously my love for my wife is much different than the love I have for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

I only eat a peanut butter and jelly sandwich once a year. But when I make one, it's a real gnarly sandwich. It's loaded with crunchy peanut butter and loaded with jelly, dripping down the sides. When I take a bite, I can't open my mouth for half an hour. Then I get the shakes from all the sugar in the jelly. I've never outgrown peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. They're awesome!

But I also love my wife. Obviously my love for my wife is not the same as my love for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

But in the Greek language, we have four, basic words for love. First, we have "eros." We get our word "erotic" from it. It's a sensual love. That love is described as wanting to receive but not to give. It only wants to take. That word is not found in the Bible.

The second word for love is "storge." It's a family love. It's the love between brothers and sister, parents and children and fathers and mothers.

Third, is the word "phileo." We get our word "Philadelphia" from it. It means a friendship love. We say to our friends, "I love you," but it wouldn't be the same way we love God or love our spouse.

The fourth word for love, which is the most common word for love used in the New Testament, is the word "agape." This is a love that gives and gives, with no expectation of receiving, no demand to reciprocate. In John 3:16, the Bible says, "For God so loved..."—or "agapéd"—"...the world that He gave." So agape love is a giving, sacrificial love. So when Paul uses the words "love your wives," he is using the Greek word "agape."

1 Corinthians 13:4-8, Paul says in the NLT, "Love..."—it's the Greek word "agape"—"...is patient and kind." So husbands, be patient and kind. If you're not kind, you're not spiritual. A husband's love for his wife should show patience and kindness. "Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance....But love will last forever!" The King James Bible says, "Love never fails!"

Husbands, I want you to read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 every day for the next week. Pray over it. Meditate on it. And ask yourself, "How am I doing when it comes to loving my wife, as Christ loves the church?"

The kind of love described in 1 Corinthians 13 is the kind of love that God wants a man to have for his wife. Charles Erdman says, "This kind of love transforms and controls the exercise of authority. It makes tyranny and unkindness and selfishness and cruelty absolutely impossible. It removes from the submission expected of the wife all that is distasteful and difficult. Love is, in Galatians 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit." So it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in a man's life.

In Ephesians 5:25-30, we see this love broken down further. This is a parallel passage to Colossians 3. The two passages were written at the same time. Paul wrote a lot of the same things, but he wrote them in different ways. Anyone who knows the Bible knows that this is one of the clearest instructions for marriage in the whole Bible.

It says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones."

After being commanded to be "filled with the Spirit," after being commanded to submit "to one another in the fear of God," Paul then tells the wives to submit to their husbands and the husbands to love their wives, that they respect one another and that they love one another.

Number one, husbands, your love for your wife should be sacrificial. Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." This is to be sacrificial love. The picture or the pattern is Christ's love for the church; He gave Himself for it.

I've been reading again about the nativity, the Advent, the virgin birth and the Incarnation. And I was so thrilled to think about the fact that Jesus Christ, coequal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, who was with the Father and the Spirit from all eternity past, gave up heaven to come all the way down to earth. That's a big step down. Not only to come down to earth but to be born in a stable and laid in a manger. So He humbled Himself.

How is a husband to love his wife? He is to come down humbly to serve his wife sacrificially. So the picture or pattern of a husband's love is that he gives himself for his wife, as Christ gave Himself for the church.

Number two, the picture of a husband's love is of sanctification. Your love for your wife is to be a sanctifying love. Ephesians 5:26 says, "...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." This verse is referring to Christ and the church, which Paul says "is a great mystery," but it's also a picture of marriage. The church is sanctified by "the washing of water by the word," and husbands are to have a sanctifying effect on their wives.

What does that mean? It means that husbands should be influencing their wives to be more

holy, to be more godly, to be more spiritual, to love God, to love Christ, to love His Word and to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit by praying for her, by sharing the Word with her, by leading her to church and by leading her in worship. Men ought to lead the family to worship God.

If you're taking a back seat in the spiritual lives of your family, you're blowin' it. If you say, "Honey, you go to church today; I've got other things to do. You pray with the kids. You read the Bible to them," you're blowin' it. You want your wife to be sanctified? You want your children to love Jesus and to love God? You want a Christian family? Then you be the spiritual leader in your home.

You say, "Well, I don't read very well." Then learn to read. I can say that, because when I got saved, I had just gotten out of high school, and I literally didn't know how to read. But when I was saved, I opened the Bible, got the Lord's help, and when I started reading it, I learned to read by reading the Bible.

If you need help, listen to my audio sermons, follow along with me and you can read it yourself. I say that because I run into men today who say, "I can't read good." Learn to read, because you need the Word of God.

I like "talking Bible" with my wife. I like reading with her and praying with her. I like sharing doctrinal things with her and discussing the Word of God with her.

By the way, the priority of my life is that the Lord's number one, my wife is number two, my children are number three and my congregation is number four on the list.

So you, as a husband, should have a sanctifying effect upon your wife. And what does that mean? The words "saint" and "holy" both come from the same root word, which means "to set apart." So to sanctify your wife means that she'll become more holy, more godly, like Jesus Christ.

Ask yourself, "Is my wife more like Jesus because of me or in spite of me? Is she more spiritual because of me or in spite of me?" If you aren't having a sanctifying influence in her life, then you are being negligent in your responsibility as a husband, as a leader and as a man of God. You need to set her apart and make her holy by "the washing of water by the word."

Number three, the love for your wife is to be affectionate. Ephesians 5:28-29 says, "So husbands ought..."—so it's a duty—"...to love..."—or "agape"—"...their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church." So he is nourishing himself, cherishing his own health, taking care of his own body. So men ought to love their wives as their own bodies.

The word "nourish" means "to warm with body heat." I would paraphrase that as "hug your wife." Some men say, "Well, she knows I love her. I don't need to hug her! I eat her food; don't I? I come home from work. I pay the bills." Give her a hug.

The average married couple talks to each other only 35 minutes a week, because they're so busy. Talk to your wife.

When was the last time you wrapped your arms around your wife, gave her a hug, gave her a kiss and said, "I love you"? How long has it been? Nourish your wife. Cherish her. And have no ulterior motive in your mind; just that you want her to know you love her and appreciate her. That's what it means to nourish.

And the word "cherish" means "to value; to hold dear; to keep in one's mind."

Martin Luther said, "Let the wife make the husband glad to come home. And let him make her sorry to see him leave." Instead of, "Oh, you're home! I can't believe it. Don't you want to work overtime tonight or something?" Or when you're at home, she says, "Isn't it time for you to leave?"

My wife and I have been empty-nesters for quite a while. You get so busy raising your kids and then they get married and leave. They go off and start their own homes. Then you're sitting there just looking at each other. "What do we do now?" Sometimes wives tell me, "Not only are we empty-nesters, but he's retired and he stares at me all day. Can't he go do something?"

You need to build that relationship so when the kids leave and become one with their own spouses, you still have that bond, which is an unbreakable bond. So the husband-wife relationship of one flesh is closer than the parent-child relationship. Build that relationship; it's so important.

Number four, your love for your wife is to be unbreakable. So you are to be sacrificial, sanctifying, affectionate and number four, your love is to be unbreakable. Ephesians 5:31-32 says, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined..."—or "cleaved"—"...to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Then Paul says, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

You say, "Pastor John, that verse sounds very familiar." Yes; because it starts in Genesis 2:24 and is quoted elsewhere in the Bible and in the New Testament. Paul uses it over and over as the foundation for marriage.

When Paul says that we are to leave our father and mother, it means that our love for our wives is to be exclusive. Love for no one else should be substituted for your love for your wife or husband.

Also, "joined," "cleaved" or "glued together" means that our love for our wives is to be permanent.

And "one flesh" means that our love is to be intimate. There is intimacy in marriage. In Matthew 19:6, Jesus said, "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." God never designed marriage, never created marriage with the intention that divorce was an option. Divorce came onto the scene because

of sin, so divorce is a divine concession to human sin. In Matthew 19:8, Jesus said, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you...”—not commanded you or ordered you —“...to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” So there are reasons for divorce, but it is a divine concession to human sin; it’s not God’s perfect design.

This is a quote from a book called *The Home Beautiful*, which was written in 1912 by James R. Miller. He said, “When a man offers his hand in marriage to a woman, he says by his act that his heart has made a choice of her among all women; that he has for her a deeper, tender affection than for any other. At the marriage altar he solemnly pledges to her a continuance of that love until death; that when the beauty has faded from her face and the luster from her eyes, when old age has brought wrinkles or when sickness, care or sorrow has left its mark of wasting or marring, the faithful husband’s love is to remain deep and true as ever. His heart is still to choose his wife among all women and to find its truest delight in her.” I like that. This is how a husband is to love his wife.

Back in Colossians 3:19 I want to make a second point. It says, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” “Husbands, love your wives” is the positive of this command. The negative is, “Do not be bitter toward them.” I think this is important. So love is to be unbreakable, and we are not to be bitter toward our wives. The J. B. Phillips translation renders this, “Don’t let bitterness or resentment spoil your marriage.”

Again, this is an imperative; it stresses the constant prevention of a sour attitude. It literally means, “Stop being bitter.” Whether it’s the wife’s heart or the husband’s heart, when you let bitterness come into your marriage, you’re headed for destruction.

Whenever I do premarital counseling, I always turn to Matthew 19, where Jesus warned that “because of the hardness of your hearts,” Moses gave an allowance, the rite of divorce. But that wasn’t God’s will from the beginning. So “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” Don’t ever let your heart get hardened or bitter toward your wife or husband. Someone said, “When love weakens, bitterness sets in.” A root of bitterness can poison a marriage.

The word “bitter” is not only found here in Colossians 3:19. It’s also found in Revelation 8, of the star called “Wormwood”; in Revelation 10, of the little book that John ate. It was bitter in his stomach. And Jesus warned of this bitterness or hardness of heart.

So why would the husband become bitter? In the context, maybe the wife is not submissive, maybe she’s not loving him the way she should, maybe she is unresponsive to him, so he has become bitter toward her. Husbands need to be kind, tender-hearted and forgiving their wives, “even as God in Christ” has forgiven them, Ephesians 4:32.

1 Peter 3:7 says, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding...”—get to know your wife—“...giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel...”—she is submitted to you—“...and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”

This is one of several references in the Bible that tells us why our prayers can go unanswered. Here it's because a husband doesn't treat his wife properly. You can't expect God to hear your prayers if you're not giving honor to your wife as "the weaker vessel."

I believe that "the weaker vessel" means that she has a weaker position of submission to the husband as the head; she's more vulnerable. So you have to give honor to her. You have to give your attention to her. Or else God's not going to answer your prayers.

You can't be wrong with your wife and right with God. I've seen this. Guys come to church and want to be all "spiritual," but I happen to know they're mistreating their wives. It doesn't work. Jesus said, in Matthew 5:23-24, "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

This is why communion is such an important part of the service. Before you eat the bread, before you drink the cup, before you worship the Lord in that way, you had better make sure there is no animosity in your heart toward anyone or anyone toward you.

This is what brings healing to a marriage; that you ask for forgiveness, and that you are willing to forgive. If God has forgiven you—and He has—you need to forgive others. No one can survive in a marriage without learning how to be forgiving. So we come to the Cross to be forgiven; we stay at the Cross to learn to be forgiving toward others. So "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you," Ephesians 4:32.

Husbands, if you are bitter or sour or angry toward your wife, you're on a dangerous path.

So remember these three principles that govern the home: "the peace of God" ruling, Colossians 3:15; "the Word of Christ" dwelling, verse 16; and the name of the Lord glorified, verse 17. These three things control, govern and guide the marriage relationship: God's peace, Christ's Word and God's name being glorified in and through our lives.