

Wives and Husbands

[18] Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

*[19] Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.
(ESV)*

What can we learn from these verses?

GOD EXPECTS CHRISTIAN WIVES AND HUSBANDS TO FOLLOW HIS INSTRUCTIONS WITHIN MARRIAGE.

So let's ask the question then: What are His instructions?

I see 4 Instructions given in Colossians 3

Instruction #1 - To the wife, God says, "submit to your husband." **3:18**

- What does this phrase mean?

By definition, the Greek word *hoopotasso*, translated submit, means to arrange under - to put in a lower rank - to be subordinate. It often refers to a military ranking order, where there is a leadership rank structure. Mr. Miles at Frontier School of Bible in His Christian Family Class wrote, "it is surrendering to the authority, discretion, or will of another." He said, "it is to come underneath the authority of another and arranging your life accordingly."

To make it more simple, I'll word it this way: let your husband lead, or empower your husband to lead.

- What does this phrase not mean?
 1. Submission does not mean that the wife is lesser in value than the husband. 1 Peter 3:7
 2. Submission does not mean that women are lesser in value than men. Genesis 1:27
 3. Submission does not mean that all women are to submit to all men. Ephesians 5:22
 4. Submission does not mean that husbands are to force submission upon their wives. Colossians 3:18
 5. Submission does not mean that a wife must participate in her husband's sin, or to commit sin at the demand of her husband. Colossians 3:18
 6. Submission does not mean that a wife who is a mother has no authority over her home or her children's lives. Proverbs 1:8
 7. Submission does not mean that a wife is her husband's slave or doormat. 1 Peter 3:7
 8. Submission does not mean that a wife cannot be an independent thinker, having no control over her own personal pursuits. Proverbs 31:11, 16
 9. Submission does not mean that a wife must live with an abusive man. Matthew 12:11 (Throughout the Bible, a life in danger often permits an exception to a rule.)
 10. Submission does not mean that a wife cannot make reasonable requests to her husband. Genesis 21:12

Instruction #2 - The wife is to view submission with the attitude of what is right in the Lord. **3:18**

- What does “as is fitting in the Lord” mean?

Paul is explaining the attitude the wife is to have regarding submission. She should view her submission to her husband’s leadership as something that pleases Jesus Christ. This is consistent with God’s original intent within marriage. If she obeys God in this. She pleases God

This phrase also implies that a wife must submit only in the context of what is right in the eyes of the Lord. A wife does not need to submit to sinful actions for her husband. A wife does not need to lie for her husband. A wife does not need to hide the sin of her husband.

Regarding marriage, both the husband and the wife have the same example set before us in the Bible. His name is Jesus. Jesus is our perfect example of submission. He is equal to God the Father, and yet, He voluntarily chose to submit to the Father’s will. He left heaven. He emptied Himself. He said not My will but Yours be done. He willingly went to that cross to set us free of our sins by faith in Him.

Instruction #3 - To the husband, God says, “love your wife.” **3:19**

The verse does not say: Husbands make your wives submit.

The word is *agapao*, or *agape*. This is a high form of love. This is deeper than friendship, deeper than erotic love, deeper than emotional love. This is self-sacrificing love.

Agape love means at great cost to you, you do what is the most beneficial thing for someone else. Agape love is not a feeling, but a decision. Agape love is not dependent on the other person. This is a decision of the will, regardless of who the other person is. Agape love was displayed best by God Himself, and requires dependence on Him to carry this out.

This love means sacrificing yourself for her.

Dr. John Barnett offered 12 ways a husband can love like Christ.

1. Seek Christ's humility. Matt, 20:28; John 13:1-15
2. Seek Christ's servanthood. Eph. 5:23; Phil. 2:6-8; Mark 10:45
3. Seek Christ's kind words. John 7:46
4. Seek Christ's closeness. Eph. 5:28
5. Seek Christ's helpfulness. 1 Peter 5:3
6. Seek Christ's sacrifice. Eph. 5:25; Phil: 2:6-8
7. Seek Christ's sharing. 1 Pet. 3:7
8. Seek Christ's loyalty. 1 Cor. 13:4-8
9. Seek Christ's focus. Matt. 6:22
10. Seek Christ's tenderness. Eph. 5:28; Col. 3:19; 1 Cor. 13:4,5
11. Seek the priority of praising her. Express appreciation for her. 1 Pet. 3:7; Prov. 31:28

Instruction #4 - To the husband, God says, "do not be bitter toward her." **3:19**

God plainly tells a husband, do not demonstrate a harsh attitude toward your wife. He says, if you're bitter toward her, harsh with her, and have a bad attitude toward her, stop it!

There are two ideas behind this phrase:

1. Internally, a husband could be holding a bitter grudge against his wife that outwardly shows itself in being harsh with her.
2. A husband makes her bitter by the way he treats her.

God expects Christian wives and husbands to follow His instructions within marriage.