

Col 3:18-19
“Minimal Marriage Instructions”

Introduction

Paul does not go into a lengthy teaching on marriage in this book of Colossians. Why? Because remember that all of Paul’s letters were to be circulated around all the churches. So, Paul by the leading of the Holy Spirit, spent more time on certain topics in the various letters that he wrote. So, remember in the book of Ephesians Chapter 5, he gave a lengthy teaching on marriage. So in this letter he just writes 2 very short sentences.

Col 3:18-19

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

19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

Women submit:

In the 40 plus years of peaching the Bible, I have understood that our culture or in our times, the world hears these verses and many women in particular are very offended. It seems culturally old fashion.

Even in the church we often hear women say, “I am not the submitting type, so forget that”...

Often I find that the idea of “submission” is very misunderstood and the way it is being thought of, is very offensive. So let’s understand what is “Biblical submission” the way God meant it to be understood.

Let’s start by breaking verse 18 down:

3:18 Wives submit....to their husbands

Col 3:18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

A. Wives:

1. This is not a word to the husbands!!! And the husband is to make sure your wife is submitted to you. Husband’s hands over your ears, this is only for the wife to hear!!
2. This is something from God “for wives to do”, from their own will, unto the Lord.

B. “your own”:

1. You do not submit to all men or all husbands, but to your husband only!
2. The submission talked about here is only for the *sphere* of a wife’s submission - to her **own husband**.
3. The Bible never commands nor recommends a *general* submission of women unto men. As we see in the Muslim world view.

C. Submit:

The Greek word (hupotasso) (“under” + “to put in order”) – to arrange under, to subordinate

- A Greek military term meaning “to arrange troop divisions in a military fashion under the command of a leader”.
- In non-military use, it was “a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden”.

1. The Greek word (hupotasso) - “to subject oneself.”
This is a crucial point, **“It is the wife’s responsibility to do this herself”**, coming from **an inward conviction of her own.**
2. The word (hupo) means “to be under in rank.”
As we just looked at, The ancient Greek word translated **submit** is essentially a word borrowed from the military.
It speaks of the way that an army is organized among levels of rank.
3. Submission does **NOT** mean:
 - Submission does not mean inferiority (Gal 3:28).
 - Submission does not mean silence.
 - The idea of submission doesn’t have anything to do with someone being smarter or better or more talented.
 - Example of a police officer, equal as citizens and Americans, but greater in authority when he/she is on duty.

Quote: (Wiersbe)
“Anyone who has served in the armed forces knows that ‘rank’ has to do with order and authority, **not with value or ability.**”
4. Submission does mean:
 - It has to do with a God-appointed order.
 - Submission means you are part of a team.
 - The family is a team, then the husband is “captain” of the team.
 - The wife has her place in relation to the “captain,” and the children have their place in relation to the “captain” and the wife.

D. As is fitting in the Lord:

This phrase does not define the *limit* of a wife’s submission.

It defines the *motive* of a wife’s submission.

- It means, **“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands because it is a part of your duty to the Lord, because it is an expression of your submission to the Lord.”**
- It honors God’s Word and His order of authority.
- It is part of their Christian duty and discipleship.

This is a crucial phrase.

It colors everything else we understand about this passage.

There have been two “wrong” interpretations of this phrase:

1. The interpretation that “favors” the husband says that **as is fitting in the Lord** means that a wife should submit to her husband **“as if he were God Himself”**.

- In no place does the Scripture teach an unqualified, without exception, submission – except to God and God alone.
- But this is wrong. And *in no place* does the Scripture say that a person should submit to another in that way.

Note: (Exceptions to when a wife does not need to submit)

As is the case in every human relationship, the command to submit is not absolute. There are exceptions to this command for a wife to **submit to her own husband**.

- When the husband asks the wife to sin, she must not submit.
- When the husband is medically incapacitated, insane, or under the influence of mind altering substances, the wife may not submit.
- When the husband is violent and physically threatening, the wife may not submit.
- When the husband breaks the marriage bond by adultery, they wife does not need to submit to her husband being in an adulterous relationship.

2. The second wrong interpretation, is if the wife says something along these lines, “I’ll submit to him as long as he does what the Lord wants.”
 - The wife is not in the seat of judging over her husband by deciding whether the husband is making the choice that is God’s will or not.
 - Basically saying, “I’ll submit to my husband when I agree with him or “I’ll submit to him when he makes the right decisions according to my opinion and carries them out the right way, according to me”.
 - This is not submission at all.

Once again: “It is fitting in the Lord” means:

- For wives, submission to their husband is part of their Christian life.
- When a wife doesn’t obey this word to **submit to your own husband as is fitting in the Lord**, she doesn’t just fall short as a wife. She falls short as a follower of Jesus Christ.
- This means that the command to submit it completely out of the realm of “my nature” or “my personality.” Wives aren’t expected to submit because they are the “submissive type.” They are expected to submit because it is **fitting in the Lord**.
- This has nothing to do with your husband’s intelligence, or giftedness, or capability. It has to do with honoring the Lord Jesus Christ.
- This has nothing to do with whether or not your husband is “right” on a particular issue. It has to do with Jesus being right.

Note: (To single Ladies)

This means that a woman should take great care in how she *chooses* her husband. Remember, ladies: this is what God requires of you in marriage. This is *His* expectation of you. Instead of looking for an attractive man, instead of looking for a wealthy man, instead of looking for a romantic man, you better first look for a man you can *respect*.

Note: (moving forward)

We will see as we now look at Vs. 19, if the husband does it right it makes the women's role so much easier and even delightful.

3:19a Husbands Love (Agape) your wives

Col 3:19a

19a **Husbands, love your wives** and do not be bitter toward them.

A. Husbands, love your wives:

Paul's words to husbands safeguards his words to wives.

Though wives are to submit to their husbands, it never excuses husbands acting as tyrants over their wives.

Instead, a husband must **love** his wife, and the ancient Greek word translated **love** her is (*agape*).

The ancient Greek language had several different words describing different kinds of love.

1. Eros – Sexual passion
2. Philia – Deep friendship; men who have side by side in battle have such a bond
3. Storge - Love between parents and children

- each of these speak about love that is “felt”.
- These describe “instinctive” love, love that comes spontaneously from the heart.
- Paul assumes that eros (desire) and phileo (fondness) are present in marriage already

Note:

Christians should not act as if these things do not matter in the marriage relationship. They do matter.

But Paul's real point is to address a higher kind of love, agape love.

4. Agape describes a different kind of love.

The Greek word here is (agapao) – love that is based on choice, choosing to value another person, God's kind of love.

Agape really doesn't have much to do with feelings - it has to do with decisions.

It can be defined as a sacrificial, giving, absorbing, love.

The word has little to do with emotion; it has much to do with **“self-denial” for the sake of another.**

Note: (Someone could causally read “Love your wife”)

We can read this passage and think that Paul means, “husband, be kind to your wife.” Or “husband, be nice to your wife.” There is no doubt that for many marriages, this would be a huge improvement. But that isn't what Paul writes about. What he really means is, “husband, continually practice self-denial for the sake of your wife.”

In a picture:

"This is the love that Jesus has for us, demonstrated when He died for us on the cross".

Agape love:

- It is a love more of decision than of the spontaneous heart; as much a matter of the mind than the heart, because it chooses to love the undeserving.
- This is the love that's described in 1 Cor 13 – Love is patient and kind..."
- It is a love that loves without changing.
- It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment.
- It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing.
- It is love that loves even when it is rejected.
- Agape love gives and loves because it wants to; it does not demand or expect repayment from the love given. It gives because it loves, it does not love in order to receive.

Agape love is the continual love Christ has for His Bride!!!

Need an example to follow, here you have it...

Eph 5:25-30

25 Husbands, **love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church** and **gave Himself for her**,²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,²⁷ 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.²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

3:19b Husbands do not be bitter toward them**Col 3:19b**

19a Husbands, love your wives **and do not be bitter toward them.**

B. And do not be bitter toward them:

Bitter- the Greek word (pikrainesthe) – bitter that is found in taste

The only other place it is used in the Bible is to refer to something "**bitter in taste**".

Such as in:

Rev 8:11

11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, **because it was made bitter.**

Rev 10:9-11

9 So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book."

And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and **it will make your stomach bitter**, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."

10 Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. **But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.**

Example: "of bitterness"

Ex 15:22-25

22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. 23 Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. 24 And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" 25 So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. **When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.**

This Old Testament story gives us a New Testament insight:

Follow me on this one.

Gal 3:13

13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "**Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree**")

1 Peter 2:21-25

21 For to this you were called, because **Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example**, that **you should follow His steps**:

22 "Who committed no sin,

Nor was deceit found in His mouth";

23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, **but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously**; 24 **who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree**, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness -- **by whose stripes you were healed**.

25 For you **were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls**.

The very next thing Peter ties this into is marriage:

Wives follow Jesus example in "submission" to the Father, to the extent of even dying on the cross.

1 Peter 3:1-6

1 **Wives, likewise**, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. 3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward -- arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel -- 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

Understanding:

- You once had a marriage that was sweet to the taste, but now it has turned bitter
- Throw in the tree!!

- Get your eyes on Jesus, and Love each other in an agape love, as Jesus loves us!!
- How did Christ get His bride, by dying on the tree and forgiving us
- How are you going to have a bride and keep her as lovely and precious, by dying to yourself!

Peter further commands:

Husbands you follow Jesus example, on dying to self to have a precious bride.

1 Peter 3:7

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, **giving honor to the wife**, as to the weaker vessel, and as **being heirs together of the grace** of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Biblical marriage they way God designed it, is a union and the sharing of a life together in the goodness of God.

- The implication is perhaps the wife has given the husband some *reason to be bitter*. Paul says, "that doesn't matter, husband."
- The husband may feel perfectly justified in his harsh or unloving attitude and actions towards his wife, but he is not justified - *no matter how the wife has been towards the husband*.
- *Agape* loves even when there are obvious and glaring deficiencies, even when the receiver is unworthy of the love.

C. **The Role Of Husbands**

Remember what the Biblical definition of love is in **1 Cor 13** ***Love is patient, kind, not jealous, doesn't seek its own, isn't provoked, and endures all things.***

Jesus said,

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one **lay down his life...**"

Eph 5:25

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church **and gave Himself for her,**

When did Jesus start loving His bride?

Rom 5:6-8

6 For **when we were still without strength**, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly**.
7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Rom 5:10

10 For if **when we were enemies** we **were reconciled to God through the death of His Son**, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

And this is the love we are called to have for our wives!!! A love to the death!!

How did Christ demonstrate His love for the church?

- He died for her.
- And not just a one-time sacrifice like pushing her out of the way of an oncoming bus.
- He actually took all the pain and sorrow caused by her sin and **put it ALL upon Himself.**

Husbands, this is the key to fulfilling your role:

- The give “unconditional love and forgiveness”.
- Taking every sin your wife has committed against you, taking all of the pain and hurt that those things have caused, and crucifying yourself with them.
- Jesus didn't retaliate by throwing our sin back at us - He bore it in His body on the cross.

We are called to do exactly the same thing:

1 Peter 2:21

21 **For to this you were called**, because **Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:**

<h3>Conclusion</h3>

Let's not forget the context and the verses preceding these verses on “Marriage”.

Col 3:12-15

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.** 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also **you were called in one body;** and **be thankful.**

Hardest place to live as a Christian is in our own home, especially in marriage, but we have the Resurrection Power of Christ to live our Christianity out.