

# Preeminent. Christ's Place in The World

## WEEK 13

### Husbands, Wives, and Children



*“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them” (Col. 3:18-19).*

Having described in 3:12-17 some characteristics of the new humanity in Christ — humanity as it should be — Paul in verses 18-21 depicts what this means for family relationships. This progression conveys two fundamental truths: First, living as new people starts at home; our families should be the first to see our new life in Christ, even if it can be harder to be Christlike toward them than others. Second, Jesus’ disciples are not concerned merely with “otherworldly” realities, for He calls us to die to self in all our relationships.

Paul addresses wives, husbands, and children in today’s passage. His words are strange to our culture, for the notion of a wife’s submission to her husband is rejected as passé, and some days it seems that obeying one’s parents is also now optional. Modern scholars uncomfortable with verse 18 range from evangelicals who say it is a temporary rule adopted to make Christianity palatable to first-century Romans to liberal theologians who call the text oppressive and deny its divine authority.

In addressing these issues, Christian men especially must recognize that female oppression has for too long been among us. Women have not always been

**COLOSSIANS 3:18-19**  
**CORAM DEO**

Paul expands on male and female roles in Ephesians, and our study of that book in a few months will look at this topic in more detail. Today, note that submission need not mean some household chores belong exclusively to wives and others to husbands. One commentator notes that proper interpretation of Scripture’s view of marital roles does not sound “like we are leading a march back to the gender caste system of the first century.”

treated like the divine image-bearers they are (Gen. 1:27). Napoleon Bonaparte’s comment that “women are nothing but machines for producing children” reflects past sentiments of many Westerners, including, sadly, many in the church. Still, female oppression and the misuse of Scripture to justify it does not mean Paul’s rules were temporary. Similarities exist between Colossians 3:18-21 and first-century cultural norms, but the apostle’s guide for families has Christian ideas (love, pleasing the Lord, not discouraging children) woven throughout. It is hard to keep these ideas and discard the unpopular injunctions. Paul’s confrontation with paganism also makes it unlikely at best that he shaped his ethics to make Christianity more acceptable to non-Christians.

The triune God defines equality differently than our culture, and His Word judges us, not vice versa (1 Cor. 1:18-25). He shows us that equality and submission are not mutually exclusive. The Father and the Son are coequal in deity and dignity, but the Son submits Himself to the Father (John 1:1-4; 5:19-20). Similarly, husbands and wives are of equal value, though wives submit themselves to their own husbands.<sup>1</sup>



## OPEN IT

1. What words come to mind when you think of marriage?
2. What have been some of the biggest influences on how you view marriage?

## READ IT | Colossians 3:18-19

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<sup>1</sup> R.C. Sproul, *Husbands, Wives, and Children*, [www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/husbands-wives-and-children](http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/husbands-wives-and-children)



7. Looking back to Colossians 3:12-17, how can living out these attributes help to create an environment for marriages to thrive and grow?
  
8. What are some of the enemies of marriage today and what makes them so effective at eroding such an important relationship?
  
9. When the **world** hears the word “submission,” how does it respond? What are some of the reasons for this reaction?

*The Gospel of Jesus has done more to help more women than any other teaching in the history of Planet Earth. Here's a starting point for this discussion if you're interested: [www.goo.gl/2YAiCw](http://www.goo.gl/2YAiCw)*

10. How has the concept of biblical submission been misunderstood and misapplied? What are some of the differences between biblical and unbiblical submission?

*“Submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband’s leadership, and help carry it through according to her gifts. It’s the disposition to follow a husband’s authority and an inclination to yield to his leadership. It is an attitude that says, “I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for things and lead with love. I don’t flourish in the relationship when you are passive and I have to make sure the family works.”<sup>3</sup>*

11. What are **your** initial thoughts to this definition of submission? Is there anything **you** would add, qualify or omit?

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<sup>3</sup>John Piper, <http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/the-beautiful-faith-of-fearless-submission>

12. What causes a Christian wife to desire to submit to her husband? What things might keep her from desiring such a role?

13. Read Proverbs 21:1. What promise does God give to ensure us that He is in control of authorities?

**Wives**, how does this help you trust your God when it comes to your husband's less than perfect leadership?

*"...As is fitting in the Lord" does not define the extent of a wife's submission. It 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." They submit simply because it is fitting in the Lord to do it. It honors God's Word and His order of authority. It is part of their Christian duty and discipleship.<sup>4</sup>*

14. Why is it important to recognize that submission to one's husband first begins with submission to God?

**Wives**, how are you doing at expressing respect and honor to your husband? In what specific ways have you done so in the last couple weeks?

**Wives**, now ask your husband, "How am I doing at showing you respect? In what specific ways do have I done a good job at that in in the last couple weeks?"

**Husbands**, what are one or two ways that your wife expressed respect and honor to in the last couple weeks? How did that make you feel?

**Husbands**, what 3 ways would you enjoy receiving love from your wife in the next few weeks?

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<sup>4</sup> David Guzik, Commentary on the Bible, [www.enduringword.com/commentaries/5103.htm](http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/5103.htm)

*Headship is not dictatorship or lordship. It is loving leadership. In fact, both the husband and the wife must be submitted to the Lord and to each other. It is a mutual respect under the lordship of Jesus Christ. True spiritual submission is the secret of growth and fulfillment. When a Christian woman is submitted to the Lord and to her own husband, she experiences a release and fulfillment that she can have in no other way. This mutual love and submission creates an atmosphere of growth in the home that enables both the husband and the wife to become all that God wants them to be.<sup>5</sup>*

15. What should be the response of the husband whose wife embraces her divine calling as a wife and mother?

**Husbands**, how are you doing expressing love and honor to your wife? In what specific ways have you done so in the last couple weeks?

**Husbands**, now ask your wife, “How am I doing expressing love and honor to you? In what specific ways have I done a good job at that in in the last couple weeks?”

**Wives**, what are one or two ways in what ways that your husband expressed love and honor to you in the last couple weeks? How did that make you feel?

**Wives**, what 3 ways would you enjoy receiving love from your husband in the next few weeks?

*God's arrangements are never lop-sided. If there is a word of instruction and guidance for those who have the subject place, there is equally a word for those who take the lead. In each case the Spirit of God puts His finger upon the weak spot. **The husband is exhorted to love.** Mere natural love can easily turn to bitterness, but this can never happen when his love is a reflection of the divine. **If the husband is marked by love the wife has no difficulty in being subject.**<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament*, p 690.

<sup>6</sup> Frank B Hol, *Paul's Epistles: Galatians – Philemon*, page 110, [www.preceptaustin.org/colossians\\_317-25.htm#3:18](http://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_317-25.htm#3:18)

16. Why should a husband seek to earn his wife's respect with love? How would this improve a good marriage and how might it impact a difficult one?

17. What causes a Christian husband to desire to love to his wife? What things might keep him from such an endeavor?

*A husband is not to lead by being harsh, like a shepherd who is harsh. The sheep will refuse to go with him, and perhaps will even die. Rather, **he leads and guides them in the right direction with gentleness**; then the sheep (and wife) will follow him. The sheep do this out of a need to be protected, to be led to food and water that they cannot find on their own. Women also have the need to feel protected and cherished. Humans are to lead other humans to the precepts of His Word and character (James 3:11-14).<sup>7</sup>*

18. Why is it so important for husbands to remember their relationship with Christ before they relate with their wives?

What does the life of Jesus teach men about service and love that can be directly applied to their marriage?

*What we begin to understand is that Paul was bringing liberation to the home. He understood that Christians were to have "Christian" homes. That love was to abound and the roles were to be understood in light of God's grace. When we slow down and appreciate the context, we see the gospel bringing liberation through love<sup>8</sup>.*

19. How has the gospel brought love and joy to your marriage, your family, and to your household?

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Richard J. Krejcir, Running the Christian Home, [www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=53964](http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=53964)

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Powell, <http://gracemahomet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Colossians-Small-Groups.pdf>

## **Group Activity**

*Arrange for some time during your discussion to break up into groups of men and women. Take 10-12 minutes to discuss the following questions. When you gather back share some of what you discussed with the other group.*

### **Married Men:**

Why might your wife want/not want to submit to you?

What is one thing that you can do or change that might encourage your wife to desire biblical submission?

Do you think that your wife feels loved? What is one thing that you can do, improve, or change to cultivate this more?

### **Married Women:**

How well do you fulfill the command of Colossians 3:18 with joy?

Why is it easy or difficult for you?

What is one way you can encourage your husband's obedience to love and care for you?

### **Single Men & Women:**

What words of insight or question can you share with your married group members? What thoughts and applications come to mind as you read and study this text?