

# Colossians 3:17-19 Commentary

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## Colossians Resources

Commentaries, Sermons, Illustrations, Devotionals

CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

[Colossians Overview](#) - Click Chart on right side

Christ Preeminent in All Things Supreme Lord - Sufficient Savior			
Colossians 1	Colossians 2	Colossians 3	Colossians 4
Supremacy of Christ		Submission to Christ	
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Christ Our Lord		Christ Our Life	Christ our Love
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Instruction	Warnings	Exhortations	Reminders
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His Person and Word		His Peace and Presence	

**Colossians 3:17** [Whatever](#) you [do](#) (2PPAS) [in word or deed](#), [do all in the name](#) of the [Lord Jesus](#), [giving thanks](#) (PAPMPN) [through](#) Him to [God the Father](#). (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** [kai pan o ti ean poiete](#) (2PPAS) [en logo e en ergo](#), [panta en onomati kuriou iesou](#), [eucharistountes](#) (PAPMPN) [to theo patri di' autou](#).

**Amplified:** And whatever you do [no matter what it is] in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and in [dependence upon] His Person, giving praise to God the Father through Him. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

**Macent:** let your discourse and your actions be all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father by him.

**Moffatt:** Indeed, whatever you say or do, let everything be done in dependence on the Lord Jesus, giving thanks in his name to God the Father.

**Montgomery:** And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God our Father through him. ([NJB](#))

**NLT:** And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** And whatever you may have to do, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, thanking God the Father through him. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** And all, whatever you do in the sphere of word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, constantly giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

**Young's Literal:** and all, whatever ye may do in word or in work, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus--giving thanks to the God and Father, through him.

**AND WHATEVER YOU DO IN WORD OR DEED: kai pan o ti ean poiete (2PPAS) en logo e en ergo**

- **Whatever:** Col 3:23 2Ch 31:20,21 Pr 3:6 Ro 14:6-8 1Co 10:31
- **in word:** 2Th 2:17 1Jn 3:18)

**Whatever you do** ("Whatever you are in the custom of doing")- This is another way of saying "Make no exceptions" to this general principle - a charge that is now within the potential for every new man or woman in Christ (Who is now our life - Col 3:4-note). The Greek word **pas** (**all**) is placed at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis. **Eadie** writes " the apostle's idea is, that while some things are done formally in the name of the Lord Jesus, everything should be done really in it." In **all** your speech and conduct (your lips and your life) Paul is saying do it as if in the presence and power of Jesus and the glory of His Father Who art in heaven.

**In word or deed** - In "lip or life". Notice that doing may be **in word**, as well as **in deed**. Paul ascribes to no secular or sacred split. **All** of the believer's life is to be a life of holiness (cp 2Cor 7:1, 1Pe 1:15-16, 17)

**Eadie** adds "The apostle has just spoken of formal religious service, and surely it is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. But not it alone-all speech and action must be imbued with the same spirit." ([Colossians 3:16-19 Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** comments that we must...

See how our being Christians does not relax the bonds of our Christian relationship, but it calls us to the higher exercise of the responsibilities and duties connected therewith.

Do not draw any line of demarcation, and say, "So far is secular, and so far is religious." Let your whole life be religious; and if there is anything proposed to you, in which you cannot glorify God, do not touch it.. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

If any of you go to the theater, can you go there in the name of the Lord Jesus? Why, you would not dare to cross the threshold with such blasphemy in your soul! And when you go to any place of doubtful amusement, can you go there giving thanks to God and the Father by Jesus Christ? Can you thank the Lord that you are permitted to go, and pray for divine blessing when you go, and when you come away? A lady once said to a Christian minister, "The pleasures of going to the play are very great; there is the pleasure of thinking of it beforehand, the enjoyment of it at the time, and then the pleasure of thinking of it afterwards." "Yes, madam," said the good man, "and there is one other pleasure which you seem to have forgotten, that is the pleasure of thinking of it on your dying bed; I would like you to remember that." Let me read this verse again: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." If you cannot do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, do not do it at all if you are a Christian; and even if you are not a Christian, you will be accountable to God, by-and-by, for all that you do.

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**Robert Morgan - Whatever...**

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the "whatever you do" verses. These are sweeping commands spanning all our words, thoughts, attitudes, and actions, designed to make us living doxologies. There are two such verses here in Colossians 3.

- Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (v. 17).

- Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men (v. 23).

I'm intrigued by the phrase in verse 17: "in the name of the Lord Jesus." That means we should do everything as though Jesus Himself were doing it. Our every word should be as though Jesus were speaking it.

Recently I had a medical procedure requiring anesthesia. The hospital wanted to know if I had a durable power of attorney, and they asked who would make decisions in my name should a crisis arise. The person who acts in my name does so with full legal authority as though I myself were making the decision.

This verse tells us that whatever we say in life, we're to say it as though Christ were saying it. Whatever we do in life, we're to do as though Christ were doing it. Whatever we do in word or deed, we're to do in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Furthermore, we're to do it with thanksgiving.

In Christian living, the small things we do are often bigger than the large things we accomplish; the Lord delights in small things. But whether small or large, let's do it all in the name of Christ for the glory of God. That's our calling.

- Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. (Prov. 16:3 NIV)
- Plan carefully what you do, and whatever you do will turn out right. (Prov. 4:26 GNT)
- Work hard at whatever you do. (Eccles. 9:10 GNT)
- Do faithfully whatever you do. (3 John 5 NKJV)
- Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from... the Lord Christ. (Col. 3:23-24)

- Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col. 3:17)

- Remember that God is going to judge you for whatever you do. (Eccles. 11:9 GNT)

- Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for God's glory. (1 Cor. 10:31)

([100 Bible Verses Everyone Should Know by Heart](#) - recommended resource)

- **in the Name:** Mic 4:5 Mt 28:19 Ac 4:30, 19:17 Php 1:11, 1Th 4:1,2

**How much? "All"** - a divine "no exception clause!"

**In the Name of** - "In the Spirit of the Lord Jesus" Eph 5:20-note (A T Robertson). Remember that the "Name" of Jesus is not merely His designation/identification (which it is), but His Name is an expression of the sum total of His divine Being, in essence serving as a "summary" of all His attributes and characteristics! His Name is thus equivalent to His Person! Jesus' Name is of no avail if detached from His character. As an aside, think how often the lost world uses this matchless Blessed Name as a "curse word!" Woe! When we hear His Name so horribly blasphemed, may God's Spirit give us boldness to gently speak up explaining that He is our Lord and we respectfully ask that they not use His Name in such a profane manner. Now back to our phrase "in the Name of" - What does this signify in this context? Taking the word "in" (en) as a reference to "in the sphere of," (in the "atmosphere" of), whatever we do (of eternal value) must be done in Him, in the sphere of His presence and power, which is now in the form of His indwelling Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the One Who is to be the Enabler of **"whatever we do in word or deed."** (cf Jn 15:5)

**John Eadie** explains **in the Name of** as "by his authority, or generally, in recognition of it. To speak in His name, or to act in His name, is to speak and act not to His honour, but under His sanction and with the conviction of His approval (**Ed:** cf 1Th 4:2-note). This is the highest Christian morality, a vivid and practical recognition of Christ in everything said or done (**Ed:** cf 2Cor 5:9-note). Not simply in religious service, but in the business of daily life; not merely in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, but in the language of friendship and of bargain, of the forum and the fireside; not simply in deeds which, in their very aspect, are a Christian compliance, such as almsgiving, or sacramental communion, but in every act, in solitude and in society, in daily toil, in the occupations of trade, or negotiations of commerce. **This is a high test.** It is comparatively easy to engage in religious discourse, but far more difficult to discourse on everything in a religious spirit; comparatively easy to do a *professedly Christian* act, but far more difficult to do every act in a *Christian spirit*. In the one case the mind sets a watch upon itself, and speaks and acts under the immediate consciousness of its theme and purpose, but in the other, the heart is so influenced by religious feeling, that without an effort it acknowledges **the Name of Christ**. Men may for the occasion solemnize themselves, and word and act may be in direct homage to Christ, but the season of such necessity passes away, and the sensations it had created lose their hold. Thus the associations of the Sabbath fade during the week, and the emotions of the sanctuary lose themselves in the market-place. Still, the apostle does not inculcate any familiar or fanatical use of Christ's name, it is not to be mixed up with the phrases of colloquial life. A man is not to say, in Christ's name I salute thee, or in Christ's name I buy this article or sell that one, charter this vessel, or engage in that speculation. But the apostle means, that such ought to be the habitual respect to Christ's authority, such the constant and practical influence of His word within us, that even without reference to Him, or express consultation of Him, all we say and do should be said and done in His spirit, and with the persuasion that He approves. Christianity should ever guard and regulate amidst all secular engagements, and its influence should hallow all the relations and engagements of life. This is the grand desideratum (that which is needed, wanted or wished for), the universal reign of the Christian spirit (**Ed:** cf Ro 14:8-note). The senator may not discuss Christian dogmas in the midst of national interests, but his whole procedure must be regulated, not by faction or ambition, but by that enlightened patriotism, which, based on justice, is wise enough to know that true policy can never contravene morality, and is benignant enough to admit that other states are interlinked with our progress, and that the world is one vast brotherhood. The merchant is not to digress into a polemical dispute while he is concluding a sale, but love of profit is not to supersede rectitude, nor is the maxim, that there is no friendship in trade, ever to lead him to take undue advantage, or accomplish by dexterity what equity would scarcely permit. The tradesman, as he lifts his tool, is not to say, in Christ's name I strike; but in the spirit of Him who was among His disciples, "as one that serveth" is he faithfully to finish the labour assigned him, ever feeling himself to be under the "great taskmaster's eye." Art, science, literature, politics and business, should be all baptized into the spirit of Christ." ([Colossians 3:16-19 Commentary](#)) (Highlighting and Italics mine)

This is even a principle found in the Old Testament...

Micah 4:5 Though all the peoples (Gentiles, pagans, heathen) walk each **in the name of his god**, As for us, we will walk **In the Name of the Lord our God** forever and ever.

It might be helpful if we emulated the example of musical genius **Johann Sebastian Bach**. Often at the bottom of a manuscript he would write the letters **INDNJC**, an abbreviation for the Latin words...

**In Nomine Domini Nostri Jesu Christi**  
**In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**

Our actions should "speak forth" the truth that Jesus is and does exactly what He claims. Just a few seconds of sin can disgrace the greatest of names, beloved. His Name is of course the greatest, but if you are in covenant with Him you have been given a new name and are His representative (see **Covenant - Name Change** cp Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel, sinner to saint and Christian Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1Pe 4:16-note). The NT gives us a sad example of one who failed miserably in the man we know as Judas Iscariot. Have you ever thought about the Hebrew meaning of his name? It's *Judah* which means means *praise of Jehovah!* **So next time you are tempted by an evil thought, word or deed, ponder your new name *Christianos* meaning Christ-like (!) or follower of Christ (see Jesus definition of a "follower" - Mt 16:24, Mk 8:34, Lk 9:23,14:33)**

**Dr S. Lewis Johnson** - The expression, "**in the name of the Lord Jesus**" means under the authority and approval of Him. George Goodman used to tell a story which illustrated action under the approval of the Lord Jesus. He wrote: "I remember hearing a story of a man who was walking behind a gipsy woman, and when they came to a place where the road divided, the gipsy woman threw her stick up into the air, and let it fall on the ground. Then she did it a second time; and a third time. By this time the gentleman had caught up with her, and, being curious, he enquired: 'Why do you throw your stick up into the air like that?' She replied: 'That is how I determine which way to go; I go whichever way the stick points.' 'But you threw it up three times?' he said, wondering why she had done so. 'Yes, I did!' she answered, 'for the silly thing would point that way, and I wanted it to go this!'" I think the lesson is obvious. ([Colossians 3:5-17 The Inward Life](#) in Bibliotheca Sacra, Jan, 64 or see also [Colossians 3:12-17 The Christian in Vogue](#))

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**MAKE EVER MOVE COUNT** (In "whatever you do"!)- Car racing legend Bobby Unser faced the toughest race of his life—and won. He and a friend, Robert Gayton, were snowmobiling in New Mexico when both of their sleds quit working. Snowdrifts as high as their chests, temperatures as low as zero, and winds as stiff as 70 mph hampered their attempt to find shelter. They even had to spend one night in a snow cave they made. Late the next day they found a barn with a heater and a phone.

After the rescue, Unser said, "Every decision we made had to be right." He and his friend had experienced a terrifying struggle with the elements they couldn't control as they did everything possible to stay alive.

As Christians, we are living in a world that is hostile to our spiritual survival. Every day we go up against forces that could destroy us. Some are internal—our pride and selfish desires. Some are external forces—ungodly media influences, acquaintances who don't support our faith, the stresses of life. Wrong decisions as we face these "blizzards" can lead to destruction.

Every move we make—each word and action—must be done in Jesus' name (Col. 3:17). We must live according to God's principles and act as we think Jesus would. That will make every move count. - Dave Branon

May everything we do—  
By word or deed or story—  
Be done to please the Lord;  
To Him be all the glory.  
—Roworth

**When making a decision, ask,  
"What would Jesus do?"**

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**DRIVE THE PIPE DEEPER** - During Bill Leslie's ministry as pastor of LaSalle Street Church in Chicago, there was a difficult period when he felt as if his soul was becoming a desert. His people were making so many demands that he was becoming spiritually drained.

While in this state of spiritual drought, he struck up a conversation with a devout Christian woman. He told her he felt like a pump, and his people so constantly pumped him that he was running dry. Straight from her heart, she answered, "Didn't you volunteer to be pumped when you prayed to be used by the Lord? Don't ask your people to quit pumping. Drive your pipe deeper. You need to get down where there's water again."

Perhaps you've had the same experience as Bill Leslie. Remember that God may entrust you with duties that seem to be drought-inducing burdens. Yet they are God-given assignments designed for your spiritual growth. Drive the pipe of faith and prayer deeper until once again you strike the living water of God's grace. As you "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16), you will be able to serve with a heart of gratitude and praise (Col 3:16-17).

If you sense your spiritual well drying up, drive your pipe deeper. God gives an unlimited supply of grace.

We shrink from this life's challenges—we plead

For watered pastures never touched by pain;  
But God will often let us sense our need  
Before He sends His cool, refreshing rain.  
—Gustafson

### Man has no lack when God is his supply.

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**PART-TIME CHRISTIANS?**- The host of a radio program told about a man who described his religious views by saying, “I’m a Christian on Christmas and Easter.” He seemed to think Christianity was a part time proposition.

Even if we don’t deliberately relegate our faith to just 2 days each year, many of us engage in a form of part time Christianity. We do that when we pick the time and place to practice our faith instead of being consistent every moment of every day.

When we choose to sin or neglect our relationship with Christ or let the world squeeze us into its mold, we become parttime Christians. Jesus told us to take up our cross daily and follow Him (Lk. 9:23). He didn’t suffer an unbearably cruel death on the cross so that we could pick and choose when we want to follow Him.

Why do we sometimes turn our back on our Savior and in effect tell Him to step out while we take over? Usually it’s because we disobey a clear biblical teaching. For example, if we neglect to “pray without ceasing” (1Th 5:17), we become self-sufficient. If we stop doing everything “heartily, as to the Lord” (Col 3:23), we start living for ourselves.

Following Jesus is a fulltime commitment. Don’t fall into the trap of thinking you can be a part time Christian. - Dave Branon

In all the little things of life,  
Your will, Lord, may I see;  
In little and in great alike,  
Help me to faithful be! —Anon.

### GIVING THANKS THROUGH HIM TO GOD THE FATHER: eucharistountes (PAPMPN) to theo patri di autou

- **Giving:** Col 1:12 2:7 Ro 1:8 Eph 5:20 1Th 5:18 Heb 13:15 1Pe 2:5,9 4:11
- **To God:** Eph 1:17 Php 2:11 1Th 1:1 Heb 1:5 1Jn 2:23

### A CONTINUAL ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Such a lifestyle is **only possible** as we rely on the continual filling (controlling, empowering) of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18-note- see effects/results of Spirit filling in Eph 5:19, 20-note)

Through our Great High Priest..

Heb 13:15 Through Him (cf Heb 4:14, 16) then (therefore) (Why "then/therefore?" see Heb 13:14), let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name..

**Giving thanks** (2168)(**eucharisteo** from **eucháristos** = thankful, grateful, well-pleasing - Indicates the obligation of being thankful to someone for a favor done <> in turn from **eú** = well + **charízomai** = to grant, give.; English - Eucharist) means to show that one is under obligation by being thankful. To show oneself as grateful (most often to God in the NT). Here in Colossians, Paul uses the **present tense** which calls for giving thanks to be our lifestyle, our natural (supernatural) response to all the people and circumstances which God allows or sends into our lives. Of course the only way to accomplish this supernatural end is by means of reliance on the filling (control) of the Spirit, not by reliance on natural means!

**Eucharisteo** is a word that at its very core (**eu** = good + **charis** = grace) means to acknowledge how good grace is!

**Moulton and Milligan** note that **eucharisteo** originally meant “do a good turn to” or “oblige,” and in late Greek passed readily into the meaning “be grateful,” “give thanks”. Giving thanks is the quality of being grateful, with the implication of also having appropriate (Spirit filled) attitude. This meaning is common in diplomatic documents in which the recipient of a favor reciprocates with assurance of goodwill. It is also used to express appreciation for benefits or blessings. Giving thanks was an important component of Greco-Roman reciprocity as demonstrated by a copy of a letter written by the Emperor Claudius to a Gymnastic Club expressing his gratification at games performed in his honour. The word eucharista was also common on ancient inscriptions.

**Thanksgiving** expresses what ought never to be absent from any of our devotions. We should always be ready to express our grateful acknowledgement of past mercies as distinguished from the earnest seeking of future mercies.

**TDNT** writes that...

We first find **eucharistos** in the senses "pleasant" and "graceful." **Eucharisteo** means "to show a favor," but this imposes a duty of gratitude and the meaning "to be thankful" or "to give thanks" develops. We also find the sense "to pray."

The Greek world held thanksgiving in high esteem. With the ordinary use we find a public use (gratitude to rulers) and a religious use (thanksgiving to the gods for blessings). Thanks are also a constituent part of letters. ([Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans](#))

In the Gospels the verb **eucharisteo** frequently describes Jesus' example of giving thanks (Mt 15:36; 26:27; Mk 8:6; 14:23; Lk 22:17, 19; Jn 6:11, 23; 11:41) Paul was frequently thankful to God for the saints and the grace given to them (1Co 1:4, Ep 1:16 Php 1:3, Col 1:3, 12, 1Th 1:2, 2Th 1:3, 2:13, Philemon 1:4). The effect of the Spirit's filling is a thankful heart (Eph 5:20, cp Col 3:17).

**Eucharisteo** describes a person who is depending on God's grace moment by moment. The present tense pictures this as one's lifestyle, a life only possible under the control of the Spirit.

**Eucharisteo** - 38 times in the NT (not in non-apocryphal LXX)- Mt 15:36; Mt 26:27 (Jesus' practice was to give thanks - here before the "last supper"); Mk 8:6; 14:23; Lk 17:16 (only 1/10 cleansed lepers thanked Jesus for healing); Lk 18:11 (pretentious thanks from the Pharisee!); Lk 22:17, 19; Jn 6:11, 23; 11:41 (Jesus' thanks was directed to the Father); Acts 27:35; 28:15; Ro 1:8-note, Ro 1:21-note; Ro 14:6-note; Ro 16:4-note; 1Co 1:4, 14; 1Co 10:30; 11:24; 14:17, 18; 2Co 1:11; Ep 1:16-note; Eph 5:20; Php 1:3-note; Col 1:3-note, Col 1:12-note; Col 3:17-note; 1Th 1:2-note; 1Th 2:13-note; 1Th 5:18-note; 2Th 1:3; 2:13; Philemon. 1:4; Re 11:17-note.

**Eadie on give thanks through Him** - The sentiment is found in Ephesians 5:20, more pointedly and fully expressed, and in almost the same connection. As ye give thanks to God by Christ, so think all and speak all in Christ's name, who is the medium of thanksgiving. Blessings come through Him, and through Him thanks are to be rendered. ([Colossians 3:16-19 Commentary](#))

**Through Him** - What a precious, powerful picture this little phrase **through Him** conveys (or at least should convey). It was Christ's rending of the veil (cp Mt 27:51, Mk 15:38, Lk 23:45, He 6:19, 20-note, He 10:19, 20, 21, 22-see below) that separated us from **God the Father** that now makes it possible for us to offer up a sacrifice of praise **through Him**. The writer of Hebrews explains it this way...

Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (See **notes** Hebrews 10:19; 20; 21; 22)

**Through Him** (our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ) then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And **do not neglect** (present imperative + the negative = command to stop an action/attitude that you are already exhibiting!) doing good and sharing **for** (a term of explanation = explains why we are to stop neglecting and start doing -- and also explains or gives us the motivation for so doing) with such sacrifices God is pleased (God pleasing doing is God initiated and God empowered [See Heb 13:20, 21-note, esp verse 21 [note God's part and our responsibility - He equips, we do, He works in us - Result? Pleasing in His sight!]) but we still have a charge to join Him in the "Great Adventure" - let [Steven Curtis Chapman "fire you up" to join God in this Great Adventure - Brothers and Sisters in Christ - Let's Saddle Up and follow Jesus!](#)). (See notes Hebrews 13:15; 16)

Someone has made the following statement so applicable to our need to strive (not in our own power but the Spirit's power - cp Col 1:28-note, Col 1:29-note, esp verse 29 - note our part and God's part, our personal responsibility and God's sovereign provision!) to maintain a heart attitude of gratitude (for our **old flesh** continually seeks draw us the opposite direction toward murmuring and complaining, Php 2:14, 15- notes - cp the effect of walking in the Spirit - Gal 5:16-note, [note the order - first, **walk** in the Spirit, then that walk {His power} will take care of the strong desires of the flesh - please do not reverse the order! That's **legalism** which kills {"the letter (law) kills, but the Spirit gives life" 2Cor 3:6-note}. Only God's transforming grace and Spirit is able to set the captive free!] filled with/controlled by the Spirit - Eph 5:18-note, Eph 5:19, 20-note, esp verse 20 in regard to maintenance of an attitude of gratitude)...

**Don't complain about thorns among the roses!**

## Be grateful for roses among the thorns!

**S Lewis Johnson** - We began by pointing out the need for a marriage between the believer's position and the believer's practice, between his creed and his conduct. In these verses the apostle has outlined the Christian apparel, and it is indeed a heavenly wardrobe. These garments are the products of the enabling power of the Spirit of God. May He motivate believers by reminding them of their cost in His blood, and may He enable believers to don them in His name and for His glory. (Ibid)

### A Simple Study... THROUGH HIM

Consider the following simple study - observe and record the wonderful truths that accrue through Him - this would make an edifying, easy to prepare Sunday School lesson - then take some time to give thanks for these great truths by offering up a sacrifice of praise...through Him.

Jn 1:3 [[NIV reads "through Him"](#)], Jn 1:7, John 1:10, Jn 3:17, Jn 14:6, Acts 2:22, 3:16, Acts 7:25, Acts 10:43, Acts 13:38, 39, Ro 5:9 [note], Ro 8:37 [note], Ro 11:36 [note]; 1Co 8:6, Ep 2:18 [note], Php 4:13 [note], Col 1:20 [note], Col 2:15 [note], Col 3:17 [note], Heb 7:25 [note], Heb 13:15 [note], 1Pe 1:21 [note], 1John 4:9

Would you like more study on the wonderful topic of through Him? Study also the NT uses of the parallel phrase through Jesus (or similar phrases - "through Whom", "through our Lord", etc) - John 1:17, Acts 10:36, Ro 1:4, 5-note; Ro 1:8-note, Ro 2:16-note, Ro 5:1-note; Ro 5:2-note, Ro 5:11-note, Ro 5:21-note, Ro 7:25-note, Ro 16:27-note, 1Cor 15:57, 2Cor 1:5, 3:4, 5:18, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:5-note, Php 1:11-note, 1Th 5:9-note; Titus 3:6-note, He 1:2-note; He 2:10-note, Heb 13:21-note, 1Pe 2:5-note, 1Pe 4:11-note, Jude 1:25)

All things are from Him, through Him and to Him. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

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**ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTH** by **Harry A. Ironside** - COBBLING FOR THE GLORY OF GOD - "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17).

When I was a boy, I felt it was both a duty and a privilege to help my widowed mother make ends meet by finding employment in vacation time, on Saturdays and other times when I did not have to be in school. For quite a while I worked for a Scottish shoemaker, or "cobbler," as he preferred to be called, an Orkney man, named Dan Mackay. He was a forthright Christian and his little shop was a real testimony for CHRIST in the neighborhood. The walls were literally covered with Bible texts and pictures, generally taken from old-fashioned Scripture Sheet Almanacs, so that look where one would, he found the Word of GOD staring him in the face. There were John 3:16 and John 5:24, Romans 10:9, and many more.

On the little counter in front of the bench on which the owner of the shop sat, was a Bible, generally open, and a pile of gospel tracts. No package went out of that shop without a printed message wrapped inside. And whenever opportunity offered, the customers were spoken to kindly and tactfully about the importance of being born again and the blessedness of knowing that the soul is saved through faith in CHRIST. Many came back to ask for more literature or to inquire more particularly as to how they might find peace with GOD, with the blessed results that men and women were saved, frequently right in the shoe-shop.

It was my chief responsibility to pound leather for shoe soles. A piece of cowhide would be cut to suit, then soaked in water. I had a flat piece of iron over my knees and, with a flat-headed hammer, I pounded these soles until they were hard and dry. It seemed an endless operation to me, and I wearied of it many times.

What made my task worse was the fact that, a block away, there was another shop that I passed going and coming to or from my home, and in it sat a jolly, godless cobbler who gathered the boys of the neighborhood about him and regaled them with lewd tales that made him dreaded by respectable parents as a menace to the community. Yet, somehow, he seemed to thrive and that perhaps to a greater extent than my employer, Mackay. As I looked in his window, I often noticed that he never pounded the soles at all, but took them from the water, nailed them on, damp as they were, and with the water splashing from them as he drove each nail in.

One day I ventured inside, something I had been warned never to do. Timidly, I said, "I notice you put the soles on while still wet. Are they just as good as if they were pounded?" He gave me a wicked leer as he answered, "They come back all the quicker this way, my boy!"

Feeling I had learned something, I related the instance to my boss and suggest that I was perhaps wasting time in drying out the leather so carefully. Mr. Mackay stopped his work and opened his Bible to the passage that reads,



"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

"Harry," he said, "I do not cobble shoes just for the four bits or six bits (50 cents or 75 cents) that I get from my customers. I am doing this for the glory of GOD. I expect to see every shoe I have ever repaired in a big pile at the judgment seat of CHRIST, and I do not want the LORD to say to me in that day, 'Dan, this was a poor job. You did not do your best here.' I want Him to be able to say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'"

Then he went on to explain that just as some men are called to preach, so he was called to fix shoes, and that only as he did this well would his testimony count for GOD. It was a lesson I have never been able to forget. **Often when I have been tempted to carelessness, or to slipshod effort, I have thought of dear, devoted Dan Mackay, and it has stirred me up to seek to do all as for Him who died to redeem me.** (Bolding added)

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Beloved, how are you doing your work (in word or in deed), whatever and wherever it may be? As unto the Lord and for His glory? Or just to get by? As John Piper ([Read his free book - Don't Waste Your Life](#) and/or his series at the [2008 Spring conference](#)) exhorts the body of Christ, don't waste your life (pray Ps 90:12-[note](#), make it your aim to Ep 5:16-[note](#)), for our works wrought by abiding in the Vine (Jn 15:5), in the power of the Spirit (Php 2:13-[note](#)), with proper motivation (1Cor 4:5), will give a proper opinion of (glorify) our Father in heaven (Mt 5:16-[note](#)) will be repaid at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2Co 5:10-[note](#), see also bema)!

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Colossians 3:18 **Wives, be subject (2PPPM) to your husbands, as is fitting (3SIAI) in the Lord. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** [Ai gunaikēs, hupotassēthe \( 2PPPM \) tois andrasin, os aneken \(3SIAI\) en kurio](#)

**Amplified:** Wives, be subject to your husbands [subordinate and adapt yourselves to them], as is right and fitting and your proper duty in the Lord. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Macent:** Dames, be submissive to your husbands, as becomes Christians.

**Moffatt:** Wives, be subject to your husbands; that is your proper duty in the Lord.

**Montgomery:** Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting for Christians. (**NJB**)

**NLT:** You wives must submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Wives, adapt yourselves to your husbands, that your marriage may be a Christian unity. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** **Wives, be constantly subjecting yourselves with implicit obedience to your husbands as you ought to do in the Lord.**

**Young's Literal:** The wives! be subject to your own husbands, as is fit in the Lord;

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**WIVES BE SUBJECT TO YOUR HUSBANDS: Ai gunaikēs hupotassēthe (2PPPM) tois andrasin:**

- **Be subject:** Ge 3:16 Es 1:20 1Co 11:3 14:34 Eph 5:22-24,33 1Ti 2:12 Titus 2:4,5 1Pe 3:1-6)

## CONJUGAL DUTIES

**Related Resource:** See Paul's parallel passages in Eph 5:22-33 ([See notes](#))

**“Marriage is easy.  
It’s living together afterward that’s tough.”**

Too many young people try to find a mate they can live with but the emphasis in Scripture is not so much on **finding** the right mate as **being** the right mate. Colossians 3:18-19 gives us short but pithy instructions on being the mate we should be.

**Hughes** - Colossians 3:18–4:1 could well be titled, “How to Have a Full, Rich Family Life.” The text contains three sets of exhortations: Col 3:18 and Col 3:19 to wives and husbands, Col 3:20 and Col 3:21 to children and parents, Col 3:22–4:1 to servants

and masters....It is teaching which is much needed today when marriage has fallen into disrepute, as with the seven-year-old girl who had just seen the movie Cinderella and was testing her neighbor lady's knowledge of the story. The neighbor, anxious to impress the little girl, said, "I know what happens at the end." "What?" asked the girl. "Cinderella and the prince live happily ever after." To which the little girl answered, "Oh no, they didn't. They got married!" It was totally innocent, unwitting cynicism. But others are more calculated, like the famous literary figure William Congreve who wrote, "Every man plays the fool once in his life, but to marry is playing the fool all of one's life." (Colossians and Philemon: the supremacy of Christ)

**This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humaneness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve.** Literally, Paul is saying "Women, be in subjection to the men" for the Greek language has no distinctive terms corresponding to our words wife, husband. But from the context, the reference to married persons seems to be unmistakable.

As with an attitude of gratitude (above), this attitude is only possible by continual reliance upon the enabling power of the Holy Spirit = Eph 5:18-note- see effects/results of Spirit filling in Eph 5:19, 20-note; see especially Eph 5:22-note).

**Wives** - Young's Literal has "The wives!" which picks up the Greek emphasis by placing "wives" at the beginning of the sentence.

To carry out this command requires spiritual discipline. Tim Schoap says "Discipline recognizes that in Christ you are already pleasing to God, and seeks to align practice with position. Where legalism trusts self, discipline trusts Christ." I would add that obedience to this command (present imperative - discussed below) is **impossible** in one's own power but is only **'HIM-possible!'** In other words, instead of self-reliance, we need Spirit reliance! Wives and husbands (in Col 3:19) can only carry out these commands enabled by and relying upon the grace and power of the Holy Spirit (**Read** and **Memorize** and **Meditate** upon these four crucial passages: Eph 5:18-note, Gal 5:16-note, Php 2:12-note coupled with Php 2:13-note). Our obedience **must be** supernatural, not natural (e.g., a just "grit your teeth," "gut it up" and "just do it!" attitude) for this latter approach inevitably leads us into the "spiritual dead end" of legalism!

**William Barclay** on the **plight of women** in the ancient world - Under Jewish law a woman was a thing; she was the possession of her husband, just as much as his house or his flocks or his material goods were. She had no legal right whatever. For instance, under Jewish law, a husband could divorce his wife for any cause, while a wife had no rights whatever in the initiation of divorce. In Greek society a respectable woman lived a life of entire seclusion. She never appeared on the streets alone, not even to go marketing. She lived in the women's apartments and did not join her menfolk even for meals. From her there was demanded a complete servitude and chastity; but her husband could go out as much as he chose, and could enter into as many relationships outside marriage as he liked and incur no stigma. Both under Jewish and under Greek laws and custom, all the privileges belonged to the husband, and all the duties to the wife. (The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians)

**F. F. Bruce** - (Paul) does hold that there is a divine instituted hierarchy in the order of creation, and in this order the place of the wife comes next after her husband."

**This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humaneness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve.**

**Wayne Grudem** - Equality and differences in the Trinity are reflected in equality and differences in marriage (1Cor 11:3) and are part of God's original creation order. Although distorted by the fall, this creation order is reaffirmed by redemption in Christ (Col 3:18-19).

**Hughes** - Orthodoxy teaches that the Son is simultaneously equal to the Father and submissive to him. Likewise, equality and submissiveness can coexist in human relationships, including the marriage relationship.

**Tony Evans** - I want to clarify right away that this command does not address a woman's intrinsic worth as a person and a child of God. A wife is equal in value to her husband. Peter said the wife is a "fellow heir of the grace of life" (1Peter 3:7). A wife's submission has to do with function, not value. Just as Jesus Christ is functionally subordinate to the Father, yet equal with the Father, so a wife is functionally subordinate to her husband, yet equal to him. It is "fitting in the Lord" that a wife should defer to her husband's authority. The idea is that it is proper and becoming for a wife to conduct herself this way, because this is what God asks of her and what exalts Christ in her life and in the home. A wife who separates her relationship with her husband from her relationship with Christ will not relate to her husband properly. She will resist and rebel against his God-given authority, and thus separate herself from God's hand on her life. (From Who is this king of glory?: experiencing the fullness of Christ's work in our lives)

**John Piper** - According to the divine pattern wives are to take their unique cue from the purpose of the church. As the church submits to Christ, so wives are to submit to their husbands. The church submits to Christ as her head....the basic meaning of submission would be: recognize and honor the greater responsibility of your husband to supply your protection and sustenance; be disposed to yield to his authority in Christ and be inclined to follow his leadership. The reason I say that **submission** means a disposition to yield and an inclination to follow is that the little phrase "as to the Lord" in verse 22 limits the scope of submission. No wife should replace the authority of Christ with the authority of her husband. She cannot yield or follow her husband into sin. But

even where a Christian wife may have to stand with Christ against the sinful will of her husband, she can still have a spirit of submission. She can show by her attitude and behavior that she does not like resisting his will and that she longs for him to forsake sin and lead in righteousness so that her disposition to honor him as head can again produce harmony. So in this mysterious parable of marriage the wife is to take her special cue from God's purpose to the church in its relation to Christ. (from his sermon on Eph 5:21-22 - [Marriage- a Matrix of Christian Hedonism](#))

**Be subject** (5293) (**hupotasso** [word study] from **hupo** = under + **tasso** = arrange in orderly manner) means literally to place under in an orderly fashion or to line up under and was a common military term in secular Greek. In the active voice **hupotasso** means to subject, bring under firm control, subordinate as used in (Ro 8:20-note). This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humaneness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve. In non-military use, **hupotasso** described a *voluntary* attitude of giving in or cooperating with another. Note that Paul uses the passive voice with a middle sense (see more discussion below) which signifies the *voluntary* subjection of the wife to the will of her husband. Husbands and wives both need to understand the voluntary nature of the submission called for in the marital relationship lest it be misapplied (see Eph 5:21-note). This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humaneness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve. Note that Paul does not say "Women be a *door mat* for your husbands to step on!" (This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humaneness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve. **Husbands take note!**) This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humaneness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve. Remember that the only leaders qualified to lead are those who have learned to serve.

**Wiersbe** - Anyone who has served in the armed forces knows that 'rank' has to do with order and authority, not with value or ability.

**Guzik** - submission means you are part of a team. If 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.

**Eadie** - The injunction has been fully considered under Ephesians 5:25-33 (note), where it is enforced by a special argument, and a tender analogy derived from the conjugal relation of Christ and His church. The submission which is inculcated on the part of the wife is wholly different in source and form from that slavery which is found in heathen lands, for it is the *willing acquiescence* which springs out of social position and wedded love, and is dictated at once by a wife's affection, and by her instinctive tendency to lean on her husband for support. ([Comments on Col 3:18](#)) (Italics mine)

**Spicq** has some excellent, insightful comments noting that **hupotasso** is "a major virtue in the Christian pastoral writings, expressing the relations of subordination in the cosmic and religious order. God has placed everything in submission to Christ, to whom the angels are subordinate (Heb 2:5; 1Pet 3:22); the church is in submission to the Lord (Eph 5:24); Christians submit to God, to his law and his training, but also to one another to cooperate (1Cor 16:16) in the fear of God (Eph 5:21; cf. Ro 13:8). Woman is subordinate to man, the wife to the husband, the children to the parents (1Ti 3:4; cf. Marcus Aurelius 1.17.3), the young to the old, slaves and servants to their master (Ep 6:5, Titus 2:9; 1Pet 2:18), subjects (cf. Ep. Arist. 205, 207, 265; Josephus, War 2.140; Polybius 21.43, hoi hypotattomenoi) to their sovereign; and finally the Christian must submit to every human creature. We may conclude that the baptized (Ed: I would qualify that only one who is born by the Spirit, Jn 3:3, 5, independent of water baptism if that is what Spicq is alluding to here. cp baptizo conveying the sense of identification with Christ's death - Ro 6:3. ) person is a "son of obedience" (1Pet 1:2, 22) in all the larger or smaller human communities in which he is placed (1Pe 2:13-3:12), contributing to the maintenance of the order fixed by the plan of providence whereby all creatures are ordered in a hierarchy (Wis 11:21). It is clear that **hupotasso** does not have the same range in these differing communal relationships; but it is always reverent submission, seen as a self-offering (cf. Titus 3:1, 2). It means first of all accepting the exact place God has assigned, keeping to one's rank in this or that society, accepting a dependent status, especially toward God (Jas 4:7), like children who are submissive to a father's discipline (Heb 12:9), after the fashion of the child Jesus. **This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humaneness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve.** To submit is to accept directives that are given, to honor conditions that are imposed, to please one's superior (Titus 2:9) or honor him by the homage that is obedience (cf. Ep 6:1), to repudiate egotism and aloofness. It is to spontaneously position oneself as a servant toward one's neighbor in the hierarchy of love. (Spicq, C., & Ernest, J. D. Theological lexicon of the New Testament. 3:424-26. Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson)

**Hupotasso** - 38x in NT (Observe that this verb is clearly a favorite of the apostle Paul) - Lk. 2:51; 10:17, 20; Ro 8:7, 20; 10:3; 13:1, 5; 1Co. 14:32, 34; 15:27, 28; 16:16; Ep 1:22; 5:21, 24; Php 3:21; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5, 9; 3:1; Heb 2:5, 8; 12:9; Jas 4:7; 1Pe 2:13, 18; 3:1, 5, 22; 5:5

**Hupotasso** is modeled by our Lord Jesus during His earthly life as He showed proper submission to His parents (Lk 2:51). Luke describes subjection in the invisible realm where evil spirits (demons) are described as subject to Jesus' disciples (Lk 10:17, 20). Paul describes how a mind set on the flesh cannot (and therefore will not) submit to God's law (Ro 8:7-note). In Romans 15 (Ro 13:1-note, Ro 13:5-note) Paul explains that it is the necessary submission of every person to governing authority, a "chain of command" (order) which has been established by God. Paul also uses **hupotasso** six times in two verses to describe the future

glorious time when all things in the universe will be made subject to Christ during the Messianic Age and then in the age which follows (Re 21:1-[note](#)) all things will be made subject to God the Father...

But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming (Rapture), then comes the end (=the end of the Millennial Kingdom [Messianic Age] which the Son then hands over to His Father), when He delivers up the (Millennial) kingdom to the God and Father, when He (Jesus) has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He (King Jesus, Re 19:16-[note](#)) must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (cp Re 20:7, 8, 9, 10-[note](#)) The last enemy that will be abolished is death (1Co 15:54, 55, 56, 57, 58). For HE (God the Father) HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION (hupotasso) UNDER HIS (God the Son's) FEET (cp hupotasso in Ep1:22-note). But when He (God the Father) says, "All things are put in subjection (hupotasso)," it is evident that He (God the Father) is excepted Who put all things in subjection (hupotasso) to Him (God the Son). And when all things are subjected (hupotasso) to Him (God the Son), then the Son Himself also will be subjected (hupotasso) to the One who subjected (hupotasso) all things to Him, that God may be all in all (Re 22:3, 4, 5, 6, 7-[note](#)). (1Co 15:24, 25, 26, 27, 28)

**Hupotasso** was a secular military term describing lining up or marshalling of soldiers under the commanding officer, drawing up in order to prepare for battle. In this state of subordination they were now subject to the orders of their commander. The fact that one soldier is a private and another is a general does not mean that one man is necessarily better than the other. It only means that they have different ranks. And so we see that the idea is more the submission is more to the position than to the person. Hupotasso also described the arrangement of military implements on a battlefield in order that one might carry out effective warfare!

**Hughes** - "**Submit**" is not a synonym for servile, menial bondage. The appeal is to free responsible people and can only be heeded voluntarily. Moreover, none are called to follow it into sin or irrationality or harm of any kind. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). This is a charge for Christians who are living as Christians. (Ibid)

**Beet** says **hupotasso** here indicates

not worse in quality but lower in position" (not inequality for women are equal to men before God), represents "the divine pattern of subordination" and "suggests arrangement and order".

One must not think of a wife's being subject as synonymous with "slavery" or "subjugation." The wife is not to dominate or to lead, but to follow her husband's leadership as long as it does not compromise her loyalty to Christ. Her first loyalty is to the Lord Jesus and to the authority of His Word.

Remember that Paul's command is given in the context of the initial command at the beginning of Colossians 3 *to keep seeking the things above*. (Col 3:1-note) A wise woman will therefore accept the temporary relinquishing of her *'rights'*, for the eternal reward that is to come ("the things above"). Implicit is that if she asserts independence from her husband, it will adversely affect *'the things above'*, specifically her reward for the deeds done in the body (2Co 5:10, 1Co 3:11, 12, 13, 14, 15).

**Hupotasso** in this verse is in the present tense indicating that an attitude or mindset of willingness to submit to her husband is to be her constant practice (enabled by the Spirit - Ep 5:18). The imperative mood is a command (keeping in mind that what God commands, He also enables or empowers). Finally it is in the passive or middle voice depending on what linguistic source one examines. Passive indicates that action upon the subject comes from outside the subject being acted upon. Middle voice signifies that the wife initiates the act of submitting and participates in the effects or results of submission. **Middle voice** conveys the idea of the wife choosing to put herself under (hupo = under) her husband, not because of compulsion, but because she has a willing spirit. Middle voice also conveys a reflexive sense and can be translated as "subject yourselves". In any case the idea of submission of the wife is that of a voluntary attitude and action based upon her recognition of God's sovereign, ordained order. It follows that submission cannot be forced upon the wife against her will by a demanding "despot-like" husband. The wife is a helpmate (a helper suitable to the husband) and not a slave to suit the husband's every whim. She will gladly submit to a loving leader who himself is submissive to God and His sovereignty.

**Vaughn** - The form of the verb (middle voice) shows that the submission is to be voluntary. The wife's submission is never to be forced on her by a demanding husband; it is the deference that a loving wife, conscious that her home (just as any other institution) must have a head, gladly shows.

**MacArthur** - In Ephesians Paul also gives this same injunction in Eph 5:22 (a command is implied but the verb hupotasso is actually not present in the Greek sentence in Ep 5:22-note). Observe that this charge to the wife is given in the context of the command to be continually filled (present imperative) with the Spirit (Ep 5:18-note). If you are not filled with/controlled by (empowered by) the Holy Spirit (cp Php 2:13NLT - note), just try submitting to another person when everything within you and every one around you (including the world, the flesh and the devil) is crying out "Don't do it!". Sure, a wife might outwardly "submit" in her own human strength and will power, but this is not genuine submission. In this scenario, the unwilling wife who "makes" herself submit is like the

little boy whose mother disciplined him and told him to sit in the corner. While his outward, physical demeanor (he is sitting down) conveys submission, all the while he is "standing up" on the inside! Only the Spirit can transform our hearts and renew our minds to be subject like our Lord was subject to those earthly men who were in authority over Him! See the related topic Walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 - notes Gal 5:16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26) MacArthur, J. Colossians. Chicago: Moody Press)

God does all things...properly and in an orderly manner (1Co 14:40). If He did not have a chain of command in society, instead of moral order (kosmos) we would see moral chaos (cp a society in apostasy and anarchy as in Jdg 21:25-note). The fact that the woman is to submit to her husband does not suggest that the man is better than or superior to the woman. It only means that the man has the God ordained responsibility of headship and leadership in the home (Ep 5:23-note, Ep 5:24-note). According to the Master's plan, the husband's role is to be the Spirit filled spiritual head of the house and the woman's role is to live with a Spirit enabled attitude of submission to her husband. Paul's words give no comfort to the chauvinist, for he immediately (Col 3:19) commands husbands to selflessly, sacrificially, love their wives. The Spirit borne fruit of this supernatural agape love in and from the husband provides the proper environment in which godly submission by the wife is to take place (cp Eph 5:25-note, Ep 5:28, 29, 30-note).

**Wiersbe** adds some wise caveats noting that...

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 (Eph 5:21-note). 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. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

The Greek Textus Receptus (from which KJV is translated) adds the pronoun *idios* (own) which is translated as your own husbands but this Greek word is not found in most Greek manuscripts so it is omitted from the majority of translations. Wives however are to submit to their own husbands with whom they have an intimate, personal, vital relationship as directed by Paul in Eph 5:22 (note) which reads...

Wives, *be subject* to your own (*idios*) husbands, as to the Lord.

Jewish law considered a woman a "thing" , a possession with no legal rights. The only way she could divorce her husband was if he developed leprosy, became an apostate or ravished a virgin. The "sophisticated, intellectual" Greeks were not much better for in their society a woman never appeared alone, had to be totally chaste, whereas her husband could have as many relationships as he desired.

Genuine Christianity consists of both right doctrine and holy living. It is difficult to see how Christianity can have any positive effect on society if it cannot transform its own homes, and thus in America today we see an intense attack leveled at Christian homes, especially Christian marriages.

Christ coming to live within a regenerated men and women brought a new meaning to authority and submission in the home for it created a new order by introducing...

- A New Presence - Christ Who is our life (Col 3:4-note)
- A New Power - The Spirit of Christ - "Be continually filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18-note)
- A New Purpose - "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col 3:17-note)
- A New pattern - Christ is the pattern or Model "Husbands, love your wives. just as Christ also loved the Church." (Eph 5:25-note)

When a woman submits to the loving leadership of her husband & follows God's intention for her, she is fulfilled and so is the husband. Confuse the duties or roles of either member of this union & you destroy the BLESSING that each is to be to the other.

Keep in mind 3 caveats in order to have a Biblical understanding of submission:

(1) Submission does not imply inferiority (Gal 3:28)

(2) Submission is not absolute and there may be times when a wife must refuse to submit to her husband's desires because they violate God's Word. Luke records an incident which illustrates this principle...

(The Jewish rulers speaking to Peter, et al) "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name,

and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men."

(3) The husband's authority is not to be exercised in an authoritative, overbearing manner, but in the context of a loving relationship (but see 1Pe 3:1-note)

#### AS IS FITTING (becoming, proper) IN THE LORD: os aneken (3SIAI) en kurio:

- **As is fitting:** Ac 5:29 Eph 5:3 Eph 6:1)[/FONT>

**Is fitting** (433) (**aneko**) means something is fitting or right to do and is what is proper or is one's duty. Aneko is used of actions that are due someone and Lightfoot states conveys the "ultimate meaning of moral obligation". In (Philemon 1:8 third and final NT use in Ep 5:4-note) the contextual use of aneko denotes not merely that which is fitting but that which is almost legally obligatory or a necessary duty.

In this use in Colossians aneko is in the imperfect tense which speaks of an action going on in past time. Lightfoot says that the use of the imperfect/past tense points to the fact that the wife's submission to her husband is an obligation that is a self-evident one which is arrived at from reasoning regarding the proper relation of the wife to the husband. The Greek form in this phrase expresses an obligation. This speaks of how God designs and commands the godly family to operate.

**Aneko** - 3x -

Eph 5:4 and [there must be no] filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Phlm 1:8 Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you [to do] that which is proper,

In the Lord - This phrase modifies fitting and thus this obligation on the part of the wife is fitting in the Lord in the sense that she is as to her position in salvation, in Christ, and a person in such a position has the moral obligation to obey the Scriptures when they command the wife to be subject to her husband.

Many couples are united in wedlock in a rosy fog of optimism. Blinded to the shortcomings, each sees only the other's good points. But as the years pass by, the excitement wears off, and the couple begins to drift to the opposite extreme of viewing each other's same traits as faults! Someone has called this "reverse reasoning," giving the following examples

"She married him because he was 'strong and masculine'; she divorced him because he was a very 'dominating male.' He married her because she was so 'fragile and petite'; he divorced her because she was so 'weak and helpless.' She chose him because 'he knew how to provide a good living'; she left him because 'all he thought about was the business.' He married her because she was 'steady and sensible'; he divorced her because she was 'boring and dull.'"

Note the repetition of "Lord," in these last verses of this epistle (occurring seven times Col 3:18, 20, 22, 23, 24 ; Col 4:1).

**Eadie on in the Lord** - The translation then is—"as it should be in the Lord." This obligation of submission commenced with their union to the Lord, sprang out of it, and had not yet been fully discharged. It is therefore not a duty which had only newly devolved upon them, but its propriety reached back to the point of their conversion. Their union with the Lord not only expounded the obligation, but also enforced it. ([Colossians 3:18 Commentary](#))

**Guzik** has a lengthy discourse on "fitting in the Lord"

This is a crucial phrase. It colors everything else we understand about this passage. There have been two man "wrong" interpretations of this phrase, each favoring a certain "position."

i. 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. The idea is "you submit to God in absolutely everything with question, so you must submit to your husband in the same absolute way." This thinks that as is fitting in the Lord defines the extent of submission. But this is wrong. Simply put, in no place does the Scripture say that a person should submit to another in that way. There are limits to the submission your employer can expect of you. There are limits to the submission the government can expect of you. There are limits to the submission parents can expect of children. In no place does the Scripture teach an unqualified, without exception, submission – except to God and God alone. To violate this is to commit the sin of idolatry.

ii. The interpretation that “favors” the wife says that as is fitting in the Lord means “I’ll submit to him as long as he does what the Lord wants.” And then it is the wife’s job to decide what the Lord wants. This thinks that as is fitting in the Lord defines the limit of submission. This is also wrong. It is true that there are limits to a wife’s submission, but when the wife approaches as is fitting in the Lord in this way, then it degenerates into a case of “I’ll submit to my husband when I agree with him. I’ll submit to him when he makes the right decisions and carries them out the right way. When he makes a wrong decision, he isn’t in the Lord, so I shouldn’t submit to him then. It isn’t fitting to do so.” Simply put, that is not submission at all. Except for those who are just plain cantankerous and argumentative, everyone submits to others when they are in agreement. It is only when there is a disagreement that submission is tested.

iii. 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.

iv. “The phrase ‘in the Lord’ indicates that wifely submission is proper not only in the natural order but also in the Christian order. The whole thing, then, is lifted to a new and higher level.” (Vaughan)

v. Therefore, as 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 **isfitting 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.

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. ([Colossians 3 Commentary](#))

**William MacDonald** makes the point that

Paul repeatedly brings these matters of everyday life under the searchlight of the lordship of Christ as follows: (1) Wives—as is fitting in the Lord (Col 3:18). (2) Children—well-pleasing to the Lord (Col 3:20). (3) Servants—fearing the Lord (Col 3:22). (4) Servants—as to the Lord (Col 3:23). ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer’s Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

The home life is to be pervaded with the acknowledgement of His divine preeminence throughout. There is a placard, often found in the homes of Christians throughout the world, which aptly states that...

Christ is the Head of this house,  
The unseen Guest at every meal,  
The silent Listener to every conversation

## Notes on HUPOTASSO (from Dr. Wayne Barber Ephesians 5:22, 33)

(1) First let’s look at the meaning of the phrase “be subject.”

The word "subject" is *hupotasso* and means to submit. So when I use the term "submit" I am saying the same thing as "subject yourself." *Hupotasso* comes from two Greek words, the word *hupo*, which means "under," and *tasso*, which means "to set in place." In other words, *hupotasso* means to set something up under something else. In the context it is talking about one submitting to the authority of another. Paul is saying to the wives,

Be willing to place yourself in a position under your husband who is the authority of your family. Be in that position of being submissive.

...*Hupotasso*, the word that is used for wives to husbands, is the word that talks about two people who are absolutely equal in God's eyes, totally equal. There is not one level of inferiority of one to the other.

*But the wife makes a choice to place herself as an equal underneath another equal, her husband, in order that there can be order and function in the family. The whole purpose of it is so that it meets the design that God has ordained.*

So what is the meaning of the word *hupotasso*? Does it mean that your wife is a slave to obey your every command? Does it mean that you treat her like a child? No! If there is a man who thinks for one second that they have any superiority in God's eyes over their wife, they are gravely mistaken from God's Word. However, by His design to have a functional family, concessions have to be made. So God says, "Wives, you make it and you choose to put yourself underneath the headship of your husband" in order that the design can be what God says it ought to be. The meaning of it has nothing to do with inferior to superior. It takes nothing from the dignity of a woman for her to submit, but rather it enhances her worth in God's eyes, for such a worthy walk is pleasing in His sight. It takes great integrity for a person to do what God says should be done. (Ed: And it also takes "great power", not the wife's power, but the Spirit of Christ in her, giving her both the desire and the power [Php 2:13NLT] to fulfill God's design for a healthy marriage.)

(2) Secondly, let's look at the mindset of submission.

In Ephesians 5:22 it says,

Wives, be submissive to your husbands.

It says nothing about their ability. There are many families in which the wife is more gifted than the man. Maybe the wife is full of personality, full of character, full of all kinds of ability. It is the exact reverse of what you think the model ought to be. God says, "Wives, I don't care how much intelligence you have. I don't care how many spiritual gifts you have. I don't care how much energy you have. I don't care how much better you look than your husband. Wives, submit to your husbands." "But God, my husband is a bully! God, you don't want me submitting to my husband, do you?" God said, "That's right. You submit to your husband." The mindset comes up in the verb: "be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord." The verb there is present tense and middle voice. This is not something you do one time so you can get something. Present tense means this is constant: every day be being under submission to your husband at all times. But even more than that is the middle voice. The middle voice means, you yourself make your own choice. If you want to have a properly functioning family, wives, you yourself make up your mind you are going to live in the state of submissiveness to your husband, no matter what he is like. God says, "Submit to that man in your family." The meaning is of two equals. Oh, what integrity a person who loves God has who is willing to put themselves under an equal in order that God's order and function may take place in the family.

(3) Thirdly, there is the motivation of being submissive.

Now what in the world would make a woman who is equal, probably more gifted, probably more educated than her husband, put herself under submission to him? Well, look at the verse: "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord." I have had people ask me, "You mean to tell me I am to treat my husband as I treat the Lord? Is that what he is saying there?" No, he is not saying that. A lot of husbands want to be treated that way, but that is not what he is saying. Paul is saying, "You do this as an act of love to the Lord."

What should motivate you to do this? The verse is saying the thing that ought to motivate you is because the Spirit of God controls your life and the Spirit of God has revealed to you what the Scriptures say. In order for the Lord to make your family a functional family, you are willing to obey what He says. It's not because you love your husband that much, but it is because you love Jesus that much. That is the key. As I love the Lord Jesus, I am willing to do whatever it is he tells me to do. A wife's love for Christ motivates her to obey. So, she looks in God's Word. She is a student of Scripture. She can't be Spirit-filled if she is not because the Scripture has to play a role in our obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. She gets into the Word. Ephesians 5:22 says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands." Jesus said in John 14:21, "If you love Me, you will obey Me." She says, "Out of loving You, Lord, I am going to do what You have told me to do." That is the motivation of submission.

(4) Fourthly, let's look at the model of submission.

Ladies, God has honored you because He has asked you to do what He also has done. The model, of course, is the Lord Jesus



Himself. Paul says in Eph 5:23, 24, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything." We will get into some more of the details of that later. I want you to see first of all the model of submission.

Look in Philippians 2:5-8 (notes). In verses Php 2:5, 6 it reads,

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming *obedient*."

The word there is not the one he is asking wives to do. Oh, no, it is a much more severe word. It is *ishupakouo*. He chose to be a reflection of His Father. He says in John, "I can do nothing of my own initiative. What I see My Father do, I do. What I hear My Father saying, I say. I have absolutely, unconditionally obeyed everything He says because I am a reflex of Him." Yet He doesn't ask the wives to obey that way. He simply asks them to obey as equals who choose to put themselves underneath them. He did that for us. As an equal He did that and modeled it for us. But He went a step further. He could do nothing except of His Father. That is not what He asks you to do, but He has already modeled it before you. You may ask, "Well, where does the Lord Jesus live now? How is He going to help me?" That is why I started where I started. He lives in us. We are the Temple of the Spirit of God. Where does Christ live? He lives in my heart. His Spirit resides in my heart! Therefore, whatever He can do, He can still do in and through me, for God is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond what we ever ask or even think. God can do that in your life. That is the model of the Lord Jesus.

In 1Peter 2 there is the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to see what he says about submission over here. He takes it right into the marriage relationship but he doesn't start there. He says in 1Peter 2:13, 14, 15...

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.

In other words, he is saying, "If you are not willing to submit to authority, then you are bringing all kinds of confusion to these people."

**1Peter 2:16-25** goes on:

Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (1Pe 2:16-note)

Peter continues the thought in 1Peter 3:1...

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Lord, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.

Peter talks about a beauty of a wife when she submits. It is not outward. It is inward. God turns that light on, and even a disobedient husband can actually be won to Christ.

So the meaning of submission is not an inferior to a superior. It is of two equals. One chooses for the sake of the design to do what God says to do. You are going to have to make up your own mind. It is going to have to be a lifestyle. The motivation is the Lord Jesus living in you. You are doing it for Him. You are loving Him. The model is Jesus Himself. He has already modeled it out for us and showed us exactly what to do. So the responsibility of the wife is to submit to her husband in order for the home to have order and for it to function properly.

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**AN ENDURING MARRIAGE** - A 104-year-old California man and his 96-year-old wife recently celebrated eighty years of marriage.

She had been a sixteen-year-old "child bride" in a marriage the families had arranged. They had no dating period—no chance to "fall in love" by today's standards. So many things were against them. Yet they raised five children, survived the Great Depression, and lived to see a day when nearly half of all marriages end in divorce.

How in the world did they do it? They stayed together on the basis of good old-fashioned values. For them, love meant commitment "till death us do part." What happened to those old values? Have we found better ideals, better principles of relationships, deeper insights, and better understanding? If so, why do so many people live with the regret of broken marriages, broken homes, broken families, and broken promises?

Maybe it's time to look again at the values that make marriages work—values such as mercy, kindness, humility, longsuffering, forbearance, and forgiveness (Col. 3:12-13). Do these sound old-fashioned? Perhaps, but they work! —M. R. D. II

A CHRISTIAN HOME IS ONE WHERE GOD IS A PERMANENT GUEST. **This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humaneness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve.**

A couple were having marital difficulties and went to see a marriage counselor. The counselor asked, "Don't you two have anything in common?" The wife answered, "Yes, neither of us can stand the other." For a good marriage, don't concentrate on being able to "stand the other person" but live so that your spouse can "stand you." (**This religious subjection is made up of an obedient spirit, humaneness of heart (Ep. Arist. 257), respect, and willingness to serve.** Bits and Pieces)

Colossians 3:19 **Husbands, love (2PPAM) your wives and do not be embittered (2PPPM) against them. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** [Oi andres, agapate \( 2PPAM \) tas gunaikas kai me pikrainesthe \(2PPPM\) pros autas](#)

**Amplified:** Husbands, love your wives [be affectionate and sympathetic with them] and do not be harsh or bitter or resentful toward them. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

**Macent:** husbands, love your wives, and do not exasperate them.

**Moffatt:** Husbands, love your wives, do not be harsh to them.

**Montgomery:** Husbands, be loving to your wives, and be not cross or surly with them.

**NJB:** Husbands, love your wives and do not be sharp with them ([NJB](#))

**NLT:** And you husbands must love your wives and never treat them harshly. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Husbands, be sure you give your wives much love and sympathy; don't let bitterness or resentment spoil your marriage. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Husbands, be loving your wives with a divine love which impels you to deny yourselves for their benefit, and stop being bitter and harsh to them.

**Young's Literal:** the husbands! love your wives, and be not bitter with them;

**HUSBANDS LOVE YOUR WIVES: hoi andres, agapate (2PPAM) tas gunaikas:**

- **love:** Ge 2:23,24 Ge 24:67 Pr 5:18,19 Eccl 9:9 Mal 2:14-16 Lk 14:26 Eph 5:25,28,29,33 1Pe 3:7)

## LOVING LEADERS

**Related Resource:** [Adam, Where Are You? - sermon by John Piper](#)

"In exhortations the scales should be equally poised" (Chrysostom) as they are here.

**F B Hole** - 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.

**Tony Evans** on the verb **love** - This is the self-sacrificing, agape love that Christ displayed when He loved and gave Himself for the church (Ephesians 5:25). A husband ought to ask himself regularly, "What have I given up for my wife lately? What has it cost me to be her husband? What sacrifices have I made to enhance her well-being?" Christ loved the church so much He made the ultimate sacrifice for her. That's the model of a husband's love. Many men have the idea that being a husband means being "the boss." But Christ demonstrated sacrificial, servant love. To put it simply, a husband should be out-serving his wife. One way a husband can test his servanthood is to list all the things his wife does for him and all the things he does for her, and see which list is longer. Christ is exalted when we husbands demonstrate His love in our marriages. It would be a major revelation to some husbands to discover that their wives were not put on earth to serve them. A wife is there to love, help, and support her husband, but his love should outserve hers because a husband's love is commanded in Scripture. The wife is never commanded to love her husband. The Bible also tells husbands not to become bitter toward their wives. The reason is that what you see is what you created. A wife is a mirror that reflects back to her husband what she is receiving from him, because a woman was made to respond. That does not mean that everything wrong in a woman's life is her husband's fault. She may have brought a lot of baggage into the marriage. But if Christ's actions toward the church are an example of a husband's actions toward his wife, perhaps part of a husband's job is to sanctify his wife (Ephesians 5:25–26), to help fix what's wrong. God created woman as a "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7), not weaker in character but more fragile in spirit, needing tender, loving care and nurturing lest she be crushed. A husband's love can cause his wife to open and bloom like a flower with new life. (Who is this king of glory?: experiencing the fullness of Christ's work in our lives)

**Eadie** on **love your wives** - The duty is touchingly illustrated in Ephesians 5:25-26. The implication is, that the submission of the wife is gained by the love of the husband. Though the husband is to govern, he must govern in kindness. This duty is so plain that it needs no enforcement. The apostle then specifies one form in which the want of this love must have often shown itself—"and be not bitter against them." ([Colossians 3:19](#))

We read Paul's call for husbands to **love** and we can easily miss how radical they were to men in the ancient world. **Eduard Lohse** writes that "Pre-Christian antiquity knew of the terms 'to love/love'...but in the Hellenistic world these terms do not occur in rules for the household."

**Love** (verb) ([25](#)) (**agapao** - see related study of noun **agape**) means to love unconditionally and sacrificially as God Himself loves sinful men (John 3:16), the way He loves the Son (Jn 3:35, 15:9, 17:23, 24).

**Husbands** - First for emphasis. **Husbands** this word is for you.

By the way, just try to accomplish this command in your own strength. Supernatural love requires a supernatural source, a supernatural power and amazing, transforming grace. I can't love my wife (in my strength). God never said I could. But He can (love her through me) and He always said He would (modified from Major Ian Thomas' famous saying). We don't just need a little "help" (which implies we can do some of the agapao love in our own power!). We need 100% enablement, by yielding to and relying on our Indwelling Enabler, the Holy Spirit (cf Eph 3:16, Ro 8:13).

**Present imperative** (continuous, to be our habit) **active** (involves volitional choice) **imperative** (a command which carries with it the power to obey via the indwelling Spirit). All of the commands in the NT are opportunities for us to depend on the supernatural enabling power of the indwelling Spirit. In my humble opinion, we cannot keep ANY of God's commands IN OUR OWN STRENGTH. This is a humbling thought to ponder! Oh, how we need to learn of and depend on the Holy Spirit for the power to obey, lest we get trapped in the snare of legalism (doing it out of a sense of duty, rather than a sense of love of Christ, a desire to please our Father and a continual dependence on the Spirit).

**Husbands love** - keep on continuously, "supernaturally", sacrificially loving. Instead of "trying", we need to daily be "dying", dying to self, allowing the Spirit of Christ (Acts 16:7, Php 1:19, Ro 8:9) to live through us, living and loving by faith not sight (cp Gal 2:20-note). Husbands **agape** love is **IM**possible, but it is **HIM**possible!

As with an attitude of gratitude (above) for all saints and a submissive spirit in wives, this attitude/action (loving our wives as Christ loved the church - Eph 5:25-26, 27, 28, 29-note) is only possible by continual reliance upon the enabling power of the Holy Spirit = Eph 5:18-note- see effects/results of Spirit filling in Eph 5:19, 20-note; see especially Eph 5:22-note).

E H Chapin put it this way "*Home is the seminary of all other institutions.*" Woe!

**Luther** rightly stated that...

The Christian is supposed to love his neighbour, and since his wife is his nearest neighbour, she should be his deepest love.

Honor your wife and in love with her dwell,

Yield to the Savior and all will be well;  
Peace He will give to both husband and wife,  
Blessing their marriage with joy throughout life.  
—Anonymous

**Agapao** - 146x in NT -

Matt. 5:43f, 46; 6:24; 19:19; 22:37, 39; Mk. 10:21; 12:30f, 33; Lk. 6:27, 32, 35; 7:5, 42, 47; 10:27; 11:43; 16:13; Jn. 3:16, 19, 35; 8:42; 10:17; 11:5; 12:43; 13:1, 23, 34; 14:15, 21, 23f, 28, 31; 15:9, 12, 17; 17:23f, 26; 19:26; 21:7, 15f, 20; Rom. 8:28, 37; 9:13, 25; 13:8f; 1 Co. 2:9; 8:3; 2 Co. 9:7; 11:11; 12:15; Gal. 2:20; 5:14; Eph. 1:6; 2:4; 5:2, 25, 28, 33; 6:24; Col. 3:12, 19; 1 Thess. 1:4; 4:9; 2 Thess. 2:13, 16; 2 Tim. 4:8, 10; Heb. 1:9; 12:6; Jas. 1:12; 2:5, 8; 1 Pet. 1:8, 22; 2:17; 3:10; 2 Pet. 2:15; 1 Jn. 2:10, 15; 3:10f, 14, 18, 23; 4:7f, 10f, 19ff; 5:1f; 2 Jn. 1:1, 5; 3 Jn. 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:5; 3:9; 12:11; 20:9

### Expositor's Bible Commentary

Agapao does not denote affection or romantic attachment; it rather denotes caring love, a deliberate attitude of mind that concerns itself with the well-being of the one loved. Self-devotion, not self-satisfaction, is its dominant trait.

**MacArthur** writes that **agapao** "seems best understood in the New Testament to express a willing love, not the love of passion or emotion, but the love of choice—a covenant kind of love. It could be translated, "keep on loving." The love that existed from the start of the marriage is to continue throughout the marriage; it must not give way to bitterness. The willing, covenant love in view here is the activity of self-sacrifice. It is a deep affection that views the wife as a sister in the Lord and the object of a promise to be kept. (Agapao) expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship."

**Kenneth Wuest** - Agapao speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans or Logos](#))

**MacArthur** elaborates, explaining that...

The nature of this love is beautifully expressed in Ephesians 5:22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 (see **notes** beginning at Eph 5:22)...God designed that a wife's submission operate within the **context** of (**Ed**: a Spirit filled husband's sacrificial) love

**Ed comment:** As an aside always note that **context** is critical for accurate interpretation/application -- If we look at [Ep 5:25-note] what is the **context** of the command for husbands to continually "love like Jesus"? Can we really love like Jesus? No and yes! Brothers, we cannot love this way in our own strength, natural strength, flesh generated strength. We need to continually surrender to the supernatural strengthening by the Spirit of Christ [cp Ezek 36:27] in order to love our wives with His Christ-like love - so the **context** of Eph 5:22ff is Eph 5:18 [note] = being continually filled with/controlled by/empowered by the Spirit!

In that way she is protected (**Ed**: Cp one aspect of Paul's "definition" of love - 1Co 13:7 see note] where "**bears**" conveys the idea of protecting by covering!) because a (**Ed**: Spirit filled) man, one who truly loves his wife, would never force her to submit to something which is humiliating, degrading or violating to her conscience. The godly husband loves his wife like Christ loves the church ([MacArthur, J. Colossians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**What does Christ's love for the church look like?** This love speaks of His leadership, presence, provision, protection, promises of good, etc. Agape (unselfish) love means LISTENING, something that even the secular world affirms. The **Harvard Business Review** says 65% of an executive's time should be spent listening. How much more important is listening in our most intimate relationship (other than Christ, to Whom we also need to learn to listen!), the **marriage covenant**. **What does Christ do for His Church?** He spends time with His body, prays for her, listens patiently to her prayers (cp 1Ti 2:5), gives of Himself, and finally and very importantly as it pertains to husbands, Christ intercedes for His Bride continually (He 7:25-note, Ro 8:34-note). Mark it down -- If you have a "hit-or-miss" prayer life (for your wife or just in general), it may even be because your prayers are being hindered and you need to read and heed Peter's warning (1Pe 3:7-note)! It is unthinkable absurd for a Christian husband to demand submission of his wife if he is not radically (i.e., supernaturally) loving her.

**J Vernon McGee** - The husband who loves his wife is the one to whom the wife is to submit. She is not to be the one to take the lead in the family, but she is to urge him to take the lead.

**Hughes** - Loving incarnationally means we must work at spending time together. The June 1986 issue of Psychology Today carried an article entitled "Marriages Made to Last" in which they surveyed several hundred happily married couples. The interviews were conducted privately with each spouse alone. The top two things they said kept a marriage going were: "*My spouse is my best friend.*" "*I like my spouse as a person.*" The researchers said good marriages develop among those who purposely spend a lot of time together. Along with this, loving incarnationally means listening. As Howard Hendricks says, "Marriage is sometimes the dialogue of the deaf." The Harvard Business Review says 65 percent of an executive's time should be spent listening. So much more so in our most intimate relationships. "He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame" (Proverbs 18:13). Incarnational love spends time, listens, gives itself. Such is Christ's love. (Ibid)

**Woman** was made from the ribs not the head (to be over man) or the foot (to be trampled on by man). But she was made from the ribs to be loved and honored by man. (Paraphrased from Matthew Henry's famous saying)

**What is agape love?** While we could answer with a number of lexicon definitions, the best answer is to see what God says. Notice that agape is best defined as a verb as shown below. In other words agape is love in action. Agape is not static but dynamic.

## **AGAPE LOVE IS LOVE THAT IS...**

- ...commanded of believers (John 13:34, 15:12, 15:17)
- ...empowered by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the surrendered saint (Gal 5:13, 14, 15, 16, 22)
- ...commanded of Spirit filled husbands for their wives even as Jesus demonstrated for His bride, the church, giving Himself up for her (Ep 5:25-note)
- ...to be manifest to wives in the same way Spirit filled husbands love their bodies (Ep 5:28-note)
- ...the love with which the Father loved the Son and those who belong to Him (Jn 17:26)
- ...a debt we are to always seek to repay but can never fully discharge (Ro 13:8-note)
- ...taught by God (1Th 4:9-note)
- ...manifested by specific Spirit enabled actions and attitudes (1Cor 13:4, 5, 6, 7, 8-see notes 13:4 5 6 7 8)
- ...shown not just by words but by deeds (1Jn 3:17, cf such love in action as a manifestation of genuine faith in James 2:15, 16-note)
- ...manifested by keeping God's commandments (Jn 14:15, 21, 23, 24)
- ...the response Jesus called for one to demonstrate to his or her enemies (Mt 5:44-note)
- ...love which calls for one to love one's neighbor as one's self (Mt 19:19)
- ...love that seeks the recipient's highest good, not activated by virtue in the recipient (undeserved) (Jn 3:16)
- ...not based on affection, sentiment or emotion but upon a decision of the will
- ...given or offered even if the love is not received or reciprocated
- ...love differs from **phileo** which is based on affection
- ...love that finds its perfect expression in Jesus Christ and the Cross (Jn 3:16, cp 1Jn 3:16)
- ...the love of the overcomers (1Jn 5:4-5) in Revelation who did not love their life even to death (Re 12:10-note)
- ...love that cannot be manifested by unregenerate individuals in its true Biblical sense of being Spirit enabled. (Gal 5:22, Ro 5:5, Titus 3:5-6)

**Help us O Lord our homes to make  
Thy Holy Spirit's dwelling place,  
Our hands and hearts' devotion take  
To be the servants of Thy grace.**

--A. F. Bayley

**William Kelly** - The wife needs not to be exhorted to love her husband; it is assumed that therein her affections are all right. But it is very possible the husband might allow anxiety and outward pressure of life so to occupy him that he might not take sufficient care of his wife or interest in her anxieties; accordingly, this is the exhortation for him. The wife is necessarily thrown upon her husband; she leaves father, mother, and all, and is cast peculiarly upon her husband; and if he be not watchful, he may fail in thoughtful love, in the attention of every day, not sufficiently guarding his temper, which seems to be what is meant by being "bitter." There should be this affection for the wife, this vigilance against the influence of circumstances; the outward world might often occasion irritation, and then the husband is liable to "vent his spleen" at home, especially on his wife. This is human nature (**Ed: flesh**) and what we know too often happens; but it is not Christ; and here it is guarded against. "Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them."

**Let none presume to think it needless.** ([Colossians Commentary](#))

**Life Application Bible** - Real spiritual leadership involves service. Just as Christ served the disciples, even to the point of washing their feet, so the husband is to serve his wife. This means putting aside his own interests in order to care for his wife.

**Matthew Poole** says that agape love is "to sweeten on the one hand the subjection of the wife, and to temper on the other hand the authority of the husband."

**Rob Salvato** - People become bitter whenever expectations are unrealistically high and they go unmet – Unmet expectations turn into disappointments, that turn into Bitterness. Guys let me tell you a secret - your wife can not be God for you. She will not satisfy your deepest longing. Only the Lord will satisfy you. And only the Lord will satisfy her, so don't come to your marriage relationship with all these expectations instead – settle into your God ordained role – and Love her! The cycle of love and submission begins with you. { Picture of Christ & the Church} And here is what we know about our Lord. We love Him, why? Because He first loved us. We love God, we submit to God, we give ourselves totally over to Him, because we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that He loves us. The Husband like Jesus is the initiator – the wife like the Church is the responder! This is what makes it safe for your wife to submit to you, She will never want to put herself under someone who is going to crush her. But it is a lot easier when she knows that you love her. That is why this whole process has to start with the Husband. Now in Ephesians Paul writes that we are to love our wife like Christ loved the Church in that he gave himself for her. And we are to love her like we do our own bodies – We nurture and care for our bodies. I think that often time we focus on the first one – Love her like Christ loved the Church = Sacrifice & Service – Lay down my life. We can think of that in such mystical terms – high elevated terms. The 2nd exhortation really brings it down to earth however – and I think gives the how to – Love her & take care of her like you do your own body. The bottom line is that we are to be as tuned in to our wives needs as we are to the needs of our own body! And we are to be as quick to meet those needs and we are to meet the needs of our own body. Now guys, you know and I know, that if there is one thing that we are tuned into, it is the needs of our own body. Hungry tired / need a break. We are so tuned into our bodies, we even anticipate their needs can't we? In the same way guys, we should be that tuned into the needs of our wives, and then that quick to meet those needs. I asked a guy one time during a counseling appointment, "tell me about yourself, what makes you tick and he listed off a whole bunch of things that were necessary for him to be a happy guy. Then I said, Okay, now what makes your wife tick, what does she need to be a happy and content woman." And he gave me one of those blank looks. He didn't have a clue! And he is not alone: A lot of guys wouldn't know how to answer that question. You know why we don't know ? We don't ask! And if we do ask, we don't listen. - Guys it's amazing what you will find out about your wife if you would just ask.- Hear her heart. Men, what do you see in your wives, what are their gifts and talents and dreams and desires? Do you know? If you do know, what are doing to help them fulfill those dreams& desires? When I was a kid I used to like to play treasure hunt in our neighbors pool – Dive for treasures / search the pool for Treasures. Guys marriage is kind of like treasure hunt. Funniest part of Marriage – Discovering how I can bless my wife / How I can make her happy/ How I can show her I love her. What can I do – that is really going to communicate that I was thinking about her today. How surprised I was thinking about this the other day: How God is a Romantic And He definitely is a Pursuer when it comes to love. The Bible is full of pictures of the Pursuing nature of God in trying to win our hearts, but I was thinking about God being a Romantic – every sunset – Look what I made for you today. Every blessing - every gift – every time he meets our needs – the comfort that he gives in the midst of trials. It is all his way of saying – I love you and you are important to me. How has God been pursuing you this week – What blessings has He brought into your life – just to let you Know He loves you! That is God! Guys can I encourage us to follow that example in seeking to show ways that communicate to our wives – I love you / you are special to me. The end result of this will be a wife that is secure and stoked and confident and growing. And That is the kind of woman that you want to be married to. And men I have to tell you, you can do this, no one can love your wife like you can. You have been designed uniquely by God to love the woman that He gave you. No one can do it like you can, so go for it, do it. ([Sermon](#))

**Pulpit Commentary...**

THE DUTY OF LOVE. This love, which is consistent with his headship over her, implies:

1. That he is to delight in her (Pr 5:18, 19), and please her (1Co 7:33).
2. That he is to cherish her as Christ the Church (Eph 5:29), providing for her support and comfort (1Ti 5:3).
3. That he is to protect her as the weaker vessel.
4. That he is not to be bitter against her, using bitter words or sour looks, acting rigorously or imperiously, as if she were a slave and not a companion.
5. That he is to seek her spiritual good, for she is to be an heir with him of the grace of life. (1Peter 3:7.)

**Newton** notes that...

**The command to love far exceeds what was common of marriage in Paul's day.** Had he used another word for "love," perhaps one that expressed sexuality, then it would have fit well with the Greek and Roman

minds. But in the term "agape," a selfless, serving, giving type of love without thought of return was totally foreign to the marital lives of Greeks and Romans. Wives were often thought of as property. Typically, in the Greek world, wives had no part in the social activities of her husband. She was more of a recluse at home while he frolicked in the sensualities of his day. The husbands and wives did not even eat meals together. So Paul's command was radical! It expressed the work of sanctification going on in the believer, as he adopted an attitude toward his wife that was totally foreign to his society. The Christian husband must not let society's standards (or lack of standards) on marriage be his own. Instead, he must take the high road set forth in Scripture: love your wife.

**The command to love your wife implies that the husband is to be committed to total unselfishness in the relationship.** He is told that the one "who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph. 5:28). He is to model his actions of love after that of Christ who unselfishly gave himself for his bride. The practical edge of such loves means that the husband is on the lookout for how he can best meet the needs of his wife. He seeks to nurture her, to care for her, to help her enjoy marriage to the fullest. He labors to help her develop in spiritual and emotional maturity. His joy and delight is seeing the progress and growth in his wife. George Knight asks,

Just as Christ works to present His church to Himself as a glorious bride in a glorious marriage, should not the husband work to make his wife glorious and their marriage glorious? [J. Piper & W. Grudem, ed., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 172].

A man cannot do this if his interests are seated upon other things. Nor can he nurture and care for her if he does not take time to talk with her and to listen to her. The time spent in focused attention increases the husband's capacity for loving his wife and the wife's great satisfaction and delight in her husband.

**Loving your wife demands sacrificial actions in giving to your wife.** Jesus Christ "gave Himself" for the Church. It was a sacrifice of his life and a willingness to suffer so that his Bride, the Church, might be radiant with glory. Do not think that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was done with grim resignation or merely out of duty. It was the unselfish heart of love that was willing to pay the ultimate price for his Bride's benefit.

There are a lot of men who would stand between their wives and an intruder to offer protection. But those same men, though chivalrous in protection, would not think of adjusting their schedule or career or outside interests for their wives. Sacrifice may come in many areas. Yes, protection of one's wife is included, but it also involves the sacrifice of his energies, goals, time, and interests in his wife's best interest.

**Loving your wife requires that you become a man of God in the home, serving to give wise spiritual guidance and leadership.** This command to love your wife cannot be fulfilled if you are not developing in your ability to love through your union with Christ. The sensitivities developed through spiritual maturity will have a corresponding affect upon the Christian marriage. ([Sermons from the Epistle to the Colossians](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION OF AGAPE LOVE OF A HUSBAND** - "Dr. Robert Seizer, in his book [Mortal Lessons- Notes on the Art of Surgery](#), tells of performing surgery to remove a tumor in which it was necessary to sever a facial nerve, leaving a young woman's mouth permanently twisted in palsy. In Dr. Seizer's own words "Her young husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed, and together they seem to dwell in the evening lamp light, isolated from me, private. Who are they, I ask myself, he and this wry-mouth I have made, who gaze at and touch each other so generously, greedily? The young woman speaks. "Will my mouth always be like this?" she asks. "Yes," I say, "it will. It is because the nerve was cut." She nods, and is silent. But the young man smiles. "I like it," he says. "It is kind of cute." All at once I know who he is. I understand, and I lower my gaze. One is not bold in an encounter with a god. Unmindful, he bends to kiss her crooked mouth, and I, so close, can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate to hers, to show her that their kiss still works." (Kent Hughes - *Colossians and Philemon: the supremacy of Christ*)

**AND DO NOT BE EMBITTERED AGAINST THEM: kai me pikrainesthe (2PPPM) pros autas:**

- **Be embittered:** Col 3:21 Ro 3:14 Eph 4:31 Jas 3:14

**Spurgeon** - Oh! there are some spirits that are very bitter. A little thing puts them out, and they would take delight in a taunt which grieves the spirit. I pity the poor woman who has such bitterness where she ought to have sweetness; yet there are some such husbands.

**Ray Pritchard** - It's not the first part that grabs our attention; it's that last phrase. One translation says, "do not be harsh with them."

Another uses the words "harsh" and "resentful." Another translation says, "A husband must love his wife and not abuse her." There must be a problem here because God never wastes words. There must be a reason God said this. He knows that we often struggle in this area. If he had said, "Husbands, love your wives," and stopped there, that would have been fine with us. And if he had said, "Love your wife as Christ love the church" (as he did in Ephesians 5), we would have been fine with that. We know we fall short of that high standard, but it's a noble goal. It's a positive thought. Colossians 3 is very challenging to every Christian man. Love your wife. Don't be embittered against her. Don't be harsh. Don't be resentful. Don't abuse her. Don't hold hard feelings against her. God is telling us this is a problem. It is easy for us to become angry with our wives, to turn against them, to take them for granted, and to be very mean to them. He's speaking this about our Christian wives who love us dearly. This is a word from the Lord we need to take seriously. ([Angry Man Alert](#))

**Eadie on do not be embittered** - There is no doubt that the inconsistency here condemned was a common occurrence in heathen life, where a wife was but a legal concubine, and matrimony was not hallowed and ennobled by the Spirit of Him who wrought His first miracle to supply the means of enjoyment at a marriage feast. The apostle forbids that sour and surly objurgation (harsh rebuke) which want of love will necessarily create; all that hard treatment in look and word, that unkind and churlish (rude in a mean-spirited and surly way) temper which defective attachment so often leads to. Wives are to submit, not indeed to guard against a frown or a chiding (scolding, rebuking), but to ensure a deeper love. So that if this love is absent (**Ed**: The Husband is the "initiator"!), such obedience will not be secured by perpetual irritation and fault-finding (by the husband), followed by the free use of opprobrious (Synonyms = abusive, derogatory, disparaging, insulting, offensive, venomous) and degrading epithets. In Ephesians, the apostle proposes as the example Christ's love to the church in its fervor, self-sacrifice, and holy purpose (Eph 5:25), and also enjoins the husband to love his wife as himself (Eph 5:28), as being in truth a portion of himself, but here in Col 3:19 the injunction is curt and not illustrated, followed only by the prohibition of a sin which a husband's indifference will most certainly induce. It would almost seem, however, as if the phrase, "as is fitting in the Lord," enforced both the duty recorded before it, and that which stands after it. ([Colossians 3:19](#))

**Embittered** (4087) (**pikraino** from **pikros** = originally meant pointed, sharp and then more generally of what is "sharp" or "penetrating" to the senses, like a pervasive smell, a "shrill" noise, a "painful" feeling) means literally to make bitter (as of waters that are bitter to the point of being undrinkable). To produce a bitter taste in the stomach.

Figuratively **pikraino** means to have "bitter" resentment or hatred toward someone. To exasperate or to become angry. To grieve (see uses in Ruth below).

**Jamieson** says that **embittered** means...

ill-tempered and provoking. Many who are polite abroad, are rude and bitter at home because they are not afraid to be so there.

**Bitterness** refers to that which is caustic, resentful or sarcastic. The English dictionary (**Webster**) describes being **bitter** as one who exhibits intense animosity, who is harshly reproachful, who is marked by cynicism or rancor and finally as one who is intensely unpleasant. The recipient of another's bitterness experiences an emotion (in words or actions) that is distasteful or distressing. Something that once was good has turned "sour!" Oh, how many times this happens in marriages! These things ought not to be! Clearly, husbands need to depend on the indwelling Word and the indwelling Spirit to lead like Jesus and not be embittered when circumstances might arise that provoke this fleshly attitude.

**John Phillips** - We must avoid allowing that kind of bitterness to sour our marriage. Most of us have irritating traits that exasperate others. Unless we deal with them, these traits, within the narrow walls of the home, can become destructive and turn the marriage to wormwood. The irritating things might be big or little. A sneering attitude by one partner toward the other partner's spiritual interests, economic needs, or emotional and physical desires will do it. On the other hand, it might be something as casual as the way one raises an eyebrow. The look on the face, perhaps, will do it, or the tone of the voice or the way a deaf ear is turned when the other is talking. These minor irritants might be done unconsciously, carelessly, and with no deliberate desire to annoy. They are, however, the little foxes that spoil the grapes. Solomon (with much experience of marriage and its problems) advises that these foxes be caught the moment they appear (Song 2:15). (Exploring Colossians)

**Adam Clarke's** comment is pithy...

Wherever bitterness is, there love is wanting. And where love is wanting in the married life, there is hell upon earth.

**Pikraino** - 4x in the NT here in Col 3:19 and in the following passages...

[Revelation 8:11 \(note\)](#) and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they **were made bitter**.



[Revelation 10:9 \(note\)](#) And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it, and eat it; and it will **make** your stomach **bitter**, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

[Revelation 10:10 \(note\)](#) And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was **made bitter**.

**Pikraino** - 9x in the non-apocryphal Lxx = Ex 16:20; Ru 1:13, 20; Job 27:2; Isa 14:9; Je 32:32; 33:9; 37:15; Lam. 1:4. Here are some examples

**Ruth 1:13**-note Would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters; for it is **harder for** (Hebrew = marar = to be bitter; pikraino) me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."

**Ruth 1:20**-note And she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara (bitter), for the **Almighty** (Shaddai) has **dealt** very **bitterly** (Hebrew = marar = to be bitter; pikraino) with me.

**Job 27:2** "As God lives, who has taken away my right, And the Almighty, who **has embittered** (Hebrew = marar = to be bitter; pikraino) my soul,

**Lamentations 1:4** The roads of Zion are in mourning Because no one comes to the appointed feasts. All her gates are desolate; Her priests are groaning, Her virgins are afflicted, And she herself **is bitter** (Hebrew = marar = to be bitter; pikraino).

Paul says as those who have **laid aside the old self** husbands are commanded (imperative mood) to continually (present tense) not be bitter to their wives. In other words, this Greek verb construction of **do not be embittered** (present imperative with a negative particle) is a command to cease a practice was already being practiced amongst the Colossian husbands (or not to let it begin). Paul says in essence "Stop being bitter". Robertson says "Do not have the habit of being bitter."

**MacArthur** hits the "proverbial nail" on the head writing that...

Paul tells husbands not to call their wives "honey," and then act like vinegar! Husbands must not display harshness of temper or resentment toward their wives. They are not to irritate or exasperate them, but rather to provide loving leadership in the home. ([MacArthur, J. Colossians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

The related Greek word is **bitterness (pikria)** which literally originally described that which is pointed or sharp such as an arrow and then began to be used more generally of what is sharp or penetrating to the senses, such as the smell of a pungent cheese, the piercing sound of a shrill noise, that which is painful to the feelings. Figuratively **pikria** defines a settled hostility that "poisons" the whole inner man. For example, someone (in this case our wife) does something we do not like, and so we harbor ill will against her (cp Eph 4:31-note; He 12:15-note). **Bitterness** leads to **wrath** (which is to be put aside - Col 3:8-note) the external explosion that reflects one's internal feelings. Don't try to put them under the rug, but do humble yourself and put them under the blood!

In first Corinthians Paul writes that...

one who is married is concerned (**merimnao** [word study] - is anxious) about the things of the world ("earthly responsibilities" = NLT), **how he may please (aresko** [word study] = behave properly toward one with whom one is related, soften one's heart toward, see to gratify, to accommodate) **his wife**, and *his interests* are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world ("earthly responsibilities" NLT), **how she may please (aresko** [word study]) **her husband**. (1Cor 7:33,34)

**MacArthur comments:** The husband is to seek to find "how he may please his wife," and the wife to pursue "how she may please her husband." ([Ibid](#))

**How is such a mutual admiration society possible?** I'm glad you asked. **It's not!** At least it's not possible in your strength. **Supernatural** love **can never** originate from a man's or woman's **natural** inclination (the **flesh** -- the evil disposition) but can only come from the Spirit, and thus Paul commands us to be supernaturally enabled...

**Do not get drunk** with wine, for (Why not? term of explanation) that is dissipation, but (What's the contrast? term of contrast) **be filled** with (be continually submitted to and controlled by) the Spirit (Eph 5:18- note)

**MacArthur** - Though there is authority and submission by God's design, there is also spiritual equality and a mutual longing for each partner to please the other. The woman most pleases the man with loving submission, while he pleases her with loving authority. ([Ibid](#))

**Paul** calls for this mutual submission in Spirit filled believers to...

Be (being continuously) subject to one another in the fear (reverential awe, a desire to be pleasing to Him even as a little child desires to please their parents) of Christ. (Eph 5:21-note)

Read through the following list of synonyms for **bitterness** to get a better sense of why Paul is commanding husbands to stop being bitter towards their spouses.

**Synonyms:** acrimonious, afflictive, antagonistic, begrudging, biting, cruel, galling, grievous, gut-wrenching, harsh, heartbreaking, merciless, overbearing, painful, rancorous, resentful, ruthless, savage, sharp, sour, stinging, sullen, vexatious, with a chip on one's shoulder. Now ponder the "flip side" which is more of what husbands should be like as you read the antonyms for **bitterness**.

**Antonyms:** agreeable, appreciative, friendly, gentle, grateful, mellow, mild, pleasant, sweet, thankful. A convicting list (especially if you're a husband)! I can understand David's prayer in ([Ps 141:3](#))

Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. ([Spurgeon's Comment](#))

**Beet** has some interesting thoughts on **bitterness** noting that...

Similar words in all languages denote acute unpleasantness of word, demeanor, or thought. The stronger party, having nothing to fear from the weaker, is frequently in danger of acting or speaking harshly. To refrain from such harshness, even towards those we love, is sometimes, amid the irritations of life, no easy task. But it is binding upon the Christian (husband)". (Beet, J. A. Beet's Commentaries: Colossians)

**Warren Wiersbe** - Husbands must be careful not to harbor ill will toward their wives because of something they did or did not do. A "root of bitterness" in a home can poison the marriage relationship and give Satan a foothold (Eph 4:31, 27, He 12:15-see **notes** Ep 4:31; Ep 4:27, He 12:15). The Christian husband and wife must be open and honest with each other and not hide their feelings or lie to one another. "Speaking the truth in love" (Ep 4:15-note) is a good way to solve family differences. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" is a wise policy to follow if you want to have a happy home (Ep 4:26-note). A husband who truly loves his wife will not behave harshly or try to throw his weight around in the home." ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor](#))

**The Bible Knowledge Commentary** - Wives, like tender and sensitive flowers (cf 1Pe 3:7-note), may wilt under authoritarian dominance but blossom with tender loving care. So in a maturing marriage the husband exercises compassionate care and his wife responds in willing submission to this loving leadership." ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

**John Calvin** writes that God

requires love on the part of husbands, and that they be not bitter, because there is a danger lest they should abuse their authority in the way of tyranny.

**Adam Clarke** - Wherever bitterness is, there love is wanting. And where love is wanting in the married life, there is hell upon earth.

**Jamieson & Fausset** comment that bitterness is being

ill-tempered and provoking. Many who are polite abroad, are rude and bitter at home because they are not afraid to be so there.

**KJV Bible Commentary** - Stop being bitter and do not have the habit of being bitter against them. This sin wrecks many marriages. ([Dobson, E G, Charles Feinberg, E Hindson, Woodrow Kroll, H L. Wilmington: KJV Bible Commentary: Nelson](#))

**Arthur** asks - Husband, are you a servant leader who illustrates Christ's love and headship or a dictator who barks out orders? How can you encourage your wife today? How can you show her the kind of love you've read about this week? How can you minister to her needs? Are you working? If not, why not? If so, are you working to the detriment of your wife and family? Have you focused so narrowly on your role of provider that you've failed in your responsibility to love? (Building a Marriage that Really Works)

**Matthew Henry** says husbands "must not be bitter against them, not use them unkindly, with harsh language or severe treatment, but be kind and obliging to them in all things."

**Ash** explains that the command to not be embittered

would call for patience with faults, and also for a refusal to vent on the wife bitterness generated by outside circumstances. Weed points out that Paul's words are in contrast to Jewish and pagan ethics which gave husbands all the rights and wives all the duties." (The College Press NIV commentary Joplin, Mo.: College Press)

**Mills** - Husbands...are enjoined (this is another imperative) not to be cutting; that is, the husband is not to abuse his office, he is not to be overbearing, but is to show the love of God in every respect to his wife. If a husband is expected to avoid verbally abusing his wife, he must even more so avoid physically abusing her. He is obviously expected to be his wife's protector, and he is to protect her from his own superior physical strength." (Colossians: A Study Guide to Paul's epistle to the Saints at Colossae. Dallas: 3E Ministries)

**ILLUSTRATION - Priority in Marriage** - Flight attendants give these instructions to airline passengers: "For those of you traveling with small children, in the event of an oxygen failure, first place the mask on your own face and then place the mask on your child's face." In family life, parents often spend most of their time placing oxygen masks on their children's faces while the marriage relationship suffocates. The only way to have a strong family is to make sure that husband and wife keep the oxygen supply of love flowing strong between them. Citation: Merle Mees, Topeka, Kansas

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## THE "JESUS MAN"

**Guy King's illustration** - Years ago I was leading the Children's Special Service Mission at one of our South Coast holiday resorts. As I was approaching the beach one morning, this little fellow was going along there, too. As he caught sight of me, he said, "Mummie, here comes the JESUS man." He only meant that I was the man who spoke to the children about the Savior; but his remark meant far more to my heart that day. What right had I—have I—to be called a JESUS man? What degree of resemblance is there about us? I wonder if you have read that moving story of [Jerome K. Jerome's](#) called [The Passing of the Third Floor Back?](#) ([Read 47 page short story](#)) Roughly, the tale is of a poor class lodging house, where lived a heterogeneous company of needy and seedy folk, and where there was a poor, ignorant little servant girl, a good deal of a slut, and ready to sell her virtue for a worthless trinket. Into the place there came one day a lodger who at once seemed to be different, and who occupied the third floor back. He quickly revealed himself to have a very kind heart and way. He always had a kindly word for the little slavery, usually so ignored and downtrodden. She almost worshipped him. The other lodgers, too, owed him much for his many deeds of helpfulness. He was always doing something for somebody, in his kindly, sympathetic way. At last the day came for him to move elsewhere. The little maid watched him, open-eyed, as he walked with his bit of luggage to the front door; and as he turned to her with a smile and a gentle pat on the shoulder, she took her leave of him with the words, "Please, are you 'I'm?" ([Colossians 3:5-14 His Guidance on Garments](#)) **Application - To whom are you the "Jesus man?" You can only be a "Jesus man" if you are Jesus' man! Are you His wholly? Have you so clothed yourself with Christ (by the power of His Spirit, bearing for example His fruit, Gal 5:22-23) that when people look at you they see Christ in you (Col 1:27)? (cp 2Cor 2:14-16).**

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**Work At It** - If your marriage isn't working, take heart. Neither is anyone else's. In every healthy marriage, it's the people who work, not the relationship. A newspaper featured two headlines shouting from adjacent pages: In Japan, "Battered Wives Begin To Rebel," and "Britain Tries To Shore Up Marriages." Different countries and distinct cultures, but the same problems. Why?

Could it be that we expect another person to meet the deepest needs of our hearts? If so, we have placed an impossible burden on that person. Or is it our own reluctance to face the truth about ourselves, preferring to believe that it is our spouse who has a problem?

The divine commands for husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:22-33 are the framework for success in marriage, not a checklist to use in evaluating the performance of our spouse. It's a place to find our own job description. The instructions are given to weak, sinful people who need a Savior and His transforming power.

Most of us would prefer a successful and fulfilling marriage that just happens by itself. But a growing marriage requires effort and perseverance. God calls us to work at our relationship with Him—and with the person we promised to love. — David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

"For better or for worse," we pledge,  
Through sickness and through strife;  
And by God's grace and with His help  
We'll keep these vows for life.  
—D J De Haan

**Success in marriage is more than finding the right person;  
it is being the right person.**

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**Avoiding the Greener Grass** - Nancy Anderson says she grew lukewarm in her faith and thus believed the world's lie: "I deserve to be happy." This led to an extramarital affair that nearly ended her marriage. She wrote her book *Avoiding The Greener Grass Syndrome* to help keep her painful story of infidelity from "becoming someone else's story."

In her book, Nancy offers six action suggestions on how to build "hedges" to protect your marriage and to help make "a good marriage great":

**Hear**—give a listening ear to your spouse.

**Encourage**—build up your spouse by focusing on positive qualities.

**Date**—celebrate your marriage by playing and laughing together.

**Guard**—establish safeguards by setting clear boundaries.

**Educate**—study your mate to truly understand him or her.

**Satisfy**—meet each other's needs.

The grass on the other side of the fence may look greener, but faithfulness to God and commitment to your spouse alone bring peace of mind and satisfaction.

When you avoid the greener-grass syndrome by loving and respecting your spouse, your marriage will be a picture of Christ and His church to those around you (Ephesians 5:31-32). — Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When you look at someone else's life,  
Thinking that it's better than your own,  
Just remember what God's given you  
Was designed for you alone. —Hess

**Jesus Christ is the only third party  
in a marriage who can make it work.**

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**RBC Booklet:**

- [Building Blocks To A Strong Marriage](#)
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