



## eLesson 009

**Text: Colossians 3:18-19**

**Subject: Marriage**

### Colossians - Part 7

**Perspective.** Paul and Timothy began writing wrote about relationships at Colossians 3:18. The few words given there to each relationship are not a complete Biblical exposition. To understand fully you must look at the overall Biblical teaching. Put verses 18 and 19 in the context of all that the Bible states about marriage. Notice the immediate context in Colossians 3:17, *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”* That is a good foundation for all relationships. I have some suggestions for couples. First, grow closer to God, and you will be able to grow closer to each other. Second, let God be God in your life ... that is not your spouse's role in your life ... and it is not your role in your spouse's life. Only God can be everything in the world to someone. Only God is unlimited, perfect, all-knowing, all-powerful, unchanging, and all-present. You and your partner have limits ... you are not perfect ... you need to talk to each other ... you cannot do everything ... you are getting older ... and you cannot be everywhere at once. So have realistic expectations of each other. Third, do not let your marriage just happen. Be more than reactive ... be proactive. Both of you must take personal responsibility for making your marriage great.

***“Wives, be subject to your husbands” 3:18.*** Many people try to force their private agendas into this verse ... making it less or more than it really is. Some men misuse it to try to subjugate their wives. However, it is *not* a command given to husbands. It is a command given to wives. It does not say, *Husbands, dominate your wives*. Good paraphrases might be *Wives, voluntarily yield to your husbands' leadership ... let him lead ... follow him*. Some women try to ignore this verse as culturally outdated and therefore irrelevant today. However, that is not true. It is a basic ingredient in a truly Biblical marriage. The first mention of this is in Genesis 3:16 as part of God's judgment against original sin. Husbands, remember that being the head of your wife is because sin entered the world ... it is not because you are better than your wife is. Moreover, wives, remember that it is Biblical and applicable today. The same teaching is found in 1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-24, Titus 2:5, and 1 Peter 3:1-6. This is God's design for order in marriage in a fallen world. It is God's order for your marriage. Wife, respect and follow your husband. Husband, be worthy of your wife's respect. It is difficult to follow someone who is wandering aimlessly or headed in the wrong direction. Be a leader worthy of her following.

**"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" 3:18.** What does that last phrase mean ... "as is fitting in the Lord"? Does it mean that her submission to him in all things is fitting and proper? No! Should she submit to sinful requests? No! At her husband's request, should she lie, sign a fraudulent tax report, or act immorally? No! Or should she submit only if her behavior would be fitting and proper in the Lord? Yes! Who should be lord of her life? Obviously, Jesus should be Lord in her life. A wife must first submit to the Lordship of Christ. Then she submits to her husband's leadership if doing so does not violate the Lordship of Christ. A wife is not under Biblical obligation to submit her husband's abuse directed at her or at the children. God does not command a wife to submit to her husband's sinful requests, commands, or actions. She does not sin when she must choose non-submission over her husband's sinful leadership. Moreover, submission to her husband does not excuse a wife of her own accountability. Sapphira submitted to her husband's sinful plan and was judged for it, Acts 5:1-10. In that situation, she was wrong to have submitted to her husband.

**Is non-submission ever Biblical?** Yes. The Bible instructs us to submit to our governments, Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-15. However, in Exodus 1:15-17 the midwives feared God and disobeyed the king of Pharaoh. Moses' parents did not submit, Exodus 1:22-2:2, Hebrews 11:23. Three faithful men would not worship the King's golden image, Daniel 3. Daniel prayed in violation of a government's law, Daniel 6. Peter and John did not submit, Acts 4:13-20. The Lordship of Christ must be first in all of our lives. A wife must choose Christ's Lordship over that of her husband if she is forced to choose. However, wives, remember that following your husbands' leadership is Biblical. A truly beautiful wife, beautiful in the hidden person of the heart, adorns herself with imperishable qualities ... one of which is Biblical submission, 1 Peter 3:1-6.

**"Husbands, love your wives" 3:19.** Men, the submission commandment was *not* given to you. However, the commandment to love your wife was given to you. There is a Biblical example for men to follow in this. *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her"* Ephesians 5:25. Jesus loved and died for His church, Hebrews 3:6, 1 Peter 2:5. He sacrificed Himself for her, Ephesians 5:2. He prays for her, Hebrews 7:25. He comes to her aid when she is tempted, Hebrews 2:18. He sympathizes with her weaknesses, Hebrews 4:15. He nourishes and cherishes her, Ephesians 5:28-30. Husband, do you treat your wife in this way? You should. A husband should be Christ-like. A husband should love his wife as Christ loves the Church. When he does, a godly wife can submit, without fear, to her Christ-like husband. Paul wrote, *"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ"* 1 Corinthians 11:1. Husband, can you say to your wife, *Follow me, as I obediently follow Jesus?* A godly wife can follow her husband with confidence as he follows Jesus.

**"Husbands ... do not be embittered against them" 3:19.** Do not be bitter toward your wife. Cherish her. From the meaning of the word for *cherish* in Ephesians 5:29 a husband should warmly and tenderly love and care for his wife. Do not treat her harshly in attitude, words, or deeds. How do you treat her in private, in public, and in front of your children? Husbands, *"Live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel"* 1 Peter 3:7. The Bible is clear ... husbands are to lead. Husband, do you understand Christ-like leadership? Jesus said, *"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them ... but not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant ... I am among you as the one who serves"* Luke 22:25-27. Jesus led as a servant. Christ-like leadership is servanthood. Husband, serve your wife as Jesus served. Love her and lead her. Wife, be lovable and leadable.

**What about equality?** Is a husband greater than his wife is? No! Is a wife second class in the marriage? No! The Bible is clear ... men and women are equal, but different. Men are physically stronger than women are. However, greater strength does not prove superiority. The husband is the head of his wife as God, the Father, is the head of Christ, 1 Corinthians 11:3 ... but position does not prove superiority. To say that Jesus is less than the Father is heresy. Jesus and the Father are equal even though the Son submitted to the Father. Likewise, husband and wife are equal even though she submits to him. Husband, *"grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered"* 1 Peter 3:7. Husband, honor your wife as an equal in Christ ... or your prayers will be less effective. Husbands and wives are equal ... but have different God-given responsibilities in marriage. God's way is the best way. Husband and wife, in whatever you do or say in your marriage, *"do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father"* Colossians 3:17. A Biblical marriage is worthy of great honor. Your marriage is worthy of great honor.

**Application.** Take these two verses to heart. First, prioritize what God has told you about yourself. Spend more time changing yourself than trying to change your spouse. Moreover, if you are not married, remember that it is better to spend less time with the right person than more time with the wrong person. Choose a spouse who is committed to God first ... and you second.



## Study Questions Answers at end of lesson.

1. Paraphrase Colossians 3:17 as it applies to marriage.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the commandment in 3:18? To whom is it given? To whom is it not given?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why should husbands not take responsibility to make their wives submit to them?

4. What does the phrase, "*as is fitting in the Lord,*" in 3:18 mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Should a wife go along with (i.e. submit to) her husband's sin? What is a Biblical example of a woman who did?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What two commandments are given to husbands in 3:19?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. According to Ephesians 5:25, how should husbands love their wives?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. A husband's attitude toward his wife should be what instead of what?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How should a husband, following the teaching of Jesus in Luke 22:25-27, lead his wife?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What happens if a husband does not grant his wife honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life?



## Personal Reflection

No answers provided for these questions.

1. How could Colossians 3:17 change a marriage.
2. Why and how do some men misuse 3:18?
3. Why do some women reject 3:18?
4. Specifically, when should a wife not submit to her husband?
5. How could following 1 Peter 3:1-7 change a marriage?
6. How could following 1 Peter 3:8-9 change a marriage?
7. How does a godly wife treat her husband?
8. Describe a Christ-like husband.
9. How can a husband make it easier for his wife to obey Colossians 3:18?
10. How can a wife make it easier for her husband to obey 3:19?
11. How can you become a better wife ... or potential wife?
12. How can you become a better husband ... or potential husband?



## Answers to Study Questions

1. Paraphrase Colossians 3:17 as it applies to marriage. *In the words, attitudes, and actions in your marriage, do it all in the name of Jesus ... with thankfulness to God.*
2. What is the commandment in 3:18? To whom is it given? To whom is it not given? *The commandment is for wives to submit to their husbands ... given to wives and not to husbands.*
3. Why should husbands not take responsibility to make their wives submit to them? *Husbands are not commanded to dominate their wives ... but to love them.*
4. What does the phrase, “*as is fitting in the Lord,*” in 3:18 mean? *This phrase means that a wife must prioritize the Lordship of Christ over submission to her husband.*
5. Should a wife go along with (submit to) her husband’s sin? What is a Biblical example of a woman who did? *No ... as Sapphira should not have in Acts 5:1-10.*
6. What two commandments are given to husbands in 3:19? *To love their wives ... and not to be embittered against them.*
7. According to Ephesians 5:25, how should husbands love their wives? *As Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her.*
8. A husband’s attitude toward his wife should be what instead of what? *A husband should cherish his wife rather than be embittered against her.*
9. How should a husband, following the teaching of Jesus in Luke 22:25-27, lead his wife? *In serving her ... rather than lording it over her.*
10. What happens if a husband does not grant his wife honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life? *His prayers are less effective.*

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