

Not as a group of chauvinistic men and sad sullen women. But as husbands who love their wives as Christ loved the church; willing to sacrifice for them to provide for them and to protect them. Willing to take up the role God appointed for them and be the spiritual head of their households and of the church, so that their wives can fulfill their spiritual calling.

Then our wives are freed to do what God has designed them to do, to care for, to nurture, to protect – not only the children, but the family. In order to do this they will need to follow the leadership of their husband, to give him support in his decisions and choices. You are to do this BECAUSE IT IS FITTING and also with this limitation AS IT IS FITTING. This is indeed a sacrifice on your part – but it is done in the name of Jesus. It is an act of gratitude given to God.

WIFE FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. This is my act of love towards my Saviour – and I do it in his name. When people consider the way in which I love my wife, they should see a reflection of Jesus and it should cause them to marvel that a person could be so loved.

Conclusion: This is not an instruction for the world at large – it is an instruction for the Spirit filled believer. (The call to be salt and light. The call to hold forth the word of truth in this crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like stars in the heavens. The call to do everything in the name of the Lord.)

Why is this passage so boldly contested? No one protests about the next passage about children obeying their father and the father not exasperating their children.

One of the reasons that this passage falls under such criticism is because of our sin nature. From the time of the fall it has been so.

God created men for headship – he appointed them as leaders in the household and later as leaders in the church. To this end they are given authority, but also responsibility.

But men have a strong tendency to shirk their duty. A man wants to escape from responsibility, so if he is given an excuse he will abdicate the role God has given him and go fishing instead. Men have a tendency to be passive, to sit

back and watch things happen – when they really should be actively involved in taking things in hand.

Women, on the other hand, we're created to nurture, care for and protect, but not to lead. But at the **fall** part of the curse that came upon them was a desire for authority, a desire to usurp and control. While most men can't wait for an opportunity to surrender authority, most women are quick to take control.

Is there anything wrong with that?

Yes! First of all, it defies the order that God created. That should be enough for me. It should be enough that I pick up my Bible and see that God has said it should be this way and not that way and then I go and do it.

But don't we even know this inwardly. C.S. Lewis once wrote these words in regards to husbands and wives. XXX Do you not see this truth worked out?

This is not a teaching that I am trying to present to a sinful world. Even if I could persuade a world-gone-mad that they are living in opposition to the word of God, this change is impossible in human power. The spiritually dead have no capacity to deny their sin-nature and live in obedience to God – not consistently – this is a teaching given to the church and to believers. This is meant to set the church apart from the world.

Finally, I think it is important to return to Colossians 3:17 and remind ourselves the reason that we are doing this. This is based in our desire to please God – not our desire to please our husband. So this act of submission is NOT done in response to anything in our spouse – it is done in response to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pass on now to speak to the husbands.

III. Doing everything in the name of Jesus as a 'husband'.

a. Believe it or not, when Paul wrote these words the instructions to husbands probably caused the greater reaction. Though there were likely exceptions in the Roman Empire, in most cases wives were seen as property, not as people. The Roman husband held absolute sway over his family, he could do whatever he wanted and no one could question his action or motivation. So it must have seemed like an anomaly to encounter Christian husbands who actually loved their wives – not with a doting sort of affection or a lustful passion – but in a genuine self-sacrificing love.

When we flip over to Ephesians 5 we get a sense of the depth to which the husbands love was meant to go. He is called to give himself up for the sake of his wife. He is given the example of Christ's love and action for the church and then told to behave towards his wife in the same sort of way.

Now the husband's love for his wife does not 'purify' her in the way that Christ's love for the church 'purifies' but the intent is the same. The husband is to love his wife in such a way that she is presented in splendor and beauty.

On a practical level, this takes in every aspect of our relationships with our wives, to be complimentary towards them, to seek the best in them, to ensure that we take up as much of their burden as we are able. After all, if I love my wife the way that I love myself, then I am making sure she has time to rest and relax, time to enjoy herself.

b. Now I want you to realize that we are not called to love our wives because of anything that we find in our wives. This self-sacrificing love is not offered because we find our wives beautiful, or because our wives do all the housework, or because our wives submit to us. Our love is not based on the actions or attitude of our wife. **Our love towards our wife is based on our relationship with Christ.** We love our wives for Christ's sake.

Now if you have a wonderfully expressive wife who loves you and makes it easy for you to love her, that's wonderful for you. But this instruction doesn't REQUIRE that we have that sort of wife. What it requires is that my heart be submitted to Christ and that I am willing to love my wife as Christ has already loved me.

I AM NOT LOVING MY WIFE FOR HER SAKE; I AM NOT LOVING MY WIFE FOR MY OWN SAKE; I AM LOVING MY

II. Doing everything in the name of Jesus as a 'wife'.

a. As we wade into this sometimes-thorny issue, I think it behooves us to realize that the presence of this instruction here demonstrates that this is not the natural DEFAULT setting for women. They do not, naturally submit, that is why this instruction is given. In the church, unlike the Roman Empire that Paul is living in, women have been given equal status with men. Before God there is no male or female, no slave or free. But out of deference for Christ, women are instructed to **yield their power to their husbands AS IS FITTING IN THE LORD.**

The meaning of the word submit, is not an acknowledgment of INFERIORITY, but of yielding control to another. By its very act, it acknowledges that a woman holds a share of control, but yields it willingly to her husband.

b. Now let's turn over a few pages and consider this teaching as it is expanded in Ephesians 5:22-24. There is a very helpful phrase here, especially for the wife that finds it hard to submit to her husband. It is the phrase: AS TO THE LORD. Lying behind those words are the words of verse 21 addressed to both men and women together: **"submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."**

My hope, for your marriage, is that you find it easy to yield control to your husband's leadership, because you have great confidence in him, and you find that he loves and

cares for you and acts in the interest of you and the children. But I realize this is not always the case, and in those moments and days or even years when it is hard to submit to your husband for his sake, then yield control out of reverence for Christ. This is a call to suffer at times, if need be, for the sake of Christ, and to consider it an honour to do so.

c. This, of course, leads to an important question – what about abusive spouses? Should a woman continue to remain in an abusive situation? No. Certainly in a situation where a woman is physically endangered or suffering, the law has provided recourse to escape such suffering. Scripture tells us that the government and its laws are put in place to keep order, and in a situation where a husband is abusing his wife, it is perfectly in order for her to follow the recourse of the law and seek its protection and even report her husband to the authorities and allow the law to take its course.

Back in Colossians we have the words: 'As is fitting in the Lord.' I think those words should be interpreted in two ways: First, THAT the willing act of submission is 'fitting in the Lord' and second, INSOFAR as it is fitting in the Lord. There are times when a husband may try to manipulate his wife to do something which is wrong, which violates the law, or violates her faith, or her conscience – and in these situations, I think scripture tells us that it is better to obey God than man.

dismiss any scripture that cuts across the grain of culture. To set ourselves up as the judge of scripture is deadly to our spiritual lives and any hope of walking obediently to God.

You see – scripture is the evaluator of culture – not the other way around. (Let those who have an ear hear.)

e. There is a reason that passages like this come under attack.

In the councils of eternity past God decided that he would act to redeem us from the curse of sin. In order to do this he would send his only begotten Son to bear the penalty for our sin. He would give his life in order to redeem sinners who respond with faith. This group of believers would become the church, who would then constitute the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

Having decided to act in such a way, God began a program of illustrating SPIRITUAL truth with PHYSICAL REALITIES. To that end he set up an elaborate sacrificial system to point to the spiritual work that would be done by Christ on the cross. He called a group of people to be his chosen people to illustrate the reality of a spiritual people called out by him to be his people. And he established marriage as a physical reality that would illustrate the spiritual reality of Christ and the Church!

It isn't that God took the already existing practice of marriage and translated it into an image of Christ and the Church – it is that he created marriage as a picture – as much as he created Israel as a picture, and the Passover as a picture, and the sacrificial system as a picture.

THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE IS TO POINT TO CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

Now that may seem like a HUGE stretch to some people. After all, in every nation and language and people we have marriage, it is the foundation of the family – it sounds suspect that marriage is really about a spiritual reality. But that is because Satan has blinded the mind of the unbeliever to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor 4:4).

Consider for a moment: If the message of the Bible is to be believed – what is the most significant reality in this world? Is it not the redemption of sinners by the blood of Christ. The creation of the people of God for his glory and the final scenes of glory when they are brought into an eternal life with him?

At that moment, those who enter into that reality will see things as they truly are – they will see that the picture of Christ and his Church is the BIG reality and marriage as a physical, human reality was the SMALL reality, just as sacrifice, Passover and the physical people of Israel.

Marriage: In the Name of Jesus

Subject: Living for Jesus

Theme: Husbands and Wives Doing all things in Jesus Name

Passage: Colossians 3:18

Intro: A couple of years ago as the press was running up to the royal wedding I remember one headline that read: Kate Won't Obey. It was in reference to the fact that Will and Kate had chosen to drop the word obey from the highly traditional wedding vows used in royal weddings. But this didn't really come as a shock or a surprise to anyone. If anything, the decision was lauded as a step of progress.

Consider how husbands are portrayed by television today. How many TV husbands and TV dads are treated with respect by their families? How many are seen as doddering fools who can't do anything right and need their wife to come and sort out every mess.

Prop.: Last week we looked at Colossians 3:17 which instructs us to do EVERYTHING in the name of Jesus. In the verses following this instruction Paul gives us practical instruction in the everyday realities most likely to touch the lives of Christians, not only in his day, but in our day. The first has to do with married life.

I. Setting the setting – understanding why this isn't a cultural passage.

a. Let's take a moment and set the stage for this discussion. Many Christian teachers have wrongly rejected this teaching because they believe that it is a 'cultural' portion of scripture – something that is no longer relevant to this culture that we're living in.

b. Paul was living in the Greco-Roman culture. In that culture wives were often seen as property, as were children and slaves. The teaching of scripture would have seemed as foreign to that culture as it does to our culture today. They would never have thought it necessary to tell a wife to submit, as though she had any other choice. They would have found it strange to hear husbands instructed to act with tender love and fathers to avoid embittering their children. **WHAT I AM SAYING, IS THAT THOUGH THESE WORDS ADDRESS A CERTAIN CULTURE, WHAT THEY ARE CALLING PEOPLE TO IS NOT CULTURALLY DETERMINED BUT BIBLICALLY DETERMINED.**

c. Today we live in an 'egalitarian culture' which often accepts no difference between men and women. To our culture the words of scripture seem dated and old fashioned. But what culture do they belong to? They are not part of Paul's culture, nor do they relate to any other culture – they are unique to the **ORDER AND STRUCTURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

d. Let me make this abundantly clear. If we dismiss these words a 'CULTURAL' and therefore no longer relevant or authoritative, we open a 'Pandora's Box' where we can