

## Husbands, Love Your Wives and Do Not Be Embittered Against Them

First, let's cover why the "wives" paragraph is given first. And, to fully grasp this, we need to look at Ephesians chapter 5 where we have a much more involved dissertation on the responsibilities in marriage of the wife and of the husband. In the paragraph of the husband's responsibilities is:

**Ephesians 5:28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;**

**Ephesians 5:29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church,**

The husband is to nourish and cherish his wife.

The principle is that in order for the husband to fulfill his responsibilities in marriage, his wife must first submit to him. If she refuses to submit to his authority, then it is most difficult for the husband to fulfill his responsibilities to his wife.

Example: If we do not submit to Jesus Christ by faith in Him as our savior, then God the father cannot save us. Then, in our lives, if we do not submit to the Holy Spirit by faith, then God cannot bless us but must discipline us. He much prefers to bless, but we refuse to submit—that is we refuse to live by faith in His Holy Spirit. Therefore, He cannot bless

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us as He prefers in that He has given to every believer the indwelling of His Spirit.

So it is in marriage. The wife must submit to her husband, in order that he might fulfill his divine obligations to her. Remember, that love first sees a need, then meets that need. If the wife is rebellious and refuses to submit to his authority, that makes it very difficult for the husband to meet her needs in that marriage. So, the wife's responsibility to submit must come first. Now if she fulfills her responsibility before the Lord and submits to the authority of her husband, then he can fulfill his responsibilities before the Lord to his wife.

**Husbands.** As we saw in the previous verse there are two primary words for man. *Anthropos*, which is the more common word for man, is not used here in this passage. Here, we have *aner* which is filled with meanings covering some 14 columns in one Greek Lexicon. Again, we shall simply translate it 'husbands' that is a man unique to his wife as to no other woman.

**Husbands love your wives.** *Present Active Imperative* of the verb *agapao*:

1. There are many different interpretations of this Greek word: R.C. Lenski: "it is more than mere affection. It is a love which is intelligent and purposeful." Other attempts to define this word in this context: "It is tender care, showing tender appreciation" "being love to a sister in the Lord." F.F Bruce attempts to define it: "It refers to Christian love. It includes sexual love and natural affection, but it goes beyond that." Peter T. O'Brien seeks to be

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descriptive: “This love will cause the husband to give of himself, to forgive, and not be overbearing. It will permeate the entire marriage relationship.” Another: “love which in the Bible and for the believer is a specialized type of love.”

2. None of these Bible teachers direct us as to where this love comes. This is love that is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. For every husband who is a believer in Jesus Christ this refers to Spiritual love or love your wives in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. The attempt to describe this love rather than define it is in keeping with the Word of God. The Bible does not define this love but describes this love, as in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 where we have some 16 descriptions of this love. The flesh cannot produce this love. It is a supernatural love that comes from the Holy Spirit when we are trusting in Him.
3. Think about it: husbands love your wives.
  - (1) Don't pass over this *imperative*. This is not just be relaxed with her. This is not hugs and kisses.
  - (2) This is an *imperative*, a command to love! And this *imperative* tells us something special about this love. You cannot command someone to have human love for someone else. Many people claim, they cannot help but loving this person or that.
  - (3) So, this *imperative* tells us clearly what category of love is commanded here of every husband. People, you can command that every believer love with this love. This is a love not from

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the flesh nature. This is a love that comes when a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit.

- (4) This is a special love, and the first thing you want to remember about love is that love sees a need and then meets that need.
- (5) This means that the husband is to always be observing his wife. Over time he learns to be more and more sensitive to her and what is going on in her soul. Unfortunately, too many husbands are a lot more observing and sensitive to their dogs than to their wives.
- (6) But according to the Word of God, the husband is to be always observant of his wife, discern her needs and then meet those needs.

Let's note a very important observation: the wife is to keep on submitting to her husband regardless of what kind of a husband he may be and the husband is to keep on loving his wife regardless of what kind of wife she may be, whether she submits or not. Unfortunately, the husband may not be won over by her submission and unfortunately the wife may not be benefited by his love, but she is to keep on submitting and he is to keep on loving.

OK, let's get right to it: The responsibility of the husband is substantially more important than that of the wife and is much more difficult than that of the wife. It is simple but not easy.

The love commanded of the husband is further described in

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**Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives,  
just as Christ also loved the church and gave  
Himself up for her,**

Note that adverb men: just as. This is the same adverb Jesus uses in the New Commandment in

**John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to  
you, that you love one another, even as I have  
loved you, that you also love one another.**

So, husbands, it is mandatory that you know the Word of God, that you know **how** Jesus loves all believers.

And husbands, how did Jesus Christ love?

**First:** He loved in the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, husbands this command in Colossians 3:19 is, in effect, a command to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. So, every husband should know how to be filled by the Holy Spirit. And that is by grace through faith. Faith in Holy spirit.

**Secondly:** Jesus Christ loved sacrificially to Himself! Do you hear that husbands? Jesus Christ loves sacrificially to Himself! Yes, this means that husbands are to love their wives sacrificially! This means sacrifice of your time! This means sacrifice of money! This means sacrifice of things you do in your life. Jesus Christ loved sacrificially of His own life. Of course, the husband can do this only once, but the concept is to love sacrificially to things you would prefer to be doing.

**Thirdly:** Jesus Christ sacrificed for the benefit of the church.

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So, husbands, you are to sacrifice for the benefit of your wives.

**First**, of course, for her spiritual benefit. This includes: going to church, Bible study, prayer and forbid—conversations about the Bible, about morals, about her thinking on various subjects.

**Secondly**, this is for her physical benefit. And yes, this includes sex. He should be aware of her sexual needs. Then, of course, medical needs. His love will cause him to be observant of her medical needs. Then his love will be aware of her emotional needs and of course clothing and outer beauty (her hair, her feet, her face).

**Thirdly**, this includes the third divine institution of family. A wise husband discusses having children and encourages family support. And his love will allow and even encourage friendships with other ladies. This one will demand that he be wise as to whom she socializes with. And if he considers someone dangerous to her spiritual life or her marriage, this is where she will submit to her husband.

The Ephesians passage gives further light on his love.

**Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives,**  
**just as Christ also loved the church and gave**  
**Himself up for her,**

Let's think about this one. In the absolute sense the husband can give up his life but one time. But let's take a close look at the text:

**gave Himself up for her; *for her***. The Greek preposition means for, in behalf of, for the sake of in the sense of protection, care, favor and benefit. For, and in behalf of. The husband out of his love will give up

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things *for* the benefit of or *on behalf* of his wife. Out of his love he will protect his wife, and ladies this means more than just protection around the house, as in locked doors and weapons. This means protect her from other men, from other distractions like alcohol, excessive gambling, spending of money etc. Jesus Christ has given to us the Holy Spirit and He has given us a multitude of warnings against being distracted by Satan or the cosmic world as in Colossians chapters 2 and 3. You will also note this preposition includes care of his wife, he will provide to the best of his ability for the care of his wife. And certainly, favor her over all others! Other ladies, family, he exalts her as his favorite. She is special to him.

**Warning:** Many of the things we have just covered can be perverted and misused. Misused by the husband to ‘control’ his wife or misused by the wife to ‘control’ her husband.

There used to be a movement that destroyed some marriages and severely hurt others: ‘Promise Keepers’ where the husband was to pray and live to be the husband his wife wanted him to be. Think about this for a moment. Many wives change even during a month of days: pre-menstrual, menstrual, and post menstrual, not to mention the fact we all change over a period of time throughout our lives. The wife may demand one thing this time of the month and the opposite another time. The wise husband will pray that God the Holy Spirit will lead him to be the husband God wants him to be, that God will give him wisdom and patience and longsuffering all of which will be demanded of the love of the husband and the love of the wife. Husbands can also be fickle and need longsuffering in a marital relationship.

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The next line in Colossians 3:19 is a warning to every husband.

**Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.**  
(positive guide for every husband:) **love your wives** (followed by a stern warning) **do not be embittered against them**

First, note the negative *not*. This Greek negative denies this absolutely in practice in a marriage. The *present active imperative* of the Greek verb meaning bitter or to make bitter.

**Stop being embittered against them.** This was already going on in some of the marriages in Colossae.

**Husbands keep on loving your wives and stop being embittered against them.** The Greek word means bitter or harsh. *Stop being bitter or harsh against them, resentful, indignant, even bitter hate.* This emphasizes the mental attitude of the husband. Both love and bitterness are mental activities of the husband. And both are quick to be expressed in his outward treatment of his wife. Just as you cannot hide Spiritual love, you cannot hide for long bitterness towards your wife. Husbands don't be in denial, you know what bitter is, so you know when you are becoming embittered against your wives. As to the translation of the preposition translated *against them*, it should be translated *toward them*.

1. The process of a husband becoming bitter toward his wife can be realized for one of two reasons. First, she does not submit and this causes him to become bitter toward his non-submissive wife.



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Secondly, the husband becomes bitter or harsh to control his wife in what can be considered non-issue control, non-protective control.

2. Many Christian males read these passages where the wife is to submit but do not read on to their own responsibilities.
3. Many Christian wives do not realize they can actually bring about bitterness in their husbands which results in harshness toward her.
4. Harshness or becoming bitter is from the flesh nature of the male and from the female. So, while the first half of the husbands' responsibilities—*husbands keep on loving your wives*—is in effect a command to live in the power and leading of the Holy Spirit by faith. And the second half: *stop being embittered against them* is in effect a command not to be in the power and leading of the flesh nature.
5. Remember that bitterness like many other mental attitude sins, act as immunization of our flesh nature. Therefore, the translation, *toward them*. The husband views his wife as an attack against him, against his authority, and his authority and his person is threatened so he becomes bitter or harsh towards her.
6. In grasping the idea behind being embittered toward her, let's know that only one, in a close relationship, can be harsh toward another. For example, a stranger may come across as rough, like a drill sergeant in the military. But, only someone you love, someone close to you can be and say things that are harsh against your soul and even hurt your soul.

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7. Every husband, every wife, every parent should know that they can inwardly hurt their wife, husband or children by being harsh toward them. Being tough, or rough is one thing but being harsh, bitter is quite another. And husbands when you express your bitterness or harshness toward your wives, you will not get your desired results. Or, if you do, it will not be a love submission but one of fear, which will damage your marital relationship.
8. Bitterness is a serious problem in the institution of marriage. Bitterness in the husband is a fantastic problem in marriage. Few marriage counselors or books on marriage address the problem of husband bitterness.
9. But the question: How does a husband stop being embittered towards his wife? Bitterness is a protection against our flesh nature. So, when you are bitter, you know that you are in the flesh, so this is a command to get out of the control of your flesh nature and get under the control of the Holy Spirit by grace through faith. Stay in the power of the Holy Spirit and love your wife with Spiritual love and you cannot become embittered towards her.
10. We have often heard that there is a thin line between love and hate. Well you are seeing it here. That 'thin line' is your volition of faith in the Holy Spirit to no faith in the Holy Spirit. From being under the power of the Holy Spirit---love and being under the power of the flesh—embittered—resentment—hate! The husband can be loving his wife in the Holy Spirit and stop living by faith and going over to his flesh nature. And husbands, you cannot, before the Lord, blame your wives for your bitterness. Bitterness is a choice that you

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make. You have made a decision to be bitter, to be harsh, to resent her. Even if she is not submitting, this does not give you an excuse before the Lord to be embittered toward her. You made a decision to get your eyes off the Lord, off the Holy Spirit and on your wife!

**Ephesians 5:25 Husbands keep on loving your wives and stop being embittered toward them**

That is: Husbands keep on walking by faith in the Holy Spirit in your marriage and stop letting your flesh nature interfere with your marriage.

We started this study with the four Divine Institutions designed by God for the stability of the individual and of society itself. Let's note some structural points on the responsibility of the husband.

1. We start here with the home in which a male child is born. A woman, the mother, must be very careful as to how she rears her male children. Also, how she rears her female children!
2. Way too many Christian children have been dominated by their mothers through erroneous systems of coercion which are used in place of normal healthy family discipline. They use guilt: making their children feel guilty if they do not obey; they use shame---controlling them by shame, or fear, fear of punishment or fear of losing their mothers love and approval. Many preachers use these three (guilt, shame and fear) to get people to live by the Law. They use guilt and shame and fear of the Lord. Mothers are in effect teaching that you have to earn love! Preachers are teaching that you have to earn God's love, or the love of Jesus Christ, their Savior-friend. This is the way many Christians have relationship with the

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Lord and this is how many boys and girls grow up and use these in their own marriages.

3. The result is that many male children develop a tendency to succumb to various types of female domination in their homes, growing up and then succumbing to female dominance in their marriage.
4. Another result is that if the boy is dominated by his mother in these and other tactics, one of two things are likely to take place in his marriage. One, he will be dominated by his wife or he will react and seek to control her and take out his bitterness toward his mother on his wife. Warning ladies! As you consider the man you think you want to marry, examine carefully these factors in his conduct toward his mother and women in general.
5. A wise wife can have wonderful influence on her husband through her love response and wisdom. One of the dangers for the woman is that in many cases where she does not have the influence she desires she often resorts to various devices to control her husband. A warning to single ladies: Note well the man you marry, things about him you like and things about him you don't like and then decide if you desire to marry him. Do not go into the marriage with the idea you will change him. Far too many marriages are ruined by wives, who after marriage go to work to try to change things about their husbands. There is that little line in many marriages: *for better or worst*. Both the husband and the wife need to pay close attention to that concept. You are marrying that person for better or worst—examine their character, personality and habits carefully before you

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marry. Ladies, please do not marry with the idea of changing him after marriage.

6. Most ladies by the time they reach 24-25 have some pretty definite ideas about what she wants in her man. Unfortunately, it takes most males longer to be wise in what they desire other than physical traits. But what happens so often is that some smooth-talking guy comes along and she is on a wave of libido or is attracted to some guy physically or to his personality or power position. She may forget, temporarily, some of her own standards. But as soon as they settle down in marriage, she realizes what she has done, and starts in on re-doing him to fit her standards.
7. Because of the flesh nature of both the man and the woman and because of the importance of the institution of marriage, God in His divine wisdom has put forth these two commands of marriage: wives keep on being submissive to your husband's authority, even when you do not wish to submit to him and husbands keep on loving your wives even if you do not desire to love her but your flesh nature is embittered towards her, you are to keep on loving her, which you can do in the power of the Holy Spirit.
8. Ladies and gentlemen, husbands and wives and future husbands and future wives, please remember the fundamental importance of the divine institution of marriage.
9. And never forget the make-up of both the male and female. We all have a body and soul and if believers, a human spirit. Our bodies are different in more ways than just being male and female. While

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all males have a male body they are each different as to their needs and desires. And while all females have the same female bodies, each one is unique in her needs desires and dislikes. And part of the journey of marriage is discovering the physical needs of the other person and meeting those needs to the best of your ability and accepting them as to their physical make up. And please always remember we are all sensitive to our own physical appearance and make up. Therefore, be most careful not to run down or talk about the physical shortcomings of your husbands or you wives. This is one sure way of scaring the other person towards you.

10. Then we each have a soul. And both the male and female are sensitive about their soulish make up as well as their physical make up. God help the marriage where the woman marries a man of less IQ than she has. She will have to guard her tongue to him privately as well as publicly. And God help the marriage where the man marries a woman that does not measure up to his idea of a real woman. He will have to change his idea and guard his own tongue to her, privately as well as publicly. Remember we are all sensitive and when you run down your spouse to someone else, you may be doing severe damage to your marriage. Both a man and woman's shortcomings are a part of their sensitivity. Leave these alone when in an argument. Often things are said in an argument that you later wished you had not said, but you said it and the damage is done to your marriage. When a husband or wife keeps harping on the other's short comings and failures, until they have trampled the sensitivity area of their souls and she just stops submitting or he becomes embittered.

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Protect each other!

Marriage is an institution where you have one person who is in your corner, in support of who you are in spite of shortcomings and failures.

Wives, keep on submitting and respecting your husbands.

Husbands, keep on loving your wives.

Next, we multiply the happiness and compound the difficulties of marriage with Children!