

INTRODUCTION

We are coming to a section in Colossians today in which the Word of God instructs us on how to enjoy successful relationships. Today, we’re going to talk about marriage, the next message is about parenting, and the next message is about the kind of employee or employer you should be. The Bible is not some mysterious book about secrets and unfathomable mysteries—it is a practical instruction manual for life.

Today we’re going to talk about step-forward wives and prefect husbands. Of course, you may recognize those two titles are take-offs from other words. In 1972 Ira Levin wrote the spooky novel “The Stepford Wives.” It was made into two movies, one in 1975 and the latest, starring Nicole Kidman in 2004. It’s a bizarre story about a town where all the wives have been remade into robots catering to their husband’s every whim. Sometimes Christians mistakenly think the Bible teaches wives should all be cookie-cutter, clones that live only to meet the trivial desires of their husbands. But I’m going to burst that bubble quickly and talk about women who are brave up to step forward.

And you may have misread the adjective in front of “husbands” as “perfect” but it’s not a typographical error—it’s the word *prefect*—and you’ll discover the meaning of that word in a few minutes. There’s no such thing as a perfect husband or a perfect wife. I saw a funny cartoon not long ago had the caption, “Waiting for the Perfect Man.” It was a drawing of a woman who had been sitting on a bench waiting so long she turned into a skeleton!

Most women have dreams of marrying a man with the looks and physique of George Clooney, the sense of humor of Jimmy Kimmel, and the intelligence of Albert Einstein. And they usually end up with a man who has the looks of Albert Einstein, the physique of Jimmy Kimmel, and who is *nothing* like George Clooney. There is no such thing as a perfect husband or a perfect wife, because we are all imperfect creatures. Therefore, there is no such thing as a perfect marriage.

However, if you are looking for God’s secret for enjoying a strong, healthy, marriage, then you’ve come to the right place—the Word of God. Let’s read them in Colossians 3:18-19 “Wives submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”

God’s word doesn’t give ten or twelve directives to a wife—there’s only one word: Submit. Isn’t that simple? The Bible doesn’t burden a husband down with eight or nine things to remember—there’s only one word: Love. There is profound beauty in the simplicity of God’s plan for husbands and wives. Let’s look at each of these words.

1. GOD ENCOURAGES WIVES TO BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO STEP FORWARD AND SUBMIT

The Bible says, “Wives, understand and support your husbands by submitting to them in ways that honor the Master.” (Colossians 3:18 *The Message*) Studies have shown most women react negatively to the word *submit*. They associate it with words like, “slave, inferior or doormat.” A

1998 Gallup Poll showed 69 percent of the public disagreed with the statement “Wives should graciously submit to the servant leadership of their husbands.” I believe most of this opposition to submission stems from a faulty understanding of what biblical submission is. I want to show you what the Bible teaches about submission, but first I want to teach you two things submission is NOT.

(1) Submission doesn't mean that women are inferior to men

Through the years the Biblical doctrine of wives submitting to their husbands has been grievously misinterpreted. It has been used as a basis to subjugate women to a role as second-class citizens. It is mind-boggling for most of us to think women in America didn't even have a right to vote until the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920.

1 Peter 3:7 says men are to honor their wives because they are the weaker partner. The only way women are inferior to men is in physical strength. That means most husbands can beat their wives at arm wrestling. But in every other way, women are equal to men—and in some ways women are superior to men. While women tend to be more emotional, studies clearly reveal they are more stable in the long run. There is a much higher proportion of men in mental institutions than women. There are many more male alcoholics or drug abusers than women. And everyone knows women outlive men.

God's Word teaches equality between men and women. Galatians 3:28 says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” But that doesn't mean we should be pushing for a unisex culture. While men and women are equal, that doesn't mean we're the same. We are different, and I say, “Vive le difference!”

Just look in a couple's bathroom. A man has five items: a toothbrush, shaving cream, razor, bar of soap, and a towel from the Marriott. The average number of items in a typical woman's bathroom is 337—a man couldn't identify most of them. Men and women are different in the way they shop. A man will pay \$2 for a \$1 item he needs. A woman will pay \$1 for a \$2 item she doesn't need—but it's on sale. So submission has nothing to do with the equality of differences of men and women. Next:

(2) Submission isn't blind obedience to an ungodly husband

The context of a wife's submission is within that phrase in verse 18, “as is fitting in the Lord.” Over the past thirty two years of being a pastor, I've discovered some wives put up with physical abuse from their husbands, because they think that's part of submitting. That's a terrible perversion of submission. Husbands, you should *never* lay your hand on your wife unless it is to show her love. Ladies, if you are being abused or battered, my advice for you is to get away from him as soon as possible and seek help from a friend or a professional who can help you determine what your next steps should be. Do you hear me? Do not simply stay there and endure abuse. You are FIRST a child of God before you are a wife, and God's Word is clear about abuse.

(3) Submission is an attitude that acknowledges that the husband is the spiritual leader

Submission is not so much an activity as it is an attitude. Submission is the attitude of voluntarily putting yourself under the leadership position of your husband so God will be glorified.

The word “submit” is a military word that spoke of a soldier lining up under the command of an officer. Understanding how this works in the military can help wives understand what it means to submit. Imagine a Master Sergeant who is older, wiser, and more experienced than a 2nd Lieutenant. That Sergeant understands the importance of saluting the Lieutenant and following his orders. If he didn’t, there would be chaos in the military. But if the Lieutenant issues a bad order, the Sergeant is going to take him aside and say, “Sir, you might want to rethink that order, and here’s why...” Wives, you may be smarter, wiser, sharper, and better than your husband, but God has established him as the leader in your family. Don’t blindly obey him. If he makes a bad choice, don’t rebel...discuss it with him.

Ladies, your job is to acknowledge your husband’s job as the leader of your family. If he doesn’t live up to it, then God will deal with Him. I love the definition of submission given by author and speaker Cynthia Heald: She says: “Submission is ducking so that God has a clear shot at your husband.”

Wives, submission is keeping a positive attitude about your life and marriage, even when things could be better. There once was a woman who woke up one morning, looked in the mirror, and noticed she had only three hairs on her head. “Well,” she said, “I think I’ll braid my hair today.” So she did and she had a wonderful day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and discovered she had only two hairs on her head. “Hmm,” she said, “I think I’ll part my hair down the middle today.” So she did and she had a grand day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and noticed she had only one hair on her head. “Well,” she said, “Today I’m going to wear my hair in a pony tail.” So she did and she had a fun, fun day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and noticed there wasn’t a single hair on her head. “Yay!” she exclaimed, “I don’t have to fix my hair today!” That’s what I call a great attitude. And when it comes to graciously submitting to your husband, attitude is everything!

2. GOD ENCOURAGES MEN TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO BE PREFECT HUSBANDS

The Bible says, “Husbands, go all out in love for your wives. Don’t take advantage of them.” (Colossians 3:19 *The Message*) As I’ve already pointed out, there is no such thing as a perfect husband, but *every* husband should be a prefect husband. If you go to the dictionary, you’ll find that the word “prefect” means “a person appointed to a position of command, authority, or superintendence.”

Men, God has appointed you to be the prefect, the head of your household. The English word *husband* comes from an Old Norse word meaning “one who holds the house together.” Like a “band around a house” a husband’s role is to be the leader responsible for holding the marriage and family intact. But the problem we find today is thousands of men aren’t stepping up to be strong enough to fulfill God’s role as the spiritual leader of their home.

Some of you men have been lying to the IRS when you turned in your income tax forms. You may wonder, “How did I lie?” When you check the box labeled, “Head of Household.” I believe the primary reason our American culture is suffering through an epidemic of broken homes is because men have abdicated their God-given assignment to be the spiritual leader of their families.

The Bible teaches HOW you are to be the loving leader your wife needs. “The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering, but by cherishing...Christ’s love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. And that is how husbands ought to love their wives.” (Ephesians 5:23-26 *The Message*) Here are four ways you should love your wife:

(1) A husband should display a selfless love

That’s how Jesus loves the church. When you married your wife, you gave up all your personal rights and your independence. When you were single you could make decisions based solely on what you wanted, but now you can’t make decisions based upon what YOU want to do. Just as Christ gave Himself up for the church, you are to give yourself up for your wife. Her welfare and happiness must be considered in every decision you make.

Loving your wife in a selfless way means you anticipate her needs and meet them. Isn’t that the way you treat your body? When it itches, you scratch it. When it’s thirsty, you give it drink. When it’s hungry, you feed it. That’s the way you are to treat your wife. You are to anticipate her needs and meet them. Your goal in life should be to please your wife just as you please your own body.

Men are naturally clueless about what women need. That’s why we’ve got to take seminars and read books to learn it. We just don’t get it naturally. We’ve been learning in Men’s Fraternity about four important needs every wife has. Our guys have memorized these four needs and even have a card to carry in their wallet to remind them. Every wife needs: (1) Security, that includes financial security and relational security. She needs (2) Conversational support: that means she needs to be able to share her feelings with her husband and he will look in her eyes and listen and support her. She needs (3) Affection, which most men mistake for sex only. But wives need hugs, caresses, and to enjoy a sense of being pampered. Finally, every wife needs (4) Significance. She needs to know you value her and she is important to you and to the world.

Some men may be thinking, “Hey, this isn’t fair! I’ve got needs, too. Why don’t we tell the wives what OUR needs are?” They already know what your needs are: food, sex, and the remote control—not necessarily in that order.

(2) A husband should display a sacrificial love

Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) After saying those words, Jesus went to the cross and laid down His life as a sacrifice for us. Sir, if you are going to love your wife the way Christ loves the church, then you must be

willing to lay down your life. Are you willing to die for your wife? You may say, “Sure, I’m willing to die if someone threatens my wife.” No, I’m not talking about defending her if she’s attacked. I’m talking about really dying—dying to self, dying to your own plans and ambitions. That’s what you must sacrifice if you are going to love your wife the way Christ loves the church.

Husbands, you can never force or coerce your wife to submit to you. Jesus doesn’t force the church to submit to Him—if He did then He might say something like, “If you don’t tithe, you’re not part of my church!” No, the reason we obey Him is because we love Him. So, you should never force your wife into submitting, you should *love* her into submitting. That’s what sacrificial love really is. It’s you being willing to give yourself to your wife as Christ gave Himself for the church.

(3) A husband should display a sanctifying love

Did you notice the words in Ephesians 5? The reason Christ loves the church is to bring out the best in her. Jesus is constantly working to make His bride more and more beautiful.

Men, when you love your wife the way Jesus loves the church, you will be constantly working to make your bride more radiant and beautiful in her character. Husbands, that’s one of your jobs—to make your wife a beautiful Christian. You do this by building her up instead of tearing her down. Sure your wife has faults, we all do. But Jesus loves me in spite of my faults, but He who began a good work in me is going to keep on working on me.

The best way you can sanctify your wife is to accept your God-given role as the spiritual leader of your family. God has assigned you that job, but too many men have abdicated it. Maybe you don’t know what it means to be the spiritual leader. Think of it this way: You are to be to your family what Jesus is to the Church. The Bible says Jesus is prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, it is your job to teach your family the Word of God. You don’t have to be a Bible expert to gather your family around and read the Word of God to them. Why don’t you pick a time and place each day, and read one Psalm to your family and then pray with them?

As priest, you are to lead them in the practice of worship. A Godly husband never just drives his family to church and drops them off; he sets the example. He brings his family to church and makes sure all the family members, including mom and dad, are involved in a Sunday School class and worship. You are the prophet: Teach them. You are the priest: Lead them in worship. And you are king. Now before you get your scepter and throne and think you’re little Lord, remember the kind of crown Jesus wore—it was a crown of thorns. He was willing to lay down His life, just as you should be willing to lay down your life for your family. The main role of a king in the Old Testament was to provide security and protection for the nation. That’s your job as king—to protect your family and provide security for them.

(4) A husband should display a supreme love

What do you think is the most powerful kind of human love? Is it the love of a mother for her children? Is it the love of grandparents for their grandchildren? Is it the love between two

friends? The Bible makes it clear the most powerful human relationship possible is the love between a husband and wife. The Bible says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” (Ephesians 5:31)

Marriage is the primary relationship on the planet. Before God created parents and children, He established marriage. Before there were nations, there was a marriage. Before there was the church, there was a marriage. Before there were friends, there was one man married to one woman: That was God’s first priority. If you are married, then loving your wife should be your first priority. You should love her more than your children, and your parents, and your friends.

I recall a new dad proudly showing me a picture of his newborn baby. He said, “I finally understand the scripture that says, ‘This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.’ I didn’t have the heart to tell him the context of that scripture wasn’t a parent describing a child. It was Adam describing the union and intimacy he had with his wife, Eve! (Genesis 2:23)

I’ve often joked that Adam and Eve had it much better than we do, because it was just the two of them. Adam never had to hear Eve compare him to her former boyfriends, and Eve never had to hear Adam talk about his mother’s cooking! I heard a funny story about Adam coming home late one afternoon and Eve said, “Where have you been all day?”

“Oh, I’ve been watching the animals and giving them names.”

Eve was a little jealous and said, “Are you sure there’s not another woman?”

“No way! You know you’re the only woman for me!”

Later that night, Adam was asleep and felt Eve’s hand on his chest. He woke up and said, “What are you doing?” Eve said, “Oh, just counting your ribs.”

Men, if you’re going to love your wife the way Christ loves the church, your love for her will be selfless, sacrificial, sanctifying, and it will be a supreme love.

CONCLUSION

In our upside-down culture, we idolize the movie stars who jump from one marriage to the next, or don’t even marry their latest partner. But in God’s eyes, there’s still nothing more beautiful than a couple who stays married. In fact, I want you to see the real stars—if you’ve been married 50 years or more, stand up so we can see you and celebrate your accomplishment.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor during the time of Hitler who was arrested and died in a German Concentration camp. He wrote a classic Christian book, *The Cost of Discipleship*. Every Christian should read it. While Bonhoeffer was in prison, he received a letter from a young woman who was contemplating getting married. She wasn’t sure marriage was a good idea during such troubling times. Bonhoeffer’s reply is a beautiful statement about marriage: “Is there anything more beautiful in life than a young couple clasping hands and pure hearts in the path of marriage? Can there be anything more beautiful than young love? Yes, there is a more beautiful thing. It is the spectacle of an old man and an old woman finishing their journey together on that path. Their hands are gnarled, but still clasped; their faces are seamed, but still radiant; their hearts are physically bowed and tired, but still strong with love and devotion for one another. Yes, there is a more beautiful thing than young love—old love.”

Wives, are you brave enough to step forward and submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord? Husbands are you strong enough to love your wives the way Christ loves the Church? When you do, God will bless you with a marriage that lasts “until death do us part.”

OUTLINE

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- (2) Submission isn't blind obedience to an ungodly husband
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Ephesians 5:23-26 The Message

A husband should display a...

(1) Selfless love

A wife needs:

- a. Security
- b. Conversational support
- c. Affection
- d. Significance

(2) Sacrificial love

(3) Sanctifying love

(4) Supreme love



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes