

November 5, 2006 by Steve Brandon



Christian Marriage

Colossians 3:18-19

- 1. Wives, Submit to Your Husbands (verse 18).**
- 2. Husbands, Love Your Wives (verse 19).**
- 3. Some Final Words.**

I remember hearing of a married couple who lived long enough to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Though they had been married for 50 years, they behaved as if they were newlyweds. They were obviously very happy together. They obviously loved being together. At their anniversary celebration, the husband was asked, "What has been the key to maintaining your happiness in marriage through all these years?" Without hardly a moment's hesitation, he replied, "It's simple really. We are both madly in love with the same person. We are both madly in love with Jesus Christ." Indeed, when a man and a woman both love the Lord Jesus with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, one can expect to find a happy marriage.

My message this morning is entitled, "Christian Marriage." My text is Colossians 3:18-19, which reads as follows:

Colossians 3:18-19

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

As we consider these words, it is important to keep in mind that these admonitions to wives and to husbands come in the context of Christian discipleship. The apostle Paul wrote these words to those in the church in Colossae, who had embraced the Christian faith. They had embraced the supremacy of Christ in all things. They had believed in His sufficient sufferings for them upon the cross. They had believed that their sins were forgiven in Him (Col. 2:13). They had a hope of heaven (Col. 1:5). They were trusting in Christ to make them complete in every way (Col. 2:10).

Upon those foundations, then, beginning in chapter 3, verse 5, Paul had been giving to the Colossian people (and through them, to us), some very practical ways in which we ought to live as followers of Christ. He begins in verses 5-11 describing the sins that we should abstain from. Continuing on with verses 12-17, he describes the attitudes that are consistent with being chosen, holy, and beloved children of God. And now, beginning with verse 18 (of chapter 3), he's going to bring these practical exhortations into our marriages (verses 18-19), our home life (verses 20-21), and our workplace (from 3:22 to 4:1). It's my plan to take a Sunday on each of these particular areas of application. This morning we will look at marriage. Next Sunday, we will look at parenting. Following that, we will look at how we ought to act in the workplace as followers of Christ.

When you consider closely the words of Colossians 3:18-19, you quickly discover that there is no problem with understanding these words. There is no problem of textual criticism. There is no debate over the intention of Paul with these words. There is no symbolism or allegory, that might call for another interpretation. Rather, these words are about as clear as can be. Paul is addressing two groups of people within the church. First (in verse 18), he addresses the married women. Then (in verse 19), he addresses the married men. To each of these people, he gives them a command. First, he tells the wives to "be subject" to their husbands. Then, he instructs the men to "love" their wives.

As clear as these words are, they are some of the most resisted verses in all of the Bible, especially in our American culture. The reason these verses are hated is because there are some who believe that they are degrading to women. There are some who believe that verse 18 makes women into doormats, who will only be trampled and abused by their husbands. They believe that such a demand upon women to subject themselves to their husbands will only cause women to be an oppressed group of people. And in our land of freedom, to stifle the freedom of any, is the cardinal sin.

It's not my purpose this morning to demonstrate how opposed the culture is to these ideas presented by the apostle Paul. If you are half awake, you can read it all around you. The feminist movement is all around us. It has also crept into the church. I do not believe that it is any accident at all, that as the feminist movement has gained steam, it has crushed marriage. But, rather than getting into a tirade against our culture, I simply want to proclaim to you God's word, without compromise, without apology, and without shame. Wherever Christianity has flourished, it has always been good for women. Oh, to some the words of our text this morning may appear to be oppressive and out of date. But, they aren't. They are neither oppressive, nor are they out of date. They are timeless principles that God has given to us in His word to help us.

I know that in following these things that God has given to us in His word, we will be placed upon the path of blessing. Wherever a command exists in Scripture, it is always for our good. I remember hearing a preacher say, "Whenever God says, 'Don't,' what He really means is 'Don't hurt yourself.'" As wives act within their God-given roles within the marriage, and as husbands act within their God-given roles within the marriage, there will be peace and harmony and happiness and joy within their marriage. The happiest marriages that I have ever seen are those where the wives are submitting themselves to their husbands, and where the husbands are lovingly leading their wives. When both

parties are fulfilling their God-given roles, the home is a happy place. But, when wives are rebelling against these words to submit, and when husbands are refusing to love their wives, the home is unhappy.

At this point, I feel that it is appropriate to give a testimony to all of you here this morning. I want to give you a testimony of my wife. She is a wonderful example to me of a wife who submits to me. As I see that sort of attitude in her, it gives me great reason to love her all the more, and be concerned about her and her well-being. I'm not standing here to tell you that we have the greatest marriage in the world. There are constantly challenges that come forth in our lives., But, I will tell you that, by the grace of God, we have a great joy and happiness in our marriage. I believe that much of this comes from our commitment to submit ourselves to the authority of God's word in every area of our lives, especially as it relates to God's plan for our marriage. As I look out upon you, I can look and see other marriages in which this same thing is taking place. There is joy and harmony and happiness in your marriages.

And so, for your own happiness, I have two exhortations to you this morning. The first is to the wives. The second is to the husbands. (1) Wives, Submit to Your Husbands (verse 18). (2) Husbands, Love Your Wives (verse 19). As we look at each of these points, please know that these words are applicable to all of us in this congregation. Obviously, it's applicable to those who are married, as you know what your role in marriage is, and as you know what the role of your spouse should be. It's also applicable to the children of our congregations, who will be wives and husbands someday. These words will help to give all of you a sense of what sort of man or woman you want to develop in your character. It will also help you in determining the sort of man or woman that you want to marry someday. Young men should be on the lookout for those women who will willingly submit to them as husbands someday. Young women should be on the lookout for those men who will unconditionally love them. And, it's also applicable to those of you who may never have been married or who may never be married again. Because, your task is to do everything in your power to encourage these types of relationships within the marriage bond. Hold high those women who are willingly submitting to their husbands. Hold high those men who are loving their wives. Commend these people as examples and models for others to follow. For, as these sorts of relationships exist within our body, we will all be strengthened as a result.

1. Wives, Submit to Your Husbands (verse 18).

As I take this command, I want to address the wives in the congregation. That's what Paul did. As I speak with you, others can eavesdrop on our conversation. And yet, there is within me a slight desire that we could be all alone. In some ways it would be good if the men would be able to leave the room right now. I say this, because there is a great danger in husbands hearing these words. They can take these words and force them upon you, in a way, that I believe is entirely unbiblical. They can take out their baseball bats, labeled, "Colossians 3:18" and club you over the head with this verse, forcing you to submit. I believe that the moment husbands pull out this verse and seek to force his authority upon his wife, forcing her to submit, he is way out of line. Now, it's not that he is wrong because he doesn't have truth on his side. Because, in fact, he does. It's scripture in its context, right here in Colossians 3:18. But, he's wrong because he is entirely devoid of love at this point. The only reason a man would ever resort to using intimidation to get a wife to submit to him, is because she isn't doing what he wants. And in his selfishness, the husband wants his wife to do what he wants. He is willing to do anything it takes to get it, even using intimidation to get it. But, at its root, love is dying to self. Love wants the best for others. In a very real sense, the husband who pulls out his Colossians 3:18 club has a log in his own eye, while he is attempting to take out the speck in his wife's eye (Matt. 7:3-5). A husband who seeks to force a wife into submission has entirely forgotten the next verse, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them" (Col. 3:19).

A husband who forces this verse upon you wives has entirely missed his call to love you, as verse 19 says. Colossians 3:18 knows nothing of the use of force or intimidation to see you comply in obedience to this verse. In the Greek text, this word, "be subject" is in the middle voice. (Which probably means nothing do you.) However, it's pretty important in this context. The Greek language (in which these words were originally written) has three voices: (1) active, (2) middle, and (3) passive. The active voice represents something that you do. The passive voice represents something that is done to you. The middle voice communicates something that you do, all by yourself. In this way, it's a bit like the reflexive form in English. To show the force of the middle voice, you could translate these words this way, "Wives, voluntarily, submit yourselves to your husbands with all eagerness and willingness on your own part." To help make it clear, this verse doesn't say, "Men, see to it that your wives submit to you in everything you say." This exhortation is directed to the wives and not to the husbands. It is worded in such a way that it is the wives who freely and willingly submit themselves to their own husbands. Obedience to this verse is not in any way to be forced upon wives. Rather, wives are to see, of themselves, of how good and how right and how pleasing to God it is when they submit to their own husbands.

This is what Jesus did. He always submitted Himself to His heavenly Father. In no way was it forced upon Him. Rather, He willfully submitted Himself to His heavenly Father. Consider the words of Jesus. He said, "I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:28-29). Jesus did everything upon the earth in submission to His Father. Jesus responded to His Father's initiative. Jesus so lived as to submit Himself to the pleasure of God. That is Biblical submission - to place yourself under the authority of another and willingly follow their instructions to you. When Jesus came to earth, He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will" (Heb. 10:9).

Please know that Jesus wasn't merely submissive to His Father during the days of His incarnation. In eternity past, Jesus submitted Himself to the Father. Consider this. John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." You cannot give what you don't own or have authority over. At one point, Jesus cried out in the synagogue, "I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. I know Him, because I am from him, and He sent Me" (John 7:28-29). This is but one instance of dozens of times in which Jesus said that the Father had sent Him. ^[1]If you send another, it's an indication that you have authority over that person to instruct them on where to go and what to do.

Perhaps you remember when the centurion came to Jesus regarding his sick servant. Jesus was willing to come and see the boy who was lying at home, paralyzed and in great pain. But, the centurion stopped Jesus saying, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it" (Matt. 8:8-9). So, also, as the Father is the one who sent the Son, it was a demonstration of the Father's authority and the Son's submission to Him. The Father had authority over the Son

long before the Son was ever sent to earth.

Not only in the past did Jesus subject Himself to the Father. But, forever, in the future, Jesus will be submitted to the Father. When all things are subjected to Jesus, as the sovereign ruler over the universe, Jesus will subject all things to His Father. Consider 1 Corinthians 15:28, "When all things are subjected to [Jesus], then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all." This pictures that great day when Jesus lays Himself and the universe before the Father, "that God may be all in all."

Why do I mention that? Because submission isn't an evil thing. There are plenty in our society who despise submission. But submission isn't an evil thing, nor is it demeaning. In the proper context, submission is very honoring to God. Even Jesus submits. Within the Trinity, you have authority and you have submission. God, the Father, is the head, of God, the Son. Just as there is authority and submission within the Godhead, so also is there authority and submission within marriage. The Father is the head of the Son. The husband is head of the wife. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, we see these things come together. Paul writes, "I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ." To be a head, means that you are in a position of authority. To have a head means that you are in a position of submission. Fundamentally, when it comes down to it, all who profess the name of Jesus have submitted themselves to Christ. We have bowed our knees to King Jesus and have recognized Him as our sovereign authority.

Submission to others is not wrong in any way, nor is it demeaning. You submitted to the government as you drove to church this morning, stopping at all red lights and staying on your side of the road. We all know what it is to submit to teachers, who give out assignments for us to accomplish. For those of us who work, we need to submit to our bosses at work, otherwise the workplace would be anarchy.

And yet, wives often find submitting to their husbands to be a difficult thing. Why is this? First of all, there is a fear of what will happen if I don't defend myself. I remember hearing a humorous account of how a husband sought to establish his authority right from the start. On their honeymoon, they were horse back riding. At one point the husband's horse stumbled. The groom got very upset and said to the horse, "that's one!" They rode on a bit longer. Soon the horse took him under a low branch that practically knocked him off his back. The man whipped the horse and said between clenched teeth, "Ok that's TWO!" A few minutes later, the horse reared back and the husband slid back in the saddle. And so, the husband leapt from the horse, and screamed, "That's three!" took out a pistol and shot the horse dead on the spot. The wife was horrified and asked her husband, "What did you do that for?" He turned to her and said, "That's one!" Though this is certainly meant to be a humorous, extreme example of a husband's ability to be abusive, wives are often fearful of the potential abuse that might come from submitting to their husbands.

Not only is there a fear of abuse that gives a woman a reason not to submit to her husband, but there is a second reason why wives find submitting to their husbands to be difficult. It has to do with the curse that has come upon women as a result of the fall.

Just think with me a moment about Adam and Eve before they fell into sin. I'm sure that their marriage was bliss. They were both created in the image of God, and thereby were spiritual equals. Both of them were recipients of God's abundant blessing, which He pronounced a blessing upon the both of them. Their union was but one of the things in creation that "was very good." Adam and Eve both were objects of the great kindness of God, giving them all they needed in the garden (Gen. 1:29-30). They both had fellowship with God, who used to walk in their midst (Gen. 3:8-11). They were with each other in great openness and honesty before one another without shame (Gen. 2:25). I'm sure that as they worked together in the garden, they were greatly blessed as they were the perfect compliment for each other.

Though they were equal in the sense that they bore God's image equally, they did have differing roles. As we read the account of creation in the book of Genesis, it's clear that Adam was given authority over his wife. His role was to lead. Her role was to help. Adam was created first (Gen. 2:7), and Eve was created to be his helper (Gen. 2:18). In giving Eve a name, it meant that he had authority over her (Gen. 2:23). After they sinned by eating the fruit of the garden, God called Adam to account for what he did. As you read the rest of the Bible, you find out that Adam had a special role in representing the entire human race, which included his wife (Romans 5:12-21). These things all imply that Adam had authority over Eve, to love her and lead her, even before the fall.

With different roles, it didn't mean that Adam was superior to Eve in any way. Nor did it mean that Eve was inferior to Adam, as one who followed him. They were both made in the image of God. They worked together in harmony. Like athletes on a baseball team, the pitcher throws the ball, and the catcher catches the ball. They have their differing roles, but one is not superior to the other. Both are needed. This was the case with Adam and Eve in the creation.

Then, something dreadful happened. They sinned and incurred the curse of God upon their souls. Listen carefully to the curse that fell upon the woman. The LORD God said to her, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you will bring forth children; Yet, your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). There are two aspects of this curse. The first has to do with the pain in childbirth. We won't go into that right now, as that is not our focus. The second has to do with the relationship between a husband and a wife. The fall has crushed this relationship. The fall has given the women of this world a desire to rule over their husbands, and to lead the home in his place (Gen. 4:7). But, as "weaker vessels," (1 Pet. 3:7), it is often the case that their desires will not be fulfilled, as he is able to dominate them. Instead, their husbands will "rule over" them. Men in the home will be domineering over their wives. That's the curse. The abuses that take place in the home when a man wrongly uses his authority is a result of the curse. This is why women often find submitting to their husbands to be so difficult.

Everything in Colossians 3:18-19 is working toward undoing the curse, by restoring us to our pre-fall days. Why would a woman ever submit to her husband? Only because she submits to her glorious Lord, who had redeemed her from her sins and will bring her into glory. Why would a husband love his wife so sacrificially? Only because he knows the love that Christ has for him! In these ways, the gospel is put on display for all to see.

The wives are called to submit to their husbands, rather than to their sinful desires (that have come as a result of the fall) to rule over their husbands. The husbands, on the other hand, are called to sacrificially love their wives, rather than ruling over them with an iron fist. And so, how is a woman to submit? In verse 18, we read, "As is fitting in the Lord." In other words, "A wife is to submit to her husband as it is

appropriate for her to do as a follower of Jesus Christ.” In Ephesians 5:22-24, we receive a more detailed explanation of what is fitting.

Ephesians 5:22-24

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 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.

It's a high calling. Wives, you are to think about your own submission to the Lord and understand what is involved in that relationship. Then, you are supposed to submit to your husband in the same way, because you are in a similar relationship. Christ is the head of the church, and therefore, you submit to His leadership in all things. Your husband is the head of the wife, and therefore, you ought to submit to His leadership in all things. But, obviously, there is a difference between Jesus and your husband. Do you know what it is? Jesus is sinless and your husband is sinful! Jesus will never ask you to do anything that is morally wrong. His judgment is perfect. All His ways are true. He can be trusted with all things. Your husband, on the other hand, is fallible. His judgment is not perfect. He may lead you along a wrong path.

So, is there ever an instance in which you can refuse to submit to your husband? I can only think of one: If your husband leads you into sin, you are not obligated to follow him along that path. In that instance, the principle is clear, “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). But, in all other instances, you submit to your husband. And when it comes down to it, in how many ways has your husband led you into a path of sin, where you had no choice, but do disobey him? Can you think of an example in which this has taken place in your marriage? I don't know your situation, exactly. But, for the most of you, I would hold that this has been a rare occurrence. Can you, right now, identify in your mind, a time in which your husband has lead you down a sinful path? To be sure, there may be some wives (or former wives) here this morning with unbelieving husbands, who can think of many instances in which this is the case. But, for the most part, our congregation is filled with husbands and wives who have embraced the gospel of Christ and are submitting themselves to the Lord. And I would contend that, for the most part, your husband hasn't led you in sinful ways.

And so, hear the command from the Lord again with fresh ears, “wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” It's my heart's desire that you would do this and know the joy that comes from it. Well, let's turn our attention now to the husbands.

2. Husbands, Love Your Wives (verse 19).

Colossians 3:19 says, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.”

Now it's time for you husbands to pay attention to my message. Paul addresses these words directly to the husbands. In some ways, it would be good if I could simply have you to myself, without your wives. This time, it's not because they are going to beat you over the head with a Colossians 3:19 club. Rather, it's because they see what you are told and when they see that you aren't holding up your end of the bargain, they can begin to hold back on their end of the deal. Because, quite frankly, your task, men, is much more difficult.

You are called to “love your wife.” In other words, you are to die to yourself and give your all to your wife. This includes all of the attitudes of verses 12 and 13. You are called to be compassionate toward your wife. You are to know her strengths and weaknesses. You are to feel her hurts. You are called to be kind toward your wife. You are to do things for her. You are to say nice things to her. You are called to walk in humility before your wife. You aren't supposed to draw attention to yourself. Rather, you are to call all attention to her. You are called to be gentle with your wife. Your wife is delicate, and you need to treat her like a fine piece of China. Your words need to come with sensitivity. You are called to be patient with your wife. You aren't demanding of your way right now. You are sensitive to the pressures of her day that have come upon her. You are called to bear with her. When things are difficult for her, you help her through those difficulties. You don't abandon her, but come along side of her. You are called to forgive her. Keep no record of her sins. But, rather, treat her as the Lord does, with sins forgiven in Christ. This is what it means to love.

We looked at 1 Corinthians 13 a few weeks back. This is how you need to be with your wife.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

As a husband, you are called to all of these things. You are called to “love your wife as yourself” (Matt. 22:39). It's not that you should find any of these things to be a drudgery. Rather, you find your joy in loving her. Your joy is found when she is happy in your love for her. It means sacrificing the fishing trip with the guys to spend time with her. It means sacrificing the football game, to do a project that she would really want done in your home. It means studying her, thinking actively of ways that you can serve her. It means asking her if there is anything that she would like for you to do, as an expression of your willingness to love her and serve her. If she likes for you to tell her that you love her, then tell her often. If she likes you to give her flowers or other gifts, give her flowers or other gifts. If she likes you to do projects around the house, do projects around the house for her. If she likes massages, give her massages. If she likes the symphony, go to the symphony.

Think back to your wedding day. You stood before a pastor and before your family and before your friends. On that day, you promised something like this, “I take you to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part.” Paul is simply calling you men to be faithful to your wedding vows to your wife. It's a high calling. But, be assured that it's a call that can be done, by God's grace.

I love the story of Robertson McQuilkin. He was the president of Colombia Bible College and Seminary. In 1990, he announced his

resignation as president, because of his wife, Muriel, who was suffering from advanced Alzheimer's disease. His care for her was so commendable that the Family Life Today Radio Program gives out an award in McQuilkin's name to a person who best exemplifies his own sacrifice that he made for his wife. These were the words that he chose to use in announcing his resignation:

My dear wife, Muriel, has been in failing mental health for about eight years. So far I have been able to carry both her ever-growing needs and my leadership responsibilities at Columbia Bible College. But recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time she is with me and almost none of the time when I am away from her. It is not just "discontent." She is filled with fear -- even terror -- that she has lost me and always goes in search of me when I leave home. Then she may be full of anger when she cannot get to me. So it is clear to me that she needs me now, full-time. ... The decision was made, in a way, 42 years ago when I promised to care for Muriel "in sickness and in health. ... till death do us part." ... As a man of my word, integrity has something to do with it. But so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years; if I cared for her for the next 40 years I would not be out of debt. Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more; I love Muriel. She is a delight to me -- her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of that wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I do not *have* to care for her, I *get* to! It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person.

[\[2\]](#)

Men, that's what we are called to do for our wives: sacrifice everything to serve them. I commend you to doing this before they get sick. Kent Hughes, the pastor of College Church in Wheaton, and his wife, Barbara, had the opportunity to visit the McQuilkins the month after he gave his resignation announcement. Hughes writes of that occasion, ...

Barbara and I had a brief visit with the McQuilkins and witnessed Dr. McQuilkin's gentle, loving way with his dear wife, who understood little of what was going on. The memory of our visit is one of lingering beauty. ... Such beautiful Christlike love did not just happen! It came from the inner resolve of a young husband who had determined forty-two years before to live under the authority of God's directives regarding how a godly man must love his wife -- as it is spelled out in Ephesians 5. They are directives every Christian man ought to be familiar with, must understand, and, I think, even commit to memory -- as I myself have. They are the foundational discipline of marriage -- the bases for holy matrimonial sweat. [\[3\]](#)

Of course, Hughes is referring to these words, as found in Ephesians 5, ...

Ephesians 5:25-33a

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself.

The model for a man's love for his wife is Christ's love for the church. How deeply did Christ love the church? He died to purchase the church (Acts 20:28). He lives to pray for the church (Heb. 7:25). He is building the church (Mat. 16:18). Someday, He will "present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:27). Jesus Christ loved the church sacrificially.

Men, you too are to love your wives in like manner. You are to die for your wives. Oh, I'm not talking literally. I'm talking that her interests are to be set above your own interests. On our computer at home, my wife has placed a little screensaver which is very good. It says, "Love: Dying to Self." This is what we need to do as husbands. Also, you are to pray for your wives. Pray that their love for God will abound. Pray that they would walk today in purity. You are to build up your wife. Help her grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Speak to her words of encouragement. You are to purify your wife. In all your conversation with her, build purity into her life. Direct her in ways that will lead her to righteousness.

It all comes back to modeling the love of Christ for the church. In 1 John 3:16, we read, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And in our context today of marriage, you might well adapt these words, "We ought to lay down our lives for our wives!"

But, there is another model for a man's love for his wife. It's his own love for himself. The mystery of marriage is this: a man and a woman come together and become one flesh. And thus, her flesh is your flesh. When she hurts, help her. When she is sick, care for her. When her muscles are sore, give her a backrub. When she has a tension headache, massage her neck. When she is cold, go run and get her a blanket. When she is hot, fix her an ice-cold lemonade. When she is tired, urge her to lie down and clean the kitchen for her. When a spill is made, you clean it up. Men, you know how you care for your flesh. Care for her flesh the same way that you care for your own. And I know, men, that you care for your own flesh.

Let's get back to Colossians 3. In verse 19, there is one more phrase the we need to deal with. "Husbands ... do not be embittered against them." These words here are talking about a harshness or bitterness that isn't proper for you to express toward your wife. In fact, that's the way that both the ESV and NIV translates this verse, "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."

I believe that this is getting at the husband who is demanding his own way. This is getting at the husband who pulls out his Colossians 3:18

club, and is willing to wield it to accomplish his own purposes. He may be thinking rightly that he is the authority in the home. He may be thinking rightly that he needs to step in and change some things in the house, rather than sitting back and being passive. And yet, his means are all wrong. And there may be times when your wife nags you about something that you really need to do, but haven't yet done. And she won't let it go. You hear about it again and again and again. At those times, you will certainly be tempted to anger and venting it toward your wife with her words. It's at this point that you must protect your heart, so that you are not embittered against her.

Husbands, there is no room for you to raise your voice, express your anger, degrade your wife, or threaten your wife if she doesn't conform to your wishes. These are all ways of dealing harshly with her. These are all wrong. Love won't do these things. Love won't be embittered against a wife to act. Husbands, Love Your Wives (verse 19).

Let's wrap this up this morning with my last point this morning. I have addressed the wives. I have addressed the husbands. Now, I'd like to speak to both of you, together, with ...

3. Some Final Words.

Husbands, do you ever wish that your wives would be more submissive to you? Wives, do you ever wish that your husbands loved you more? Here is my counsel to you: forget about it! Forget about their role. Focus on your role. Husbands, if you set your heart fully upon loving your wife, it will become obvious to her. She will know. As you demonstrate through the years your great interest in her well-being, she will see this. And, it will become easier and easier for her to submit to you, because she knows that the leadership you are providing for her is being motivated by your desire for her well-being. At the end of the day, her submission to you will come easily to her. Wives, if you set your heart fully upon submitting to your husband, it will become obvious to him. He will see it. And as you demonstrate through the years, your heart to serve him, he will come to love you more. His love for you may well limit his unreasonable demands upon your life. [4]

My ten year old son is taking a class on manners. He told us all at dinner last night of a funny cycle that his teacher told him about. His teacher told of how someone who receives a thank you note is likely to respond with a "thank you for the thank you note" note. The teacher then told of how this can provoke a thank you in return, which can provoke a thank you in return for the thank you to the "thank you for the thank you note." He said that it was quite humorous the way that this can happen. It's the same in marriage with submission and love. Submission and love are things that tend to grow on one another. When husbands love, wives are more likely to submit. When wives submit, husbands are more likely to love. It goes the other way as well. When husbands fail to love, wives will fail to submit. And when wives fail to submit, their husbands are more likely to fail to love.

Don't focus on your spouse. Rather, forget about the role of your spouse and focus on your own role. The only way for your marriage to truly thrive is for both parties to be madly in love with the same person: Jesus Christ.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 5, 2006 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Here are a few that you might be interested in looking up at your leisure: John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23, 24; 5:30, 36, 37, 38; 6:29, 38, 39, 44, 57; 7:16, 18, 28, 29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 12:44, 45, 49. They all communicate how the Father sent the Son.

[2] This quote is found in Kent Hughes' excellent book, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, pp. 33-34.

[3] *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, p. 34.

[4] These things are by no means an absolute. It may be a man loves his wife sacrificially for years, and she still refuses to submit to your leadership. Likewise a woman can submit entirely to her husband for years, while receiving nothing but harshness in return. In this case, it is probably indicative of the hard heart of the husband or the wife, which refuses to submit to the Lord in these regards. But, in general, this mutual response is typical of what takes place in the home.