

GOD'S WORD TO THE HUSBANDS

(Colossians 3:19)

God's Word to the husbands to love their wives is a countercultural, revolutionary and radical message to first century Christians because this divine instruction runs contrary to the domestic ethics and household codes of the Greco-Roman era. In a culture where marriage was undermined and where unfaithfulness and sexual perversion were the norm, God's Word calls believers in Christ to adopt and embrace a new, noble, glorious and Christ-exalting view of marriage. God's high view of marriage has never changed. As 21st century Christians, we need to go back to what God's Word has to say about marriage and family life. God has created and instituted marriage to give Him glory and to put the gospel reality on display in the world. Marriage is divinely designed to portray Christ's life-giving love for the church and the church's loving submission to Christ. As we consider God's Word to the husbands, let's reflect on the positive and prohibitive aspects of this divine instruction.

1. Husbands must _____ their wives.

The primary instruction to the husband who is given the role of headship is direct and clear: love your wife (Col. 3:19). This command essentially addresses the sinful inclination of the man to abuse his authority and lead his wife with a heavy handed dominance (Gen. 3:16). The husband is primarily responsible to initiate, cultivate and maintain love within the marriage. God demands that the husband bear the principal responsibility to establish and sustain a loving atmosphere at home by continuously and committedly loving his wife until his final breath.

Such kind of love is marked by the following characters. First, the husband must love his wife with a steadfast and unconditional love. This love that Paul alludes to is the agape kind of love which is God's unconditional love irrespective of any good merit or any desirable quality of the one loved (Rom. 5:8). This kind of love is never interrupted or diminished by the imperfections, weaknesses, and unworthiness of the beloved. Second, the husband must love his wife with a self-giving and sacrificial love. Our model and pattern is our Lord Jesus Himself who shed His own blood and gave His life for His church (Eph. 5:25). Third, the husband must love his wife with a sanctifying love. Christlike love seeks the highest good of the one loved, namely the sanctification and godliness of the object of that love (Eph. 5:25-27).

2. Husbands must not be _____ with their wives.

The prohibitive aspect of God's instruction commands the husbands not to be harsh or bitter toward their wives (Col. 3:19). Bitterness refers to a hard-hearted attitude or sinful behavior which harbors resentment towards someone who offends or hurts you. Bitterness is associated in the Scriptures with anger and is contrasted with tenderheartedness and forgiveness (Eph. 4:31-32). A husband may become embittered against his wife because of unfulfilled expectations or disillusionment, unsettled offenses and unrestrained sinful lust for other women (Rom. 15:7; Eph. 4:26-27; Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28-29). The biblical way to overcome and prevent bitterness is through the husband's steadfast commitment to devotedly love his wife, graciously forgive her as God in Christ has forgiven him and to constantly thank God for his wife.