

# Unit 3



*How Husbands Fulfill Their Role in Marriage*

## TRUTH

### by memory – Colossians 3:19 (ESV)

*"Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."*

### in Bible –

Last week you learned that God has assigned to husbands the marital role of headship, meaning leadership or authority; and to wives the role of submission, meaning that they are to cooperate with and follow their husband's leadership. These roles are a departure from the sinful pattern of conflict ("*rule*" and "*desire*") recorded in Genesis 3:16. They are, in fact, a return to the harmony inherent in the creation order of leader and helper, which is made possible again in Christians by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The wife's role of submission does not imply that she is less valuable than her husband since she voluntarily submits to him as one equal to another, just as Christ submitted to the Father. And just as Christ was exalted for His submission, so husbands are to give their wives greater honor. Husbands and wives who embrace their roles whole-heartedly function like a team where the husband is a player/coach. When the team can't agree or compromise on a matter, the husband decides whose opinion becomes the decision. He always takes the blame if the decision turns out poorly, and gives his wife credit when her judgment turns out well.

This week you'll take a closer look at a husband's primary responsibility concerning his wife – love. Love is the key measure of a husband's headship.

How is your personal worship habit developing? If you find that you are struggling with this vital spiritual discipline, ask your Journey Group leader to coach you again on using the **PRAISE** model for personal worship. Review the material from Gospel Living unit 2, or download the Personal Worship Journal, and make a real effort to try **PRAISE** this week.

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**Matthew 20:20-28** – Jesus used the occasion of an attempted power grab by James and John (who were motivated by their mother) to teach the principle of servant-leadership.

How does Jesus describe a wrong use of authority?

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How does Jesus' teaching in this passage apply to a husband's role in marriage?

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**Ephesians 5:25-33** – Once again you will take a look at Ephesians 5, this time focusing on the way husbands are commanded to love their wives.

In this passage Paul gives Christian husbands two examples of how they should love their wives. The first is the example of Christ's love for His Church; the second is a man's love for his own body. Carefully examine this passage and describe the examples of love that Paul sets before husbands.

Christ's love for His Church

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A man's love for his own body

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How could these examples be applied to the reality of a husband loving his wife for a lifetime? Give a few guiding principles or examples.

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Is Paul being too idealistic? How could a husband possibly love his wife this way for a lifetime?

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**1 Peter 3:7** – This verse records Peter’s instruction on how husbands should treat their wives.

Try to expand on Peter’s thoughts here. How should husbands treat their wives?

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## to summarize -

Last week you learned that a husband's God-given role in marriage is headship, and that this role is best understood as leadership and authority. You should also recall that the Apostles Paul and Peter couch their teaching on marital roles in the context of spiritual living. So, husbands and wives have a spiritual responsibility to bear their role well. This week you will examine what it means for a husband to bear his role of headship well.

To answer this, let's turn first to Jesus' teaching on the right use of authority in Matthew 20:20-28. In this passage, the mother of James and John brought her boys to ask a favor of Jesus: They wanted to sit at his left and right hands in His kingdom. Basically, they were asking for the places of highest honor and authority, believing they were worthy of that position (v 22). When the rest of the disciples caught wind of this, they were naturally angry. Imagine how you would feel if you were one of those ten, knowing that James and John had been secretly maneuvering to gain authority over you. This could have created a divide among the disciples, but Jesus used the occasion to teach His disciples how authority should be wielded among His followers. First, he singled out the bad example of the Gentiles, meaning the Romans who ruled over the Jews at this time, "*You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.*" (v 25). The verb translated "*lord it over*" in this verse literally means *to subject by force*. The Romans exercised dominion and authority by creating fear of their power by force of arms. Jesus said this is not how authority should be used among his followers. He used Himself as an example of how Christians should wield authority, "*...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...*" (v 28). In other words, the person holding authority must exercise that authority as a servant-leader who inspires those who follow, not by using force or fear.

Let's apply this principle to a husband's headship in marriage: He must exercise his authority with a servant's attitude toward his wife and by leading her in such a way that inspires her trust. He must never attempt to force her submission by making her afraid of emotional or physical consequences. He should not be defensive about his position or aggressive in exerting control. He should lead with love, following the example of Christ's loving leadership of His church. Paul describes Christ's love for the church this way: "*...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her...so that he might present the church to himself in splendor...*" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Using Christ's example, Paul is teaching husbands that love for one's wife is essentially an act of self-sacrifice motivated by a desire to sanctify her. It is a commitment to her based on the will of God which, though it is not based on emotion, is often supported by emotion. It is primarily oriented around her spiritual benefit, nourishing and edifying her. And, just as a man gains personal benefit from caring for his own body, so also husbands usually gain an indirect benefit by devotedly caring for

their wives (5:28-29). But regardless of personal benefit, *Christ-like love for one's wife is the essence of a man's husbandly duty: It is how he fulfills his role as head in marriage.* The right and spiritual exercise of his authority in marriage is a life of servant-leadership demonstrated by Christ-like love in action.

Men, do you believe this? Do you embrace it? Think of your wife (or future wife) and the quality of your love for her. Are you committed to loving your wife as Christ loves His Church, setting aside your own needs in devotion to her spiritual benefit? Will you lead with love in such a compelling way that it inspires her trust and submission?

If so, how will you put love into action? This all sounds very theoretical so far, doesn't it? For a start, Peter gave you a practical hint when he advised husbands to *"...live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel..."* (1 Peter 3:7). Peter's point about living in an understanding way (literally, *"according to knowledge"* in the original language) is that husbands must be sensitive to the unique nature and needs of one's wife. Husbands can so easily treat their wives with a contemptuous disregard for her needs. Such disdain belittles her and chills her trust in you; but sensitivity of words and actions honors her as the unique treasure that she is, warming her companionship and devotion to your loving leadership. Living with her in an understanding way means that a man should never speak to or treat his wife as he would another man. It also means that he will gladly provide the tangible reminders of esteem and devotion that she occasionally needs – the note, the flowers, the date, and the earnest reminders that "You're on my mind. I'm yours alone. I'll never leave you."

But what if you no longer feel love for your wife? The first answer to that question is, "Are you *willing* to love your wife?" Jesus commanded that we love even our enemies. How is this possible? Remember, love is primarily a choice, a commitment based on the will of God that is put into action. So it is possible to choose to love one's wife, even though the *feelings* of love are absent. This is an example of unconditional love. No matter what has happened between you that may have cooled your attraction to her, no matter how undeserving she may be of your love, you can still choose to love her. Often, and thankfully, feelings of love return, and marriages can be rebuilt from ashes when two spouses are committed to loving one another. But, what motivates your willingness to love your wife? – Your love for God. What empowers your love? – The grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Wives, what if you no longer feel loved by your husband? What if he doesn't live with you in an understanding way? – If his words or actions have broken down your sense of trust so that you no longer feel emotionally safe being open with him? The briefest of answers are first, to keep yourself safe. God never intended you to be exposed to abuse. And secondly, if abuse is not in the picture, don't respond by resisting his leadership in your home. Consider this, just as Christ calls a husband to

love a difficult wife unconditionally, so He calls a wife to submit to a difficult husband unconditionally. Why would you do this? – For the love of God. How could you do this? – By the power of the indwelling Spirit.

Husbands and wives, offering unconditional love or submission may sound counter-intuitive, but conditional love never created submission in one's wife, nor has conditional submission ever created love in one's husband. All this creates is a performance trap with your spouse that sends the relationship spiraling down the drain. Also, how could you believe that God would give you a conditional exemption from obedience to His Word? His Word to you concerning your role in marriage stands firm. But, so does His power to obey. He has given you His Spirit. He has freed you from sin by Christ's work on the cross, so that by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you, you can have power to obey even when it doesn't seem likely to "pay off" in your marriage.

*"Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."*(Colossians 3:19). No exceptions, men. You are the servant-leader who sets the tone in your marriage. Inspire her trust by honoring her. Win her submission with Christ-like love. Treat her with such understanding that proves you value her unique nature just as she is.

Next week you'll conclude this section of *The Journey* by looking at how wives fulfill their role in marriage.

**online –**

Remember to visit [www.perimeter.org/discipleshipcurriculum](http://www.perimeter.org/discipleshipcurriculum) for this week's downloadable audio, video, or print resources.

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## EQUIPPING

All: What do you think of the concept of love as a choice/commitment in action, as opposed to an emotion? If married, how would you describe the love that led to your wedding day? Was it a commitment supported by an emotion, or bare emotional attraction?

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Husbands and wives: How has the truth shone a light on your marriage this week? Do you have any fears about the current state of your relationship with your spouse?

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Husbands and wives: How has the truth shone a light on your own heart this week? Are there any relational patterns of behavior you need to repent of?

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Husbands: Rate your approach to exercising authority in your marriage on a scale of 1 ("lording it over") to 10 (Christ-like servant-leadership). Describe how the truth this week will impact your approach from this point on.

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## MISSION – STORY TELLING

*"And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'"* (Mark 1:17, ESV)

Continue working on your 60-second Testimony and prepare to share it from memory with your Journey Group. Also, continue praying for those on your prayer list, and specifically pray earnestly that God would give you an opportunity to share your testimony with them.

The second mission assignment is for those who are married or are in a relationship that could potentially lead to marriage. Your mission is to have a spiritual conversation with your "other half". This may not seem like much of an assignment to those who are already comfortable praying, reading the Bible and discussing spiritual matters with their partner. But to others this could be as daunting as anything you've ever done. Your apprehension is the very reason this assignment is so important. You need to begin developing the spiritual basis in your relationship and that begins with being at ease discussing spiritual topics with your partner. Your first attempt at raising the subject needn't be a long complicated affair. If you need an idea for a simple conversation starter, try one of these:

- Mention something you are learning in *The Journey*.
- Ask what s/he thought about a recent sermon.
- Share a significant experience in your own spiritual journey.
- Ask about his/her own spiritual journey.
- Ask a question about a Bible verse you recently read, but didn't understand.

Write about your experience here and be ready to share your experience with your Journey Group.

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