The Only Way to Love
Colossians 3:18-19
March 8, 2026

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Colossians 3:18-19 (ESV)

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

MAIN THEME

Paul teaches that Christian marriage is transformed by the gospel. Because believers belong to Christ, their homes must reflect his character.

Husbands are commanded to love — not dominate, intimidate, or grow cold. The warning against harshness addresses the heart. Bitterness often begins quietly through distance, irritation, or emotional withdrawal. Christlike leadership protects against that drift by cultivating tenderness and humility.

Wives are called to submit in a way that reflects trust in the Lord. Biblical submission is voluntary and rooted in confidence that God's design is good. It does not permit sin, abuse, or moral compromise. It is strength expressed through faith.

Both commands flow from the same source: a transformed identity in Christ. Before these instructions were given, Paul reminded believers that they had put off the old self and put on the new. Marriage becomes a visible expression of that transformation.

Ultimately, Paul is not presenting two competing roles but one unified picture — a marriage that mirrors Christ and the Church. Authority expressed through service. Strength expressed through trust. Love proven through sacrifice.

DISCUSSION & APPLICATION

1. Servant-Love Flows from Identity

Colossians 3:10–14; John 13:1–5

• Why doesn't servant-love come naturally?
• How does remembering your identity in Christ reshape the way you love at home?
• What does Jesus washing the disciples' feet teach about authority and humility?
• Where is Christ calling you to "take up the towel" this week?

2. Leadership Without Harshness

Colossians 3:19; Ephesians 5:25

• What does harshness or bitterness look like in subtle forms?
• How can irritation slowly harden into distance?
• Why does Paul address the husband's heart, not just his behavior?
• What practical steps cultivate gentleness and sacrificial leadership?

3. Submission as Trust in the Lord

Colossians 3:18; Ephesians 5:22–24

• What does it mean that submission is "fitting in the Lord"?
• Why is submission not the same as inferiority?
• How does trusting God strengthen a wife's support of her husband?
• What are the biblical boundaries that protect against misuse of this passage?

4. A Christ-Centered Home

Colossians 3:17; Joshua 24:15

• What are visible signs that Christ is central in a home?
• How do repentance and forgiveness protect unity?
• What practical habits (prayer, Scripture, worship) shape the climate of a marriage?
• What would change if both husband and wife asked daily, "Does this reflect Jesus?"

PRAY

Dear Lord, thank you for rescuing us with servant-love. Forgive us for the ways pride, harshness, or fear have shaped our relationships. Teach husbands to lead with gentleness and sacrifice. Teach wives to trust you and support with strength and grace. Make our homes reflections of Christ and his Church. May our love look like Jesus — humble, faithful, and joyful. Amen.

DIG DEEPER

For further study this week:

• John 13:1–17 — Jesus models servant leadership
• Ephesians 5:22–33 — Marriage reflecting Christ and the Church
• 1 Peter 3:1–7 — Honoring one another in marriage
• Philippians 2:3–8 — The humility of Christ
• 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 — The character of biblical love

NEXT WEEK'S BIG IDEA

Christ must be honored in every relationship.
Colossians 3:20–21