

Lesson 12 – Colossians 3:18-19

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Review/Introduction

The apostle Paul has detailed the person and work of Christ and the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ for salvation and sanctification. For the believer, union with Christ is the doctrinal prerequisite to walking with Christ. Chapters three and four address how the believer is to walk in light of Christ's supremacy and sufficiency. Here is where Paul exhorts the Colossians (and us) to strive in the power of the Spirit to walk in our position; to live out in practice what we already are in Christ.

Living a consistently God glorifying life is only possible through Spirit-filling. The Christian life is not lived in one's own strength. It is a life lived filled with the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through you. As the believer repents of all known sin (Eph 4:30), bows before God in complete submission (1 Thess 5:19), and is immersed in the word (Col 3:16), they will be filled with the Spirit and will therefore exhibit the fruits of the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit (letting the words of Christ to richly dwell within you) produces observable, tangible supernatural words, worship, reactions, and fulfilling relational roles one's life.

Today we begin to look at those relational roles starting with marriage.

Life in the all-sufficient Christ – Marriage Relationships (3:18-19)

1. Wife (3:18)

¹⁸Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁸Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (ESV)

The word "submission" when used in the marriage context is an off-limits topic in some circles. Even among Bible believing Christians, it can seem like an antiquated concept. However, Paul through the Spirit makes it clear that submission in relationships is a key characteristic of Spirit-filled believers.

❖ **How is your attitude towards submission?**

"Be subject" was originally a military term meaning "to arrange or rank under" or "place under in an orderly fashion". The main idea is that of relinquishing one's rights to another person. It is a humble attitude of compliance and deference. It is in the present tense and middle voice which calls for a continual subjection that is voluntary or willing.

Submission is not a new concept for believers. Spirit-filled believers willingly come under those who God has placed over them. Believers are to submit to governing authorities (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:13-17), children to parents (Eph 6:1; Col 3:20), the church to its elders (1 Peter 5:1-5; Heb 13:17), employees to employers (Eph 6:5-8; Col 3:22-25), etc.

❖ **Do you consider how God would have you to submit in various areas of life?**

Ephesians 5:21 says that a result of Spirit-filling is mutual submission in relationships. Mutual submission is a characteristic of God-honoring relationships and is typified by regarding others as more important than oneself. We lay aside our rights and humbly serve one another in love.

²¹and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Eph 5:21)

³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but **with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves**; ⁴do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Phil 2:3-4)

Yet, this mutual submission between believers does not preclude a hierarchal submission within specific relationships which are dictated by God-designed roles, for example wives to husbands, children to parents, or slaves to masters.

The Scriptures are clear that within the church and the home, men and women are to function in specifically designed roles. Jesus (Matt 19:3-8) and Paul (1 Tim 2:11-15) both reference the creation account as the foundation for their teaching on gender distinctives. See the appendix in this study for details on the theological foundation for gender distinctives. The teaching on female submission applied to the church and home has a theological foundation, not cultural.

The wife's role is to be subject to her husband as to Christ.

¹⁸**Wives, be subject to your husbands**, as is fitting in the Lord. (Col 3:18)

²²**Wives, be subject to your own husbands**, as to the Lord. ²³For 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. ²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything. (Eph 5:21-24)

❖ **What first comes to mind when you read these verses?**

“Subject” does not mean “obedient”. It means to “place under in an orderly fashion”; to set something in place under something else. It refers to two who are equal before God, but one places themselves in subjection to the other. The wife is to subject herself continually (present tense) to her own husband. She makes a choice to place herself as an equal underneath another equal, her husband, in order that there can be order in the family. The purpose is to obey God and function in the design that He has ordered. The wife's submission to the husband is not based on the husband's worthiness, intelligence, giftedness, or capability but on God's design (1 Pet 3:1-7; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19).

“Is fitting” means something is right to do, what is proper or what is one's duty. It has the meaning of moral obligation. “Fitting in the Lord” defines the motive of the wife's submission. A wife submits to her husband as an expression of her submission to the Lord. It honors God's Word and glorifies Him.

⁴so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵*to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, **being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.** (Titus 2:4-5)

❖ **Are you committed to be a doer of God's word?**

Let's look at some aspects of submission.

1. Submission is about submitting to Christ, maintaining Him as first not the husband.
 - ²²Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, **as to the Lord**. (Eph 5:22)
 - ¹⁸Wives, be subject to your husbands, **as is fitting in the Lord**. (Col 3:18)
 - ❖ **What do you place above the Lord, above submitting to your husband?**
2. Submission is based on Christ's command not on the husband's worthiness.
 - ²⁴But as the church is **subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands** in everything. (Eph 5:24)
 - ❖ **Will you obey God even if you don't feel like it?**
3. Submission honors and glorifies God.
 - ³Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵*to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, **being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored**. (Titus 2:3-5)
 - ❖ **Is the most important thing in your life God's glory?**
4. Submission is to be continual and voluntary or willing (from the Greek) – it is a choice.
 - ²²Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (Eph 5:22)
 - ¹⁸Wives, **be subject** to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (Col 3:18)
 - ❖ **What do you hope to accomplish when you choose to not submit?**
5. Submission is to the wife's own husband, not to other men.
 - ²²Wives, *be subject to your own husbands*, as to the Lord. (Eph 5:22)
 - ❖ **Do you choose other people's advice over your husband's wishes?**
6. Submission trusts God.
 - ⁵For in this way in former times the holy women also, **who hoped in God**, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; ⁶just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you **do what is right without being frightened by any fear**. (1 Pet 3:5-6)
 - ❖ **Will you trust God enough to submit?**
7. Submission manifests itself in continual respect, treating with esteem.
 - ³³Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the **wife must see to it that she respects her husband**. (Eph 5:33)
 - ❖ **What is your respect for your husband based on?**
8. Submission is all encompassing (with the next exception).
 - ²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands **in everything**. (Eph 5:24)
 - ❖ **Are there limitations on your submission?**

9. Submission obeys God before the husband.

²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)

Examples of things where the wife would not submit to her husband because it would be disobeying the Lord are participating in evil (Eph 5:11-12), not gathering with other believers [but be careful] (Heb 10:25), not teaching children about God (Eph 6:1-4) committing immorality (1 Cor 6:20), lying or cheating (Eph 4:25), etc. In some cases, it will be necessary to simply say “no” (Dan 3); in other cases, the example of Daniel’ creative obedience (Dan 1) can be applied.

10. Submission is still having something important to say.

¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Col 3:16)

²⁶She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. (Prov 31:26)

❖ **Do you strive to use wisdom in your speech?**

11. Submission is influencing her husband in a Biblical/godly way.

- Filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18-19; Col 3:16)

❖ **Are you walking in the Spirit?**

- With behavior that speaks louder than words

¹In the same way, you wives, **be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of *them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.** ³Your adornment must not be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; ⁴but *let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.* (1 Peter 3:1-4)

❖ **Does your behavior lead your words or the other way around?**

- With peace and goodness

¹⁷**Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.** Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸**If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**

¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰“But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.** (Rom 12:17-21)

❖ **Is your heart vengeful?**

- With God honoring speech

¹⁹It is better to live in a desert land Than with a contentious and vexing woman. (Prov 21:19; see also Prov 21:9; 25:24; 27:15-16)

¹A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. (Prov 15:1)

²¹The wise in heart will be called understanding, And sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness. (Prov 16:21)

¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, ... (Eph 4:15)

❖ Do you keep your tongue under control?

Only as a wife bows before the Lord, being Spirit-filled can she honor Him in submission to her husband. She submits to her Lord first, then to her husband because God designed the family to function in this way. She submits and leaves the results to God. Ultimately, submitting to her husband requires trust in God.

2. Husband (3:19)

¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

¹⁹Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. (ESV)

A husband seeking to glorify God must love his wife as Christ loves the church.

²⁵Husbands, **love your wives**, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ... ³³Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband. (Eph 5:25, 33)

Love is the sacrificial commitment of your will to your wife's needs and best interests regardless of the cost to yourself. Love is a choice. Love drove God to give (John 3:16) His son for you. God demonstrates His own love toward you, in that while you were yet a sinner, Christ died for you (Rom 5:8). Love seeks your wife's highest good, even if it costs a great deal; even if there is no response of love or gratitude.

“Embittered” is literally to make bitter (like a bitter taste in one's stomach). Figuratively, it means to have "bitter" resentment or hatred toward someone; to exasperate or to become angry. Harsh and resentful are good descriptions also. This is the negative command. The positive command is in 1 Peter 3:7.

⁷You husbands in the same way, **live with your wives in an understanding way**, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and **show her honor** as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. (1 Pet 3:7)

Husbands are to live with their wives in an understanding way and not deal harshly with them. Husbands, you are commanded to live with your wife in an understanding way which means with knowledge. You are to be a student of your wife. You are to treat her gently, as something precious and valuable. You are to show her honor which means esteem or respect since she is an equal with you before Christ in salvation.

As you walk in the Spirit, you will love like Christ and therefore not treat your wife harshly. Let's look at Christ's love. Christ's love is...

1. *Initiatory* – A husband ought to love his wife without waiting for a reason to love her. He must not wait until he deems her “lovable.” He must choose to initiate love just as Christ loved us when we did not deserve to be loved.

¹⁹We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

❖ **Do you initiate love, even to those who seem unlovely?**

2. *Sacrificial* – Christ’s ultimate act of love was when He went to the cross and paid the sacrifice for your sins. A husband seeking to glorify God in his marriage must sacrifice moment-by-moment for his wife in the big and small things of life.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and **gave himself up for her**... (Eph 5:25)

❖ **Do you sacrificially love your wife?**

3. *Humble* – As Christ’s disciples we are to follow His perfect example of humble love as explained in Philippians 2. The Christ-like husband constantly bears in mind that he is God’s slave and loves with humility.

³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ... **He humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:3-8)

❖ **Do you consider your wife as more important than yourself?**

4. *Volitional* – Christ made the conscious decision to choose to love His disciples. His love for them was a willful love not based on their ability to love Him or to do what He commanded them. He chose to love and lead them during His earthly ministry even though He knew they were broken, unreliable, weak sinners.

¹⁶**You did not choose Me but I chose you**, and appointed you ... (John 15:16)

❖ **Do you make a conscious choice to love your wife?**

5. *Unconditional* – Christ’s ultimate act of love at the cross was done for sinners. The Christ-like husband cannot wait until his wife is “godly enough” to love. If he did this, hypothetically speaking, he would never love his wife. Even when a wife is sinning against her husband in the worst way, he needs to choose to love her since Christ loved His bride, the church, unconditionally.

⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ...

⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:6-8)

❖ **Do you put conditions on how and when you extend love to your wife?**

6. *Committed* – Nothing will separate Christ’s love from His bride. The Christ-like husband has this mentality of a life-long commitment to love his bride. Nothing can separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:37-39). You should have that same mindset towards your wife.

❖ **Are you committed to your wife no matter what?**

7. *Forgiving* – Being quick to forgive and thorough in that forgiveness is a key for the Christ-like husband. Love drives the believing husband to forgive.

¹³...bearing with one another, and **forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.** (Col 3:13)

⁸Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because **love covers a multitude of sins.** (1 Peter 4:8)

❖ **Do you extend unconditional forgiveness to your wife?**

8. *Nourishing and Cherishing* – The believing husband is to nourish and cherish his wife. Nourish means to nurture, providing for physically and emotionally. This would also include providing for her physical life needs. Cherish means to tenderly care for.

²⁹for no one ever hated his own flesh, but **nourishes and cherishes** it, just as Christ also *does* the church, (Eph 5:29)

⁷But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother tenderly cares* for her own children. (1 Thess 2:7)

It should be noted that VBC does not believe that the husband is responsible for his wife's sanctification. This teaching comes from Ephesians 5:21-33 and extrapolations from other passages. It is notably that in Ephesians 5:21-33, the only direct imperatives aimed at the husband all have to do with loving his wife. In several movements (the Biblical Counseling movement, the Christian homeschooling movement, the Family Integrated Church Movement, etc.), there tends to be an undue amount of responsibility placed on husbands to "sanctify" their wives. However, when examined closely there is no command for the husband to sanctify his wife. Paul simply expounds on why Christ gave Himself up for the church in verses 26-27 and 33. A woman's sanctification in a marriage is not completely on the husband. Each person's sanctification regardless of their age or marital status is purely the work of the Holy Spirit as the believer cooperates with Him through interaction with the Word and submission to it. There is no extra, spiritual ability for a husband to bring about sanctification in his wife.

Nevertheless, due to the closeness and intimacy of the marriage relationship, the husband has the greatest opportunity to use the marriage relationship to glorify God by exemplifying, encouraging, and inspiring spiritual growth in his wife.

❖ **Do you nurture and cherish your wife?**

9. *Practical* – Christ not only showed his love in his sacrifice at the cross, He also loved in practical ways, beyond just words. Consider the feeding of the 5,000 and the many physical healings of Jesus. Wives have real, practical needs, and the Christ-like husband is aware of them and meets them when he can (cf. Eph. 5:29).

¹⁶We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

¹⁸**Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.** (1 John 3:16-18)

How might it look for a believing husband to love his wife? These are only examples and will be different for each husband as he seeks to apply the Scriptures in his marriage.

- Telling her (verbally and non-verbally)
- Appreciating her (praising qualities and what you receive from her)
- Making time for her
- Communicating (and really listening)
- Sharing (of your life)
- Promoting her growth and development
- Treating her as priority (after God)
- Working with her. If she is working, then so should you.
- Serve her quickly. If she asks you to do something you can do, do it right away.

❖ **Do you seek practical ways to love your wife?**

Conclusion

Walking in the Spirit or being filled with the Spirit results in manifold blessings – observable, tangible supernatural words, worship, reactions, and relationships in one’s life. In the marriage relationship, Spirit-filling will be manifested in the wife submitting to her husband and the husband loving his wife as Christ loves the church. I pray that is true with us.

Additional Study

For the Wife

Read Ephesians 5:18-33 and Colossians 3:16-18 asking God to show you ways in which you are not submitting to your husband. Note them here:

What would be a way to honor God in each of those situations?

Read the entire book of Titus then read again Titus 2:3-5, in what ways do you show your husband fondness? Brainstorm, asking God to show you, other ways you could demonstrate fondness.

Read Proverbs 31:10-31. Underline all the ways in which the excellent wife serves her family. How could you be more like this excellent wife?

¹⁰An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. ¹¹The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. ¹²She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. ¹³She looks for wool and flax And works with her hands in delight. ¹⁴She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. ¹⁵She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens. ¹⁶She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard. ¹⁷She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong. ¹⁸She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go out at night. ¹⁹She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle. ²⁰She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy. ²¹She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet. ²²She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple. ²³Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. ²⁴She makes linen garments and sells *them*, And supplies belts to the tradesmen. ²⁵Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future. ²⁶She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. ²⁷She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. ²⁸Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband *also*, and he praises her, *saying*: ²⁹“Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all.” ³⁰Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *But* a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. ³¹Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.

Additional Information on Gender Distinctives

The role of women in the church and home can be one of the most emotionally charged issues in the church. This information provides the biblical basis for gender equality and distinctives.

Among evangelicals there are two main positions concerning gender and roles in the church:

- 1) The complementarian view (called the traditional view or hierarchical view by opponents) teaches that God created men and women as equals with distinctive gender-defined roles.
- 2) The egalitarian view (also called evangelical feminism, biblical feminism, or biblical equality) teaches that God created man and woman fully equal and that true equality demands equal ministry opportunities in the church and equal marital roles in the home.

However, we are not concerned with “positions”; we are concerned with what the Bible teaches.

The Scriptures declare that men and women are equal in nature, personhood, dignity, and worth.

²⁷God created man in His own image, **in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.** (Gen 1:27)

In addition, the Scriptures are clear that men and women have equal access to salvation and in terms of their position in Christ as recipients of the gift of saving faith are equal.

²⁶For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, **there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** (Gal 3:26-28)

Throughout the Bible women are equal in the *nature* of their ministry. Women played a prominent role in the ministry of Jesus and ministry to Jesus (Matt 28:1-10; Luke 8:3; 23:49; John 11:1-46; 12:1-8).

No spiritual gift in the lists in the New Testament is limited to men (1 Cor 12:27-31; Rom 12:3-8; 1 Pet 4:8-11). Spirit-filled women allow the words of Christ to richly dwell within them and are empowered with all wisdom to teach and admonish (Col 3:16). Additionally, women are commanded to edify the body of Christ, which included teaching (Titus 2:4) and prophecy (Acts 2:17-18; 21:9; 1 Cor 11:5).

Yet, the Scriptures are clear that within the church and the home, men and women are to function in specifically designed roles. Jesus (Matt 19:3-8) and Paul (1 Tim 2:11-15) both reference the creation account as the foundation for their teaching on gender distinctives. In order to understand the New Testament teaching of gender roles we must first visit the creation account since gender roles are a part of God’s original design.

1. Adam was created first then Eve.

¹²But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. ¹³For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. ¹⁴And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. (1 Tim 2:12-14 cf Gen 2:7)

2. God created Adam directly from the dust, He formed the woman out of the man.

³But 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. ... ⁷For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; (1 Cor 11:3; 7-8 cf Gen 2:21-23)

3. God created the woman for the man.

⁹for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. (1 Cor 11:9 cf Gen 2:18)

4. God gave commands to Adam not Eve.

¹⁶The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." (Gen 2:16-17)

5. God named Adam and Adam exercised his God-given leadership in naming Eve.

²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." ... ²⁰Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. (Gen 2:23; 3:20)

6. The gender roles were reversed when Adam followed Eve into sin.

⁶When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, **she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.** (Gen 3:6)

7. After the fall God called out to Adam as responsible, not Eve (even though Eve ate first).

¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned— (Rom 5:12 cf Gen 3:8-9)

8. The curse highlighted the new struggle with the original order that men and women would have – male oppression and female rebellion (Gen 3:16; 4:7).

¹⁶To the woman He said, "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)

⁷If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its **desire** is for you, but you must **master** it." (Gen 4:7)

It is clear that the teaching on female submission applied to the church and home has a theological foundation, not cultural.

Additional Information for Husbands or Wives with an Unbelieving Spouse

There are several ways a Christian may find himself/herself married to an unbeliever: they come to Christ after marriage, they marry a professing believer who later denies Christ, or they were immature or rebellious when they married an unbeliever. Regardless, the Scriptures speak to this. First, the Christian spouse of unbeliever should strive to obey their biblical marriage roles.

The Christ-Like Wife of a Non-Believing Husband

1. If the unbelieving husband consents to remain in the marriage, then the believing wife should remain married (1 Cor 7:12-14). She must not “endure” the marriage but strive on her part to glorify God in the marriage. Her husband and children are in a special place to not only hear the gospel, but to see it in action.
2. Live the gospel (1 Pet 3:1-2). The most intimate of human relationship is a place which allows the gospel to shine in the most magnificent ways. The most effective ministry to a husband who is “disobedient to the word” (could mean believers or unbelievers) is his wife’s behavior. Therefore, the wife should strive to grow in her relationship with Christ.
3. Pray for your husband’s salvation and have others pray for you (but be careful) (Rom 10:1; Col 4:2-4).

The Christ-Like Husband of a Non-Believing Wife

1. Remain married and therefore committed to the marriage (1 Cor 7:12-16, 20, 24). Paul addressed this concept of spiritually-mixed marriages in 1 Corinthians. His main motivation for urging believers to remain married to non-believers is to bring a sanctifying influence to the home. In short, he views the situation as an opportunity for the furtherance of the gospel.
2. Radiate the gospel and Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). The believing husband must live the gospel. The most intimate of human relationship is a place which allows the gospel to shine in the most magnificent ways. In the spiritually mixed marriage, there is tremendous opportunity for the gospel to be spread in the clearest and most intimate manner. Believers are to make disciples “as they go” in their life, and a marriage is an excellent setting for disciple-making even though it has its unique challenges.
3. Respect God’s work in their life and be patient (1 Corinthians 3:6-9). As the gospel is ministered to the unbelieving wife, the believing husband must remember that it is God who causes the growth in people’s lives, and he must therefore exercise patience.
4. Remain in fellowship with other believers (Hebrews 10:24-25). Though the unbelieving wife may not want the believing husband to be involved in fellowship at a local church body, this is a clear command for believers to obey. This is how the parts of the body of Christ are designed to work together. A word of caution ought to be issued on this topic though because some Christian husbands may take this too far and spend every waking hour “serving the Lord.” He must not neglect his responsibility to display Christ to his unbelieving wife.