

Colossians 3:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Analysis

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Paul balances wives' submission with husbands' responsibility. "Love your wives" (hoi andres, agapate tas gynaikas, oi ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας) commands ongoing agapē love—self-giving commitment, not merely emotional affection. Present imperative indicates continuous action: keep loving. Ephesians 5:25 intensifies: "as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it"—sacrificial love unto death.

"Be not bitter against them" (mē pikrainesthe pros autas, μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτάς) prohibits harshness, resentment, or sharp treatment. Present imperative with negative: stop being harsh. Ancient patriarchy often featured domineering cruelty; Paul counters with tender sacrificial love. Husbands bear greater responsibility—wives submit voluntarily, husbands must love sacrificially, creating mutual service relationship, not master-slave hierarchy.

Historical Context

Greco-Roman husbands had nearly absolute authority, including life-and-death power over wives and children. Domestic violence was common; wives were often viewed as property for producing heirs and managing household. Paul's command to love sacrificially and avoid bitterness was countercultural, elevating wives to partners deserving tender respect. Early Christianity's treatment of women attracted many female converts and sometimes male opposition threatened by loss of traditional dominance.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 – Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 – Judging others

Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How specifically do you love your wife (or future wife) sacrificially, prioritizing her good over your comfort?
2. What produces bitterness in marriage, and how do you combat it with intentional love and grace?
3. How does Christ's love for the church model and motivate your love for your spouse?

Interlinear Text

Oι ἄνδρες ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναικας καὶ μὴ πικραίνεσθε
G3588 **Husbands** love G3588 your wives and not be
G435 G25 G1135 G2532 G3361 G4087

πρὸς αὐτάς

against them

G4314

G846

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 3:7 (Parallel theme): Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Colossians 3:21 (Parallel theme): Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

Ephesians 5:25 (Love): Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Ephesians 4:31 (Parallel theme): Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

Ephesians 5:33 (Love): Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 (Love): Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

Genesis 24:67 (Love): And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org