

COLOSSIANS



THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS

If Ephesians can be labeled the letter portraying the “church of Christ,” then Colossians must surely be the “Christ of the church.” Ephesians focuses on the body; Colossians focuses on the head. Like Ephesians, the little book of Colossians divides neatly in half with the first portion doctrinal (1–2) and the second practical (3–4). Paul’s purpose is to show that Christ is preeminent—first and foremost in everything—and the Christian’s life should reflect that priority. Because believers are rooted in him, alive in him, hidden in him, and complete in him, it is utterly inconsistent for them to live life without him. Clothed in his love, with his peace ruling in their hearts, they are equipped to make Christ first in every area of life.

This letter became known as *Pros Kolossaeis*, “To the Colossians,” because of 1:2. Paul also wanted it to be read in the neighboring church at Laodicea (see 4:16).



THE AUTHOR OF COLOSSIANS

The external testimony to the Pauline authorship of Colossians is ancient and consistent, and the internal evidence also is very good. It not only claims to be written by Paul (see 1:1,23; 4:18), but the personal details and close parallels with Ephesians and Philemon make the case even stronger. Nevertheless, the authenticity of this letter has been challenged on the internal grounds of vocabulary and thought. In its four chapters, Colossians uses 55 Greek words that do not appear in Paul’s other letters. However, Paul commanded a wide vocabulary, and the circumstances and subject of this letter, especially the references to the Colossian heresy, account for these additional words. The high Christology of Colossians has been compared to John’s later concept that Christ is the Logos (cf. 1:15–23 and Jn 1:1–18), with the conclusion that these concepts were too late for Paul’s time. However, there is no reason to assume that Paul was unaware of Christ’s work as Creator, especially in view of Philippians 2:5–11. It is also wrong to assume that the heresy refuted in Colossians 2 refers to the fully developed form of Gnosticism that did not

appear until the second century. The parallels only indicate that Paul was dealing with an early form of Gnosticism.



THE TIME OF COLOSSIANS

Colossae was a minor city about one hundred miles east of Ephesus in the region of the seven Asian churches of Revelation 1–3. Located in the fertile Lycus Valley by a mountain pass on the road from Ephesus to the East, Colossae once was a populous center of commerce, famous for its glossy black wool. By the time of Paul, it had been eclipsed by its neighboring cities, Laodicea and Hierapolis (cf. 4:13), and was on the decline. Apart from this letter, Colossae exerted almost no influence on early church history. It is evident from 1:4–8 and 2:1 that Paul had never visited the church at Colossae, which was founded by Epaphras. On his third missionary journey, Paul devoted almost three years to an Asian ministry centered in Ephesus (cf. Ac 19:10; 20:31), and Epaphras probably came to Christ during this time. He carried the gospel to the cities in the Lycus Valley and years later came to visit Paul in his imprisonment (see Col 4:12–13; Phm 23).

Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians were evidently written about the same time and under the same circumstances, judging by the overlapping themes and personal names (cf. Col 4:9–17 and Phm 2,10,23–24). Although Caesarea and Ephesus have been suggested as the location of authorship, the bulk of the evidence indicates that Paul wrote all four Prison Letters during his first Roman imprisonment (see “The Time of Ephesians” and “The Time of Philippians”). If so, Paul wrote it in AD 60 or 61 and sent it with Tychicus and the converted slave Onesimus to Colossae (see 4:7–9; Eph 6:21; Phm 10–12).

Epaphras’s visit and report about the conditions in Colossae prompted this letter. Although the Colossians had not yet succumbed (see 2:1–5), an encroaching heresy was threatening the predominantly Gentile (see 1:21,27; 2:13) Colossian church. The nature of this heresy can only be deduced from Paul’s incidental references to it in his refutation in 2:8–23. It was apparently a religious system that combined elements from Greek speculation

(2:4,8–10), Jewish legalism (2:11–17), and Eastern mysticism (2:18–23). It involved a low view of the body (see 2:20–23) and probably nature as a whole. Circumcision, dietary regulations, and ritual observances were included in this system, which utilized asceticism, worship of angels as intermediaries, and mystical experiences as an approach to the spiritual realm. Any attempt to fit Christ into such a system would undermine his person and redemptive work.



THE CHRIST OF COLOSSIANS

This singularly Christological book is centered on the cosmic Christ—“The head over every power and authority” (2:10), the Lord of creation (see 1:16–17), and the author of reconciliation (see 1:20–22; 2:13–15). He is the basis for the believer’s hope (see 1:5,23,27), the source of the believer’s power for a new life (see 1:11,29), the believer’s Redeemer and Reconciler (see 1:14,20–22; 2:11–15), the embodiment of full deity (see 1:15,19; 2:9), the Creator and sustainer of all things (see 1:16–17), the head of the church (see 1:18), the resurrected God-man (see 1:18; 3:1), and the all-sufficient Savior (see 1:28; 2:3,10; 3:1–4).



KEYS TO COLOSSIANS

Key Word: The Preeminence of Christ—The resounding theme in Colossians is the preeminence and sufficiency of Christ in all things. The believer is complete in him alone and lacks nothing because “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (2:9); he has “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). There is no need for speculation, mystical visions, or ritualistic regulations as though faith in Christ were insufficient. Paul’s predominant purpose, then, is to refute a threatening heresy that is devaluing Christ. This false teaching is countered by a positive presentation of his true attributes and accomplishments. A proper view of Christ is the antidote for heresy. Paul also writes this letter to encourage the Colossians to “continue in your faith, established and firm” (1:23), so that they will grow and bear fruit in the knowledge of Christ (see 1:10). A firm adherence to the true gospel will give them stability and resistance to opposing influences.

Key Verses: Colossians 2:9–10; 3:1–2—“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority” (2:9–10).

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things” (3:1–2).

Key Chapter: Colossians 3—Chapter 3 links the three themes of Colossians (see “Key Word”) together, showing their cause-and-effect relationships. Because the believer is risen with Christ (see 3:1–4), he is to put off the old man and put on the new (see 3:5–17), which will result in holiness in all relationships (3:18–25).



SURVEY OF COLOSSIANS

Colossians is perhaps the most Christ-centered book in the Bible. In it Paul stresses the preeminence of the person of Christ and the completeness of the salvation he provides, in order to combat a growing heresy that is threatening the church at Colossae. This heresy seeks to devalue Christ by elevating speculation, ritualism, mysticism, and asceticism. But Christ, the Lord of creation and head of the body, is completely sufficient for every spiritual and practical need of the believer. The last half of this letter explores the application of these principles to daily life, because doctrinal truth (1–2) must bear fruit in practical conduct (3–4). The two major topics are supremacy of Christ (1–2) and submission to Christ (3–4).

Supremacy of Christ (1–2): Paul’s greeting (1:1–2) is followed by an unusually extended thanksgiving (1:3–8) and prayer (1:9–14) on behalf of the believers at Colossae. Paul expresses his concern that the Colossians come to a deeper understanding of the person and power of Christ. Even here Paul begins to develop his major theme of the preeminence of Christ, but the most potent statement of this theme is in 1:15–23. He is supreme both in creation (1:15–18) and in redemption (1:19–23), and this majestic passage builds a positive case for Christ as the most effective refutation of the heresy that will be exposed in chapter 2. Paul describes his own ministry of proclaiming the mystery of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (1:27) to the Gentiles and assures his readers that although he has not personally met them, he strongly desires that they become deeply rooted in Christ alone, who is preeminent in the church (1:24–2:3). This is especially important in view of false teachers who would defraud them through enticing rationalisms (2:4–7), vain philosophy (2:8–10), legalistic rituals (2:11–17), improper mysticism (2:18–19), and useless asceticism (2:20–23). In each case, Paul contrasts the error with the corresponding truth about Christ.

Submission to Christ (3–4): The believers’ union with Christ in his death, resurrection, and exaltation is the foundation on which their earthly lives must be built (3:1–4). Because of their death with Christ, Christians must regard themselves as

dead to the old sins and put them aside (3:5–11); because of their resurrection with Christ, believers must regard themselves as alive to him in righteousness and put on the new qualities that are prompted by Christian love (3:12–17). Turning from the inward life (3:1–17) to the outward life

(3:18–4:6), Paul outlines the transformation that faith in Christ should make in relationships inside and outside the home. This letter concludes with a statement concerning its bearers (Tychicus and Onesimus), greetings and instructions, and a farewell note (4:7–18).

OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS

Part One: The Supremacy of Christ in the Church (1:1–2:23)

- I. Introduction 1:1–14
 - A. Paul's Greeting to the Colossians 1:1–2
 - B. Paul's Thanksgiving for the Colossians 1:3–8
 - C. Paul's Prayer for the Colossians 1:9–14
- II. The Preeminence of Christ 1:15–2:3
 - A. Christ Is Preeminent in Creation 1:15–18
 - B. Christ Is Preeminent in Redemption 1:19–23

- C. Christ Is Preeminent in the Church 1:24–2:3
- III. The Freedom in Christ 2:4–2:3
 - A. Freedom From Enticing Words 2:4–7
 - B. Freedom From Deceptive Philosophy 2:8–10
 - C. Freedom From the Judgment of People 2:11–17
 - D. Freedom From Improper Worship 2:18–19
 - E. Freedom From the Doctrine of Humans 2:20–23

Part Two: The Submission to Christ in the Church (3:1–4:18)

- I. The Position of the Believer 3:1–4
- II. The Practice of the Believer 3:5–4:6
 - A. Put Off the Old Man 3:5–11
 - B. Put On the New Man 3:12–17
 - C. Personal Commands for Holiness 3:18–4:6
 - 1. Holiness in Family Life 3:18–21

- 2. Holiness in Work Life 3:22–4:1
- 3. Holiness in Public Life 4:2–6
- III. Conclusion 4:7–18
 - A. Commendation of Tychicus 4:7–9
 - B. Greetings from Paul's Friends 4:10–14
 - C. Introductions Regarding This Letter 4:15–18

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

²To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters^a in Christ:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father.^b

Thanksgiving and Prayer

³We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people^b — ⁵the faith and love that spring from the hope^c stored up for you in heaven^d and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel ⁶that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the

whole world — just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. ⁷You learned it from Epaphras,^e our dear fellow servant,^c who is a faithful minister of Christ on our^d behalf, ⁸and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.^f

⁹For this reason, since the day we heard about you,⁹ we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,^e ¹⁰so that you

^a 2 The Greek word for *brothers and sisters* (*adelphoi*) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family; also in 4:15. ^b 2 Some manuscripts

Father and the Lord Jesus Christ ^c 7 Or *slave*

^d 7 Some manuscripts *your* ^e 9 Or *all spiritual wisdom and understanding*

may live a life worthy^a of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹being strengthened with all power^b according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,^c ¹²and giving joyful thanks to the Father,^d who has qualified you^a to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. ¹³For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom^e of the Son he loves, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.^f

The Supremacy of the Son of God

¹⁵The Son is the image^g of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities;^h all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead,ⁱ so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹For God was pleased to have all his fullness^j dwell in him, ²⁰and through him to reconcile^k to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood,^l shed on the cross.

²¹Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of^b your evil behavior. ²²But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation^m — ²³if you continue in your faith, establishedⁿ and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven,^o and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Paul’s Labor for the Church

²⁴Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions,^p for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵I have become its servant by the commission God gave me^q to present to you the word of God in its fullness — ²⁶the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord’s people. ²⁷To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸He is the one we proclaim, admonishing^r and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹To this end I strenuously^s contend^t with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.^u

2 I want you to know how hard I am contending^v for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. ²My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ,³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.^w ⁴I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit^x and delight to see how disciplined^y you are and how firm^z your faith in Christ is.

Spiritual Fullness in Christ

⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which

^a 12 Some manuscripts us ^b 21 Or *minds*, as shown by

1:10 ^aEph 4:1 1:11 ^bEph 3:16 ^cEph 4:2 1:12 ^dEph 5:20 1:13 ^eEph 6:12; 2Pe 1:11 1:14 ^fEph 1:7 1:15 ^g2Co 4:4 1:16 ^hEph 1:20, 21 1:18 ⁱRev 1:5 1:19 ^jJn 1:16 1:20 ^k2Co 5:18 ^lEph 2:13 1:22 ^mEph 5:27 1:23 ⁿEph 3:17 ^oRo 10:18 1:24 ^p2Co 1:5 1:25 ^qEph 3:2 1:28 ^rCol 3:16 1:29 ^s1Co 15:10 ^tCol 2:1 ^uEph 1:19 2:1 ^vCol 1:29 2:3 ^wRo 11:33 2:5 ^x1Th 2:17 ^y1Co 14:40 ^z1Pe 5:9

1:22 New Life: Based on Christ’s Death—Salvation is free, but it is not cheap. Salvation is a gift and costs me nothing, but it cost God everything—it cost Jesus his life. “The wages of sin is death” (separation from God); God’s gift is “eternal life” (eternal union of the soul with God) (Ro 6:23). This is possible because of the death of Jesus on Calvary’s cross. Jesus actually took sin’s penalty for every man, woman, and child who ever has lived or ever will live. As he hung on the cross, he cried, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” These words are interpreted, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27:46). Jesus was separated from God the Father so that you and I do not have to be. This is the heart of the atonement. The marvel of it all is that he did this while we were his enemies: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Ro 5:8).

Now turn to Ac 16:31: New Life: Received by Faith.

depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces^a of this world^a rather than on Christ.

⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. ¹¹In him you were also circumcised^b with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh^b was put off when you were circumcised by^c Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.^c

¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you^d alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness,^d which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities,^e he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.^e

Freedom From Human Rules

¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you^f by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival,^g a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things that were to come;^h the reality, however, is found in Christ. ¹⁸Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. ¹⁹They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.ⁱ

²⁰Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world,^j why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: ²¹“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? ²²These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish^k with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings.^l ²³Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Living as Those Made Alive in Christ

3 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³For you died,^m and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is yourⁿ life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.ⁿ

⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed,^o which is idolatry.^p ⁶Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.^q ⁷You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸But now you must also rid yourselves^a of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.^r ⁹Do not lie to each other,^s since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed^t in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free,^u but Christ is all,^v and is in all.

¹²Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility,^w gentleness and patience.^x ¹³Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.^y ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.^z

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.^a ¹⁷And whatever you do,^b whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Instructions for Christian Households

3:18 – 4:1pp — Eph 5:22 – 6:9

¹⁸Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

^a 8 Or *the basic principles*; also in verse 20 ^b 11 In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesh* (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit; also in verse 13.
^c 11 Or *put off in the circumcision of* ^d 13 Some manuscripts *us* ^e 15 Or *them in him* ^f 4 Some manuscripts *our* ^g 6 Some early manuscripts *coming on those who are disobedient*

2:8 ^aGal 4:3 2:11 ^bRo 2:29 2:12 ^cAc 2:24 2:14 ^dEph 2:15 2:15 ^eEph 6:12 2:16 ^fRo 14:3, 4 ^gRo 14:5 2:17 ^hHeb 8:5
2:19 ⁱEph 4:16 2:20 ^jGal 4:3, 9 2:22 ^k1Co 6:13 ^lMt 15:9; Titus 1:14 3:3 ^mRo 6:2 3:4 ⁿ1Jn 3:2 3:5 ^oEph 5:3 ^pEph 5:5
3:8 ^qEph 4:22 ^rEph 4:29 3:9 ^sEph 4:22, 25 3:10 ^tRo 12:2; Eph 4:23 3:11 ^uGal 3:28 ^vEph 1:23 3:12 ^wPhp 2:3
^xGal 5:22, 23 3:13 ^yEph 4:32 3:14 ^zEph 4:3 3:16 ^aEph 5:19 3:17 ^b1Co 10:31

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

²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹Fathers,^a do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

²²Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.^a

4 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Further Instructions

²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.^b ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵Be wise^c in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.^d ⁶Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt,^e so that you may know how to answer everyone.^f

Final Greetings

⁷Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow

servant^b in the Lord. ⁸I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our^c circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. ⁹He is coming with Onesimus,^g our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

¹⁰My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.^h (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.) ¹¹Jesus, who is called Justus, also sends greetings. These are the only Jews^d among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. ¹²Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you,ⁱ that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis. ¹⁴Our dear friend Luke,^j the doctor, and Demas^k send greetings. ¹⁵Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.^l

¹⁶After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.

¹⁷Tell Archippus:^m “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.”

¹⁸I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.ⁿ Remember^o my chains. Grace be with you.^p

^a 21 Or Parents ^b 7 Or slave; also in verse 12

^c 8 Some manuscripts that he may know about your

^d 11 Greek only ones of the circumcision group

3:25 ^aAc 10:34 4:3 ^bEph 6:19, 20 4:5 ^cEph 5:15 ^dEph 5:16 4:6 ^eMk 9:50 ^f1Pe 3:15 4:9 ^gPhm 10 4:10 ^hAc 4:36 4:12 ⁱRo 15:30 4:14 ^jTi 4:11 ^k2Ti 4:10 4:15 ^lRo 16:5 4:17 ^mPhm 2 4:18 ⁿ1Co 16:21 ^oHeb 13:3 ^pHeb 13:25

3:19 The Role of the Husband—Paul tells the husband to love his wife (see Eph 5:25), while Peter tells the husband to live together with his wife (see 1Pe 3:7). The husband cannot live with his wife as Peter says unless he loves her in the way Paul means. The love that the husband is commanded to have for the wife is not primarily sexual or emotional (though both of those concepts are involved); it is a love that loves in spite of the response (or lack of it) in the one loved. It is the kind of love that God has for the world (see Jn 3:16) and is the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal 5:22). A husband can love his wife properly only if he is a Christian and under the control of the Holy Spirit.

The two responsibilities the husband has in the family are to live with his wife and be considerate and to treat his wife with respect that is due her because she is his wife. To “live with” his wife means that the husband must take his wife into every aspect of his life. There are to be no areas of his life where there are signs that say, “Private, husband only—wife keep out.”

The husband is to perform his two duties for a spiritual purpose: “so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1Pe 3:7). The man who is not taking his wife into every aspect of his life and treating her with respect that is due her because she is his wife cannot communicate with her in the way that God intended; hence, he cannot communicate with God either. To make sure that the channel of communication with God is open, the husband must make sure that the channel of communication with his wife is open. Only in this way can he truly love his wife as God intended and manifest his headship properly.

Now turn to Pr 1:8: *The Role of Children.*