

17 Ephesians 5:22-33 Wives, Submit Yourself to Your Own Husbands

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Let us pray.

Ephesians is all about figuring out who we are in the Lord, and the second part of the book is telling us how to live it out together. Paul gives a section on marriage, and he begins with wives. We will cover wives tonight and cover husbands on Sunday.



Wives

God has set men as the head of the household. God created Adam, and then created Eve to "complete" him (not to "compete" with him).

So, we are introduced to the idea of "headship". Jesus is ordained to be the head of the man (he must subject himself to Him, see 1 Cor.), and God ordained the husband to be the head in the relationship. This does not mean complete autonomy, but that the husband and wife are "heirs together" of the grace of life, working together to grow closer to Christ.

Each person in the marriage relationship has different gifts. Let's say a woman is more capable of running the household—this can still be done with the man as "head" of the home and with the woman still having a submissive attitude towards him. Certain gifts, though, a husband must bring to the household himself—financial security, stability, protection.

The problem is that the word "submit" has become a byword for oppression, which it was never meant to be. I brought it up last week to introduce the group to that word.

Submission in marriage is a touchy subject—especially because it is really hard to submit to someone when you think they're wrong. Submission seems to be distasteful in theory—but in real submission, Godly submission, there is true freedom. God ordained submission for there to be a framework of support in civil society, and the same is within a Godly marriage—a woman who purposefully respects and submits to her husband, and the husband mindfully loves, provides for, and leads the wife.

A husband is NEVER to tell a woman that it is her role to submit.

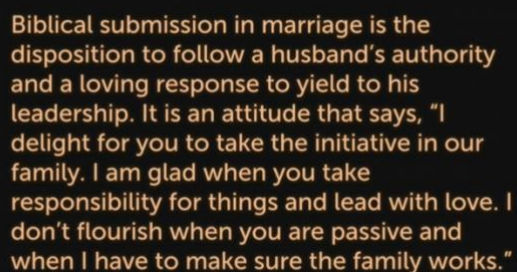
The rejection of authority is considered godless by God's word.

³ But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. (1 Corinthians 11:3 NIV)

This says that even Jesus has chosen to submit, not because of his inferiority, but because of God's order of things. Figuring these things out in a marriage is not easy. The world ridicules this and then ignores it. Let's really try to understand what the Bible is saying here. Marriage is God's idea. It is not man's idea.

God created marriage and He probably knows best how it will work. Here are some questions:

- 1 What does it mean to submit?



Biblical submission in marriage is the disposition to follow a husband's authority and a loving response to yield to his leadership. It is an attitude that says, "I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for things and lead with love. I don't flourish when you are passive and when I have to make sure the family works."

- 2 Why should a woman submit? See v. 23. The husband has received his role of leadership from the Lord. Most men would rather not be in that role. They are there because God put them there. This is God's plan for marriage. That is the only way that a woman can abide this.
- 3 What does biblical submission look like? Look at verse 33. However let each one love his wife as himself and see that the wife "respects" her husband. That best summarizes what it looks like.

There is a difference between showing respect and feeling respect. The Lord is telling the woman to "show respect" by virtue of his God given role.

Most people don't realize that respect is a man's greatest need in a marriage. A woman's greatest need is affection followed by security. Isn't it interesting that this is exactly what the Bible asks of a husband and a wife.

Wives....respect your husbands. Husbands..... Love your wives as Christ loves the Church.

So let's make some clarifications as to what submission **does not** mean:

- 1 Biblical submission doesn't mean agreeing with your husband about everything. However, biblical submission means that a woman doesn't disagree disrespectfully. Husbands can come up with some nutty ideas, and a submissive wife can and should point out the deficiencies of such things. She is to do it however in a way that is not denigrating or disrespectful.
- 2 Biblical submission doesn't mean that a woman leaves her will and her brain at the altar. There is some very errant teaching in some Christian circles that the woman's will and intellect is supposed to sort of disappear into the man's will and personality. That isn't biblical. Biblical submission is however learning to voice your thoughts and ideas in a way that honors your husband's role.
- 3 Biblical submission doesn't mean avoiding influencing your husband. I'm not talking about a husband or wife trying to change one another. It won't happen. You'll never change each other. There may be times that a woman understands that there is a need to influence her husband. Women see problems that men don't see. I have learned to listen to my godly wife. She sometimes sees problems way before me.

- 4 Biblical submission doesn't mean putting the will of your husband before the will of God. When a husband is on a path of disobedience a woman is under no obligation to put his will over God's will. In fact, it is sin for her to put her husband's fleshly will over God's will.
- 5 Biblical submission never means that a wife is to respond out of fear. A husband that bullies and pushes his wife out of fear or intimidation is guilty of the worst kind of abuse and knows nothing about the role of being a husband. Submission to a husband does not mean to be abused by a dictator.

The respect that a wife shows is a response to what is going on in the marriage. It is a response of love and his love for her. If a wife isn't submitting, a man should look to see if he is a loving, gracious, and a kind leader.

What should a woman do if her husband is not accepting or is rejecting his role as a godly leader?

Peter talks about this in 1 Peter chapter 3.

"In the same way, you wives, be subject to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won over without a word by the behavior of their wives, ² as they observe your pure and respectful behavior." 1 Peter 3

As you walk in obedience to Jesus, your life will speak volumes to your husband. If your husband is disobedient or in error, you have every right to inform him but you must do so respectfully. A woman affects a man when she just does what she's supposed to do with a gentle and quiet spirit. If I'm not studying the Word like I should be doing, I see my wife studying the Word it prompts me to go do what I'm supposed to do as well. Some women don't go to church to placate their unbelieving or abusive husbands. That is putting the errant husband's will over God's will. You are to obey God's will over your husband's will.

A woman wants a godly strong leader. By nagging him, she'll end up having a angry man who feels powerless. On the other hand, men need to pay attention when the wife makes her needs known. (and I'm not always real good at that)

Philippians 2:5-8 show us heart attitudes. This is showing us Jesus' willingness to submit to the Father. This passage wasn't written for wives, but it is an example of submission.

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death ¹ on a cross.

You really can't talk about submission without talking about the role of the man. If you obey a tyrant, it is slavery. The requirements on the husbands are very high in how he is to treat his wife. We will deal with that on Sunday.

Sandy recently gave a teaching on 1 Peter Chapter 2, and she lists some verses and insights that are very helpful.

Below is an excerpt from Sandy's teaching in 1 Peter Ch. 2. She has given several verses to show the context in which we are given instruction on how to behave with one another. Please read it all because I believe it contains good insight:

We were called to behave in this way because Christ also suffered for us, and left us an example in which to follow in His footsteps: He did no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth (Is. 53:9). When He was verbally abused, He did not retaliate—when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously (to God His Father, LK 23:46; PS 31:5). He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, so that we, having been made dead to sins, could live righteously—and by His stripes we were healed. For you were all like sheep going astray, but now have been returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (Is. 53:4-6, Septuagint) (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

We will suffer in life simply because of our own mistakes, and are expected to be patient in that suffering. Likewise, we will suffer for doing good—and our being patient in those experiences brings glory to God. This is our reasonable response, because Jesus suffered for our sins.

In the same way (as one who chooses to be patient because of what Christ did for us), you wives (should choose to) be submissive to your own husbands, so that, if any obey not the Word (of Jesus as the Messiah), they also may, without the Word, be convinced by the (godly) behavior of the wives (through the behavior of the wives the Holy Spirit will speak to the husbands' hearts and convict them), while they observe your behaving in purity and reverence (for their husband and for the Lord) (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

The attitude of the wife will go far in demonstrating the love of the Lord to the husband—even in situations where both partners are Christians (this is not to say that a woman ought to stay with an abusive spouse and subject herself to danger). The apostle Paul speaks similarly to the church in Corinth: *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would not*

be sanctified—but now they are sanctified (able to be set apart for God because the Holy Spirit resides in the house). *But if the unbeliever wants to leave, let him go. The believing brother or sister is not constrained in such cases. God has called you to live in peace (1 Cor. 7:14-15).*

Let the adorning (the woman's focus of attractiveness) **not be on her outward appearance** (only)—**the arranging of hair, putting on gold ornaments, or of dressing in fancy clothing** (in that day wealthy Greek women put a lot of effort into elaborate coiffure and dress, and those that were less privileged copied them as best as they could)—**but let it be the inner person of the heart** (in contrast to the outward), **adorned with an incorruptible meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For in times past the holy women, who put their hope in God, adorned themselves in this same way** (with a gentle and quiet spirit), **submitting themselves to their husbands** (by choice). **For example, Sarah always obeyed Abraham** (the father of the Jewish race), **and called him 'master'—and you are her daughters** (in spirit), **when you do well, and** (trusting in God as she did,) **are not frightened or overwhelmed by any adverse situation (1 Pet. 3:3-6).**

This does not say that women must not give any attention to their outward appearance, just that more attention ought to be given to their inward person (i.e., a gentle and quiet spirit). In this we become the spiritual children of Sarah, in the same way as Paul states in Galatians 3:7: *"They that are of faith are the children of Abraham"* (see also Rom. 4:11).

Likewise, you husbands, live with your wives according to knowledge (make a conscious and thoughtful effort to continually study on how to be a better husband), **giving honor to the wife as the weaker vessel** (because her body is not as physically strong as his), **and because you are heirs together of the grace of life** (they are equal partners before God)—**so that your prayers will not lose their effectiveness** (bad attitudes prevent good prayer) **(1 Pet. 3:7).**

In general men are physically stronger than women, and through the ages this has led to women being sidelined by men. Here Peter points out that not only should men not sideline women because they are weaker, but that they should take proactive care of their women because they are weaker. He also reminds that in God's eyes women and men are equals, and to treat a woman unfairly will cause a breach in a man's relationship with Him.

Finally, be united in one mind, have compassion for each other, love as members of the same family, be compassionate, and be courteous—do not repay wrong for wrong, or assault with assault, but with the exact opposite, blessing—for you know that this is what you are called to do, that through it you will inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:8-9).

Not only are the men to treat their wives with determined kindness, but are to treat each other the same way—even going so far as to let wrong done to them slide, and give a blessing in return. Women with a gentle and quiet spirit need to make a willful decision to submit to their husbands. This is not the same thing as obedience.

Husbands should make a willful decision to be kind to their wives and protect their wives from harm, thinking of ways to be a better husband to their wives.

Bad attitudes towards each other will prevent your prayers from being answered.