

Understanding Submission in Christian Marriage

Introduction:

1. "Submission" is a Bible word and a God-ordained concept.
2. Everywhere in society, God has established authority and expects submission to that authority.
 - Governmental authority - **Romans 13:1; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13**
 - Parental authority - **Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20**
 - Church authority - **Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 2:15**
 - Christ's authority over the church - **Ephesians 1:20-23**
3. The biblical principle of authority and submission are also found in marriage. **Ephesians 5:23-24; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1**
4. Submission is a wonderful Christian virtue that applies to every Christian in many different ways. **Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5**
5. Christ is our ultimate example of a submissive spirit.
 - Christ voluntarily submitted to the Father in all things. **Philippians 2:6-8; John 4:34, 5:30; 6:38**
 - This same spirit is to be found in us. **Philippians 2:5**
6. When we rebel against the biblical attitude of submission, we are manifesting a non-Christ-like spirit.
 - I'm not just talking about marriage, but in every area of life (work, school, government, parents, church).
7. Many women recoil at the very mention of the word "submission." It is simply because they do not possess a proper understanding of this wonderful, Christian attribute. Also, many men abuse and misuse this word.
8. The purpose of this lesson is to bring clarity and insight to the biblical principle of submission.

A wife's submission affirms her husband's role of leadership. Ephesians 5:23-24

1. Clearly, the husband is the God-appointed leader of his home, just as Christ is the God-appointed leader (head) of the church. This entire text really revolves around the husband and the kind of leader he is supposed to be.
 - This is a difficult task, with the flesh, the world, and Satan fighting men every step of the way.
 - On top of this, when the wife demeans him, competes with him, criticizes him, most men will not respond with anything resembling servant leadership.
 - They will retreat from their high and holy calling and start concentrating on themselves and their own desires. They shrug off their leadership responsibilities and move on.
2. When a wife takes the leadership role in the home, it is one of the worst mistakes she can ever make.
3. Submission means that the wife recognizes her husband's leadership and responds to him in a way that empowers him to lead.
4. A man is naturally a protector and a provider and wants to lead the way. It is inside of him. Men are typically built that way.

- By the way, these are the characteristics of Christ, our leader!
- So when a wife has an attitude of submission, it says, "I fully expect you to lead in this relationship." This really does something for a man. Ladies, there is no way to describe it.
- It is the same way that the church should respond to Christ. I don't expect to lead Christ.

A wife's submission affirms her respect for her husband. Ephesians 5:33

1. In verse 33, this entire text is summarized into two commands:
 - Husbands love your wives.
 - Wives respect your husbands.
2. A husband has an inherent need for his wife's respect.
 - Submission is a way of telling your husband, "I believe in you! I'm with you! You can do it! I have confidence in you."
 - It's a way of keeping him the leader, even when he doesn't want to be the leader anymore. You're helping him become what God wants him to become.
3. Ladies, what about a situation where the husband is **not** a godly leader and you really **don't** respect him. It is okay then to go ahead and run over him and take the leadership, right? Wrong!
 - The Bible never says this. In fact, we will see later how your submission is a testimony for Christ to him, that may end up bringing him to Christ.
 - Even though you may not respect the person, you respect the position. You say, "God has put him in the position as my husband and I am going to show respect for that position by maintaining a submissive heart and spirit."

A wife's submission affirms her faith in Jesus. Ephesians 5:22

1. Notice the phrase, "*as unto the Lord.*" cf. **Colossians 3:18**
2. Any time we submit to the leadership of another person, it is a faith issue.
 - By faith, we recognize that God has placed that leader in our life and therefore we are to submit to their leadership as if Christ Himself were leading us.
 - Examples: employer (**Ephesians 6:5-7**), governmental leaders (**Romans 13:1-2**)
3. One important note: A biblically submissive wife's focus is not on enabling wrong behavior, but on empowering her husband to pursue right behavior - to become the man God wants him to be, and the leader God wants him to be.
 - Ultimately, we serve Christ, and Christ never asks us to disobey God's Word.
 - No husband has absolute authority, only Christ and His Word does.
 - A wife should never submit to her husband's evil demands or sinful schemes. She has a biblical duty to confront her husband's sin and admonish him to obey God (as a loving and submissive partner).

A wife's submission affirms the oneness of their relationship. Ephesians 5:22, 24, 31

1. Notice that God's Word commands wives to submit to their **own** husbands.
 - She does not have to submit to anyone else's husband - just her own.

- Her submission says, "You are my man and nobody else. You are the one I am one with. You are the one I respect and listen to."
2. **Illustration:** Many times a wife lives to please the boss at work more than her husband. This is not healthy and very dangerous. She's not one with her boss, but many times her sense of value is coming from her job, and her boss's desires take precedence over her husband's.

A wife's submission is a powerful testimony to her husband. 1 Peter 3:1-5

1. A wife's godly life and submission speaks volumes above her spoken words. vs. 1
 - Notice, she doesn't influence her ungodly husband by lecturing, criticizing, nagging, preaching, and being a boss.
 - This will not influence a man towards God.
2. Verses 3 and 4 are a picture of a woman with a beautiful heart.
 - This goes a long way with a man. She doesn't have to be an outward beauty queen. **Proverbs 31:30**
 - Proverbs describes a woman who is in contrast to the 1 Peter 3 woman. 21:9, 19; 25:24, 27:15
 - Do you want to win the heart of your husband? Show him respect, honor, and try to please him (not by disobeying God).

In Conclusion:

1. Submission is not the wife's core role in marriage. It is her Christ-like response to **his** role that energizes him to be the leader God wants him to be.
2. Submission is not the result of a forced dictatorship.
 - True submission is a choice that begins in the heart.
 - Christ never forces His will upon us, but rather He invites us to follow Him and His example. **Ephesians 5:1-2**
 - Guys, you can forget using this thing of submission as a billy club to bully your wife around. It won't work. Even if you achieve the desired result, in her heart she will resent and despise you.
3. Submission is not subjecting one's self to abuse and sinful behavior.
4. Next week we will examine the husband's counterpart to submission.