

Ephesians Bible Study
Lesson 19 Notes
Ephesians 5:22-24

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands

First, as with all of God's commandments, the commands of our verses are *for our good* from an all-wise, loving God (Deut. 6:24; 10:13). He originated marriage, He can tell us how He designed it and how we must live in it if we want His blessing. God is not a cosmic male chauvinist, who is punishing women and rewarding men by commanding these respective roles in marriage! Rather, they reflect His wise and loving care for us as we obey. Also in this regard, *all* Christians are under authority. Husbands are not an authority unto themselves. They must submit to Christ and to the elders in a local church. To live in rebellion to authority is to live in defiance of God Himself, who ordains all authority.

Second, note that the church is in no way degraded by submitting to Jesus Christ. It is to the church's glory to submit to Christ. So it would not be degrading for a wife to submit to her husband. It results in "her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless" (5:27). Submission results in her ultimate good.

Third, the context here is the joy and thankfulness of being filled with the Spirit (5:18-20). Thus a wife's submission to her husband is not a cross that she glumly must bear. It is rather the path of joy. Just as submission to God is the way to true and lasting joy, so a wife's submission to her husband as to the Lord is the way to true and lasting joy.

Fourth, we need to understand that Christian marriage is to be a powerful witness to a selfish world where everyone is fighting for his or her rights. The world should look at Christian marriages and instantly see the difference. They should see a Christian husband tenderly and selflessly loving his wife as Christ loved the church. The world should see a Christian wife joyfully submitting to and respecting her husband, always seeking his good. The world should see Christian

children obeying their parents and the parents lovingly and patiently training their children in the ways of the Lord. The difference between this picture and the garbage on TV should cause the world to marvel.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the Bible uses the marriage relationship to picture the relationship between God and His people. Paul shows here that Christian marriage is an earthly picture of Christ and the church (5:32): “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.” God created man as male and female to reflect His image (Gen. 1:27). As we saw last week, in the Trinity, all three Persons are equally God and yet to carry out the divine plan, the Son submits to the Father and the Spirit submits to the Father and the Son. There is perfect love and harmony among the members of the Trinity. There is no rivalry or competition. Even so in marriage, the husband and wife are equal as persons before God, sharing in the grace of salvation (Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7). But there is an order of authority and submission to reflect the divine image.

As we seek to understand these verses, we will break it down into sizable chunks.

- 1. Recognize your calling.** If you are to become the support to your husband that God has designed, then you must first understand His divine calling upon your life. Do you realize that you were created specifically to be your husband’s helper? “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’ ” (Gen. 2:18). The word helper means one who aids another. Thus the woman was created because the man needed help from someone that could aid him in his responsibilities.

Now if you are thinking, This sounds so demeaning to me, that I’m just someone’s helper, then think about this for a moment. The idea of a wife being her husband’s helper does not demean her in any way. This same word helper is used in reference to the Lord Himself. David said concerning God: “The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless” (Ps. 10:14). Jesus also called the Holy Spirit our Helper who would be sent to aid us in our service to the Father (John 14:16). Therefore, since the Lord desired to help His creation in every way possible, He created woman to be a helper and aid to man.

In addition, note that the helper God created was to be comparable to Adam. The word comparable means one who is a counterpart or the matching mate of the other. Likewise, a woman is not the same as a man but is the counterpart to him which enables the two to function together. Both Adam and Eve were created with a specific divine purpose in mind.

Knowing God has a stated plan for you as a wife, are you willing to agree and yield to His desire? Are you willing to be your husband's helper and counterpart? Under the authority of God, He asks us to willingly put ourselves in submission to His plan for our lives as His creation. That's a challenge for us isn't it? We don't want to feel like we have no say, and that we must do as we are told, like small children. But much like a soldier in the army who has volunteered, full well knowing what that means, then it becomes a joy to fulfill the position that you have volunteered for, knowing that your work fulfills a part of the whole plan for the safety and protection of your family, and provides a witness to a fallen world.

- 2. Become the excellent wife.** Now that we understand the calling, we can begin to focus on the how do we do it! There is much written in the Word and in book form about becoming an excellent wife. First and foremost is our relationship with God. We will never submit to our husbands in a correct biblical manner unless we first understand our relationship to God. We can jump through all of the hoops and check off all the boxes of excellence, but if our heart is not completely submitted to God through salvation and living by the Spirit, we will find that the task of submission will become a burden to bear, rather than a joy to live out. If you desire to be the greatest aid and help to your husband then you need godly character and moral strength that can only come from your personal relationship with the Lord. The prophet Habakkuk taught that God was the one who gave him this moral strength in the midst of his trials: "The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills" (Habakkuk 3:19). The word strength in this passage is the same Hebrew word translated virtuous.

Do you have such a close fellowship with the Lord so that you can go to Him and receive His strength and virtue in the midst of your struggles? Only by yielding to your calling as a helper and experiencing God's power in your

life will you truly be able to find joy in being the counterpart to your husband. I encourage you today with the words of Solomon: “Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:30). As you reverence the Lord in your life you will experience the strength to be the helpmate God has called you to be.

3. Submission is vital not optional.

The word submission for many women is completely abhorrent to them when used in reference to a wife’s role in marriage. Many women believe this teaching of submission is a tool used by many men to manipulate and control their wives, and in some marriages, unfortunately this can be true. However, if submission is understood biblically it can never be used in this manner. Consider this fact. We all must submit in a multitude of ways throughout our lives where we don’t think submission is evil or manipulative. We all must submit to traffic laws or we get a ticket. We must submit to the laws of our nation or we go to jail. We must submit to our employers or we risk getting fired from our jobs. We all must be submissive and respectful with our friends so as not to offend them or we will not have them as friends for long. Finally, we are all called to submit to the Lord in all things. In other words, everyone submits to someone in some way. We do so to be obedient, to keep harmony, to show love, and to keep order in life.

The Bible also declares concerning marriage: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (Eph. 5:22-24). Why is submission of a wife to her husband so important to the marriage relationship? Understanding this truth is just as important as learning submission in the other areas we have already considered.

Submission creates a chain of command, harmony, and order to any organization, including the family. God has even ordained submission between the three persons of the Godhead. Paul made this clear when he taught: “I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). There is one head in our government. There is one head in most businesses. Therefore,

it stands to reason that there should be one head in the family. Becoming submissive to your own husband eliminates the power struggle between the two of you and brings great harmony to the relationship.

Thoughts to ponder:

Submission and God's Sovereignty:

- Do I really trust God's sovereignty enough that I believe that He is able to lead me through my human husband? Even if he messes up? Even if he sins?
- Submitting to our husbands in a biblical way is the biggest test of our faith as godly wives in Christ, it goes against every inch of our flesh.
- It takes complete submission to God and the power of the Holy Spirit to keep us focused on how this works together for good.
- My goal is not "to have my way" or to prove how "right". It is all about Jesus. Life is not about me anymore. I have been purchased by the blood of Christ. It is not about what I want. It is about Him.

Paul states (5:22), "*Wives, be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord." The verb is in italics because is carried over from verse 21. As we saw, being subject to one another in the fear of Christ is a result of being filled with or controlled by the Holy Spirit. "As to the Lord" does not mean that a wife must submit to her husband in exactly the same way that she submits to the Lord. The Lord is perfect and every husband is far from perfect (Amen 😊). Rather, Paul means that submission to your husband is a part of obedience to the Lord. If you are fighting against the idea of being subject to your husband, your attitude reflects that you are really fighting against the Lord, who ordained this order in marriage. So you must begin by yielding to the Lord and His direct guidance in the Word.

4. Be careful temptation ahead:

Whew, we have a handle on this submission thing....then wham, we find ourselves dealing with ways of trying to subvert, manipulate or override the control of the one God has put in authority over our home. I am going to list a few things to be prepared to deal with in marriage.

1. Submission involves respecting your husband.
2. Submission includes the desire to please the one over you.

3. Submission means not subverting your husband's will and desires through deception, manipulation or whining 😏
 4. Submission means responding to your husband as leader, consider him more important than yourself.
 5. Submission does not imply inferiority of the wife to her husband.
 6. Submission does not imply passivity, 1 Peter 3:1-6 does not say she is not to help a disobedient husband, it tells her how to help him.
5. Submission in 'everything' means that a wife cannot determine how she will submit:
- a. I would submit to him if he loved me more.
 - b. I would submit to him if he was nicer to me.
 - c. I would submit to him if he was a better lover
 - d. I would submit to him if he was smart than me
 - e. I would submit to him if he was a better spiritual leader
 - f. Etc....etc....etc

Our submission includes our thoughts words and deeds. We are to think on what is true!

But... 'in everything' doesn't mean:

- a. If he asks you to sin.
- b. When he is dodging his responsibilities, and wants you to take over.
- c. It does not mean participating in criminal behavior or physical abuse of self or children.
- d. It does not mean participating in immoral behavior.
- e. It doesn't mean you have to agree with him in everything. You may share your opinions freely. Be careful to make a distinction in what you believe to be sin, and what is actually an opinion. Sometimes a husband will desire something that you disagree with, but it is not a sin. A loving husband will never force his wife to do anything disagreeable or what she feels is not right, but be sure that what you are refusing to submit to is indeed sin, and not a preference.

John MacArthur Ephesians Commentary
 S. Gregoire – Submission
 Vine's Expository Dictionary
 Women Helping Women – Fitzpatrick
 Women Counseling Women – Fitzpatrick
 Martha Peace – The Excellent Wife