

22 Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord.23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything.

As we continue to come to an understanding of God's New Covenant purpose for marriage and other relationships in Eph. 5:22-6:9 we will look at what it means for wives to submit or be subject to your own husbands. Last week we defined the New Covenant role of the wife and what the Ephesian church would have understood a wife to be - first in the contemporary culture and then changed with the Christian ethic being attached to the understanding.

We saw the need for the command "to be subject" to be given and the context in which it was given as the role of the biblical wife was presented.

Today we need to look at three things:

- The Motivation for submission
- The Methodology of submission
- The Manifestation of submission

If the only New Testament teaching that we had on wives being submissive to their husbands was found in this letter, could we have a reasonable explanation of Paul's command? I believe so. But let us also remember our study from last week. Paul spent three years in Ephesus teaching them daily, publicly and privately, the "whole counsel of God" and there would be no reason for us to presume that marital relationships in light of Christ would not have been discussed.

So, based on this passage, first, what can we understand?

The wife knew that she had a role in God's creation as we discussed last week. Acknowledging her role comes first and living it out comes next.

One way she lives it out is to be submissive to her husband.

What is her motivation to fulfill her God ordained role? The motivation for submission is simply, obedience to Christ. The submission is to be done as unto the Lord.

As the wife understands her role, she understands the role her husband has in their marriage and that he is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church. God ordained that man would be the head, but even more important is that Christ is the head of the church. As the wife is member of the church she is to recognize that Christ is her Lord, that he is the *kephale*, the head, and she is to be obedient to the head because He is also the Savior of the body. His headship is more than just authority, He is the one to whom she owes the gift of faith and repentance by God's saving grace by which she is able to be considered a member of Christ's own bride, His called out ones, His church.

As the wife shows her obedience to Christ, it is because she would understand, in the process of sanctification and growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, the wonderful truths about that head of the church who is Christ.

Paul wrote of several of the truths that would encourage a wife to be obedient to the Lord and then be subject to her husband as unto the Lord.

Imagine the wife reflecting on what she was in society before her salavation. She was one whose purpose was to be obedient, as we discussed last week. But now, with the doctrine of Christ and the Christian ethic being added to her life, she can enjoy being submissive

because it is ultimately showing love for Christ while she shows respect or reverence for her husband. Interestingly, the word for respect or reverence found in Eph. 5:33b, the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband is the word *phobeo*, which in some contexts means to have fear or to be frightened. No woman in a Christian home should ever be frightened of her husband. If so, then something is drastically wrong. This joy of submission to Christ and accordingly, to her husband, is also not difficult when she understands that she has all of her spiritual blessings in Christ, in the heavenly places. She has been chosen from the foundation of the world to be a Christian wife, she has been predestined unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, she has known redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace and has had the mystery of His will revealed to her. She is sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit and guaranteed a place in the resurrection unto glory with Christ forever. She is no longer dead in her trespasses and her sins but is made alive in Christ. She is no longer a child of disobedience fulfilling only the desires of the flesh and the mind. She is no longer a child of wrath, alienated from God, an enemy of God without hope and without God. But she is now a child of God, one of the beloved, a part of the body and bride of Christ and what better motivation could there be to accept the role that God has given her in marriage. She is more than an obedient vassel to her husband. But, let us not forget that some women of that day were very powerful behind the scenes, politically, especially in Rome and in the courts of Empire affairs and in the houses of the wealthy. But this was not the norm of the average woman in a household.

How liberating for a woman to know that she has a purpose ordained of God. Her purpose does not begin and end with her husband, for she must first be an obedient disciple of Christ. Her personal life must be living out her salvation. She must be knowing Christ, growing in grace and showing it to the world .She must be a godly woman first so she can be a godly wife.

She has an identity that is spiritually equal to all believers, man or woman. She is an adopted child of God, a member of Christ's body and bride and she must be as obedient to God and enlightened by His word as her husband. She has as much accountability and responsibility to be growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ as her husband. She will be judged by Christ: first as a believer, not as a wife. And she does all of this as being equal to her husband or any other believer yet she is different as a wife in her ROLE.

Therefore, "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything."

As she is to be obedient in everything to Christ and under the Lordship of Christ as the head of the church, she is also to be submissive to her husband in the things that God has ordained her to be submissive to her husband as her head in accordance to God's will.

So, we have seen the Motivation for submission, now we need some examples of what submission is and what it is not and this we will call the Methodology of submission. We will begin with an Ephesian context but now begin to look to the whole counsel of God.

The wife is a reasoning being. It is a God ordained ability. She is part of the crown of God's created order, man. Yet, she should not lean upon her own understanding for the things of God in the process of learning

obedience by faith. The Ephesian wife would have heard these words earlier in the letter,

¶ For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints,16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers;17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

So too, that she should look to the husband for guidance in matters of knowledge and wisdom and spiritual counsel.

This does not deny the fact that she may even be wiser than her husband in certain matters but as she looks to the husband and if he is doing his part in loving her, he will give her an opportunity to respond as any good teacher will do and if he is being the husband he should be, he will listen to her response while remembering the Scriptures:

Prov. 31:11,12 The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain.12 She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. and Prov. 31:26 She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

A godly husband has nothing to fear from hearing a godly wife and her response if she has insight that is of value, because she is not trying to undermine his authority, she is seeking to honor him by sharing her wisdom, knowing that he trusts her.

So, submission does not mean putting a husband in the place of Christ, but to look to Christ first, and to obey Christ in regards to her role.

Submission does not mean giving up independent reasoning

Peter writes, 3:1 ¶ In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

Some wives may not have Christian husbands, but they need to reason through the truths of God's word and act accordingly. This also applies to Christian wives whose husbands may not be pursuing Godliness as they should. Her behavior will demonstrate her reasoning of God's truth.

Submission does not mean to give up efforts to guide and influence her husband, especially if he is not a believer. Peter says to do this but is not specific as to how.

Submission is not giving in to every demand of the husband. A wife should obey except when it would be sin to obey. If the husband's decision is not the best, he will be held accountable she will be blessed for obedience as unto the Lord.

Submission is not based on lesser intelligence or incompetency. For example, the wife of a non-believer is already more competent and intelligent than her husband because she has been enlightened to God's eternal truth.

Submission is not being fearful as we mentioned earlier,
“just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. I
Pt. 3:6

Sarah had to follow Abraham into many places without knowing the immediate outcome.

Submission is not inconsistent with equality in Christ. Jesus was obedient to His parents and to God the Father. Many godly people must be submissive to ungodly governments.

Peter writes, in 1 Pt. 3:7 “she is an heir of the gracious gift of life.”

Along with this we should note,

Gal. 3:28-29 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.”

This is not an egalitarian statement, proposing that there are no differences between any of those mentioned. It is stating that the status in Christ is equal for all who are Christ’s. No ethnic group, societal status or gender makes us more of a Christian than anyone else. We are all equal in Christ yet we are different in other ways, including the role we have as wives and husbands.

So, what does it mean to submit, what is the Methodology of submission?

I submit, that if Peter was able to use Sarah as an example, Paul could have as well, but it did not appear in his letters.

So let us look at Sarah to find what submission means for a Christian wife, Submission is an inner quality of gentleness that affirms the leadership of the husband.

1 Pet.:1-6¶ In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,² as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.³ Your adornment must not be *merely* external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;⁴ but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the

imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.⁵ For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;⁶ just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

Submission is an inward attitude of the heart. It is not made visible unto itself but is revealed in words and actions.

Submission is obedience like Sarah's. Although Sarah was not *always* a model wife, the New Testament presents her as an example that is positive. Men are seen in the same light. Abraham, David, Moses, and others failed God at times, but the New Testament considers them to be holy and faithful men. She was holy, she was submissive and she obeyed. Submission acknowledges an authority that is not totally mutual. Though all are to submit one to another in Christ, husbands do not submit the same way to wives as wives submit to husbands based on their God ordained roles.

Finally, we come to the Manifestation of submission – what does a submissive wife look like or sound like

First let's mention a few attributes that are manifested when a wife is not submissive with some woman /wife verses

Prov. 21:19 ¶ It is better to live in a desert land Than with a contentious and vexing woman.

Prov. 21:9 ¶ It is better to live in a corner of a roof Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

Prov. 27:15,16 15 ¶ A constant dripping on a day of steady rain and a contentious woman are alike; 16 He who would restrain her restrains the wind, And grasps oil with his right hand.

Lk. 10:40-42 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up *to Him* and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;42 but *only* one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

(Martha wanted her own way, Manipulation may come by tears, deceit, nagging, complaining, anger, or intimidation)

Now lets look at a verse that applies to anyone but could have an application to a wife. If a wife defies a husbands wishes, that are not ungodly, then we may use 1 Sam 15:23, a general principle specifically applied to Saul first in the context but a principal that has universal application as well.

“For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king.”

Another example could be a wife who constantly worries about her husband’s decisions and takes matters into her own hands when she should not:

Phil.4:6,7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Here I would like to quote from Martha Peace's, *The Excellent Wife* p.152 "Occasionally, a husband will instruct his wife that in certain matters she is to make the decisions. In those cases, when authority is delegated to her she has freedom to choose. Otherwise, he she should be consulted in all matters (that are important to him) and she should submit to his headship."(example -I do the meal preparation. My wife needs to consult me for menu items I desire for the week before she does the shopping)

A submissive wife shines with a beauty that shows she loves her God and respects her husband and loves her husband.

Titus 2:3- Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children 5 *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

There is much more that could be said about the submissive wife, but we are attempting to keep it in the context of Ephesians 5:22-24.

The submissive wife is submissive because she is a member of the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the church. As the church is subject to Christ so she should be to her husband. Any teaching in scripture that enhances a wifes relationship with Christ should be looked at to see if there is an " as unto the Lord" application regarding her husband. Again this does not mean that her husband becomes God to her or replaces

Christ. But she is to submit to the husband within the ordained order and role that God has established in His word for her.