

## **A Wife's High Calling**

Ephesians 5:21-24 (04/29/18)

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*Eph 5:21-24 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. 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.*

We're talking about the "s" word this morning. Nobody get nervous. We want to be gentle and helpful and painless as possible, not like those old slow drills dentists used to use. Get the context here in Ephesians 5. God calls us to living a Spirit-filled or Spirit-controlled life in verse 18. The fifth characteristic of a Spirit-filled life is in verse 21, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Christ Himself humbled Himself, submitting to the Father's will (Phil. 2:6-8). What does that Spirit-controlled submissive attitude in a believer look like? You won't be demanding your own way, arguing over selfish issues, or holding grudges. You see God in everything and want to please God by refusing to react. You act in kindness and forgiveness when you are crossed. You want to be like your Savior by esteeming others, your wife, your husband, above your own interests. You bring joy and encouragement into the lives of everyone who knows you. You're open to rebuke and correction and don't take offense when you are corrected. You never make others feel worthless or stupid. You guard your heart and your tongue. You want Christ to be honored in your life and you're not proud of your spiritual maturity. A submissive attitude only wants to please God and bless others. This is something of what Spirit-filled, submissive heart looks like.

Submission literally means putting yourself under the authority of another person to accomplish a purpose. The opposite would be rebelling and resisting the will of another. Imagine if Christ had rebelled against His Father's will. Instead of saying "Your will be done," imagine if He said, "I'm my own person. I have a right to do whatever I please." Without submission you'd have chaos. We all submit to all kinds of authorities in our lives, including in the state and church. The football team submits to the coach's orders, the army submits to the captain, we submit as we yield onto the interstate, the moon submits to the gravitational pull of the earth, the earth to the sun. So as we come to the Bible's teaching on submission for wives, submission is not an antiquated or negative concept. Most of life functions with leadership and submission. When an engine blows up on an airplane at 33,000 feet, as happened two weeks ago, everyone instantly submits to the leadership. Even the pilot, in this case Tammie Joe Shults, submits to directions from the tower to bring that wounded bird in successfully, which she did. As one passenger said, "It was a soft landing." Submission is crucial in this world.

### **BIBLICAL THINKING ABOUT SUBMISSION**

Before we get into the details of a wife's high calling in marriage, let's clarify exactly what submission is and is not.

- Submission doesn't mean you are inferior to your husband.  
Actually, you complement your husband. You may even be lots smarter than your husband, but you learn how to submit to him even if he isn't all that smart.
- Submission doesn't mean you never confront your husband.  
Actually he needs your counsel. God knew Adam in his sin would need a helpful counselor to navigate through life's challenges. A wise husband listens carefully to his wife's suggestions.
- Submission doesn't mean your husband is always right.  
Actually he may be wrong, but that doesn't mean you rebel against his authority.
- Submission doesn't mean you aren't responsible to live your own life for Christ.  
Actually you may far outdo your husband's knowledge of the Bible, but you don't intimidate him or make him feel stupid. A wise wife knows how to honor her husband even when he does lack knowledge.

Submission may mean establishing boundaries in your marriage, sometimes with the help of others.

- I won't be with you when you are drinking.
- I won't allow you to abuse the children.

- I'll leave the room when you get angry and yell.
- I won't enable your irresponsible behavior.

Submission includes these things.

- You'll listen to your husband without interrupting – Proverbs 18:13 says it is folly and shame to give an answer before you hear.
- You'll focus your heart and energy on your marriage before all other relationships. The children are not first in your marriage; your husband is.
- You see yourself on the same team with your husband.
- You give him freedom to make mistakes without scolding, embarrassing, or shaming him, especially in public.
- You share your opinions, ideas, perspectives, but support him when he makes the final decision without an "I told you so" attitude.
- You don't answer for your husband. "So Phil, how was your trip to Chicago?" Phil is slow to answer, so Jill answers for him. Give him time, ladies. His brain works differently than yours.
- You don't compare your husband to other men. I sat with Pastor Goode of Faith Baptist Church in Lafayette years ago when he was counseling a widow named Millie. She had remarried and was really struggling with how her new husband Arthur spent his money and time, and she kept comparing him to her first husband. Pastor Goode responded, "Millie, you're not married to Fred. You're married to Arthur." She needed to get on his team and stop comparing him.

Submission means humbly yielding to the will of your husband to glorify God together. Is this easy? Part of the curse of sin in Genesis 3 is that a wife will want to usurp the man's authority and the husband will tend to abuse his authority over her. But Spirit-filled couples find joy in God's plan of willing submission and loving leadership.

Before we go any further, I want two commitments from every husband. First, that nothing we say within the next few minutes will be used against your wife, you won't pull the "I'm the head around here" card. Second, that you will come back next week to hear the rest of this teaching. Men, your responsibility is to be so loving and thoughtful and kind that your wife's submission to your leadership will be a total joy. Most godly women want and appreciate godly leadership. Men, do you make it easy for your wife to practice biblical submission?

### **THE HIGH CALLING OF A SUBMISSIVE WIFE**

Ladies, your submission to your husband is a high calling and accomplishes four really big things in your marriage.

#### **First, your submission pictures the relationship of the church to Christ.**

*Eph 5:22-24 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.*

Submission is a free and willing choice every Christian wife is called to make. Men, you are never told to make your wife submit. In fact, as we'll see, all you're told is to love her like Christ loved the church and like you love yourself, so forget about being concerned about her submission. We're talking to the ladies here. Ladies, your submission to your husband is a major part of your walk with Christ, "as to the Lord." Your submission is only to your own husband, not to other men. Some spiritual leaders have abused that with vulnerable, weak Christian women and only bad things happen then. "To your own husband."

Paul's main point here is that your submission to your husband is grounded in the doctrine of Christ and the church. Christ is the head of the church, the Savior of the body. That means He is the authority, the leader, and His leadership is a saving leadership. He loves and protects and guides and encourages and comforts the church as her Savior. Your husband is your head, and before God is responsible to give you and your family leadership. Just as the church glorifies Christ by joyfully submitting to Him, so you glorify

Christ by your submissive spirit to your husband.

And that includes in every area of your life. Unless he wants you to sin and disobey God, you should practice submission out of a willing, humble heart. Submission is an attitude of humility serving your husband in every area. It's not, "Well, I'll submit to him here, but not over here or here." The church submits to Christ in everything. What a high calling a wife has.

### **Second, your submission has powerful influence with your husband.**

*1 Peter 3:1-4 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.*

Who has more influence in your family, mom or dad? What about when Mom ain't happy? It's true that you women set the tone in your home, for good or bad. If you've ever read about Abraham Lincoln's trials with his wife Mary, you'll know about a woman's influence. And here God talks about how you can have a huge influence for good with your husband, even for the gospel if he's disobedient to God's word. You won't influence him for good by preaching at him or playing John MacArthur sermons real loud in hopes he gets the message, or even by your physical beauty, although most guys appreciate their wife's efforts to look nice. There's nothing holy about dowdiness. How does your high calling of submission have power with your husband? A husband will see the beauty of his wife's character. He'll probably agree with Bill Withers, "Ain't no sunshine when she's gone... this house just ain't a home when she's not here." Peter gives four qualities of a beautiful, submissive wife.

**Purity.** Your heart is pure of anger and bitterness and focused in love on him only. Your goal is to please God and your husband. No flirting or dressing immodestly to draw the attention of other men.

**Respect.** Very few men do not appreciate respect. He may endure disrespect and humiliation at work, but when he comes home, he wants the love of a respectful wife.

**Gentleness.** This is the opposite of that contentious, vexing wife in Proverbs 21:9 and 19 who has driven her husband first to the roof and finally into the desert. Instead of harshly reacting and growing fangs and tiger claws when he disagrees with you, pray for him and your own heart, and express your appreciation for him. You know God is dealing with you for good, even if it isn't easy. Christ was gentle or mild with sinners. Proverbs 15:1 is a key verse for all marriages, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger."

**Quiet spirit.** He may be easy to live with, and then again your husband may make things pretty rough for you. You've got to see God in all your trials and trust Him without arguing, nagging, or yelling. A godly, Spirit-filled wife and mother has a certain quietness about her that trusts God and believes He is good and sovereign over her life. If people walking by your house can hear you yelling and scolding your kids, or worse, your husband ("Theodore! Get out there and mow that yard!"), you need help to change.

Even if your husband doesn't appreciate these qualities, someone far more important does. They are "precious in the sight of God." The word means extremely valuable. God sees your pure, respectful, gentle, quiet heart and says, "There is a highly valued person in my eyes." Men, if God thinks she's highly valued, she ought to be highly valued in your eyes, too.

### **Third, your submissive spirit in marriage brings honor to God's Word.**

*Titus 2:4-5 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.***

This is amazing. A wife's heart and attitude and especially her submitting herself under her husband's

leadership and authority, not resisting and resenting, honors God's Word. Author Elizabeth George writes, "My obedience to my husband testifies to all who are watching that God's Word and His way are right. This call to submit is indeed a high calling."

**Fourth, your submissive spirit in your marriage brings great blessing to your husband.**

*Proverbs 31:10-12 An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. 11 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.*

She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. Ladies, memorize that and apply it. When you get to the end, will your husband say, "She did me good?" Proverbs 12:4 describes this excellent wife as a crown of her husband. She makes him feel like a king. She was not like rottenness in his bones – arguing, criticizing, never satisfied, contentious – he will ache in the deepest part of his being. No, his heart trusts in her; she is completely content.

She does him good. She loves him and works hard to bring him great joy every day. When he's down she tries to lift him up. When he's troubled, she's like a soothing ointment. When he's falsely accused or slandered, she assures him. When he's going the wrong way, she carefully encourages him to turn around, "Johnny, I know you are an excellent driver and usually have everything under control, but could it be possible we should have turned off 30 miles back at that last exit?"

Ladies, you have a high calling as a wife, representing the church, having great influence, honoring God's Word, and bringing him great joy. Your submissive spirit is precious to God, and Proverbs 31:30 says her husband praises her. "Many women have done wonderfully, but you excel them all!" How can you do this? Through having Christ at the center of your life and the Spirit of Christ fueling your own heart every day.

Men, you promised to come back next week for the second half. Just be thankful, appreciate, and love and serve that precious lady who is walking with you through this life. And if you are an unmarried lady, take what God says seriously. That guy may be really cool, but consider more than his words and looks. You'll be called to submit to him. How does he handle opposition and criticism and other authorities in his life? If he goes off angry, spinning the tires and cursing, close the door on that relationship quickly. And guys, if marriage is in your future, keep your radar up for that pure, godly character. She may have a gorgeous face and figure, but what's the condition of her heart? That's what you'll want to get to know.

And thank God, while no wife or husband meets this standard, Christ did. He submitting to His Father's will, dying and paying for our sins and rebellion against God. Marriage is always between two sinners who need the cross with all its mercy and forgiveness in the center of their relationship.