

## Wives, Submit to Your Own Husbands

Ephesians 5:22, *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”*

Introduction: The idea that a wife must “submit” to her husband is a disgusting concept to many people. I have literally heard people gasp when I mentioned “submit” in the marriage vows of a wedding ceremony. But, let’s be clear—submission has never just been a woman thing. This duty is enjoined upon various men and women depending on the relationship.

- It was seen in Jesus’ submission to his parents (Luke 2:51-52).
- It is to be seen in our submission to the governing authorities (Romans 13:1).
- It is to be seen in our submission to one another (Ephesians 5:21).
- It is to be seen in the church’s submission to Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:24).
- It is to be seen in our submission to God (James 4:7).
- It is to be seen in the servant’s submission to his master (1 Peter 2:18).
- It is to be seen in the submission of younger Christians to the older (1 Peter 5:5).

So, “submission” which comes from the Greek word HUPOTASSO meaning “to subordinate, render obedience” is seen in many more relationships besides the husband and wife. However, when it comes to the husband and wife role, part of the problem is that we take that word out of its original context and often turn it into something else. Yet, truth is, as it was spoken in its first-century context, the picture of how a husband and wife were to interact in a Christian home was a tremendous elevation from the accepted norm.

Many of the Jews had slowly moved away from a conservative view of marriage and divorce was far too easy and frequent. All a Jew needed to do was provide a signed document to his wife in the presence of two witnesses and a woman could be forever severed from the marriage. The Greeks were far worse as prostitution was a commonly accepted practice in their culture and wives were often just viewed as tools for the home who were better not seen or heard. The Romans were just as degenerate as they divorced and remarried commonly and easily. Some count their years by their birthdays, the Romans could count them by their marriages!

So, imagine being a first-century Christian and hearing Paul say that husbands need to love their wives as Christ loved the church and just as strongly as we love ourselves. It would not have been viewed as an insult. The Spirit’s teaching was a major upgrade for women and a rebuke to the common man. Furthermore, Paul’s writing seems to imply he speaks of the Christian home—a home where there is a husband and wife who are both servants of Christ. When both marriage partners are devoted first to God, then accepting the roles God has assigned to man and woman are much easier to achieve.

Like the husband, the wife’s role is patterned after Christ and His church. The husband is to love his wife *“as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her”* (Ephesians 5:25). But, the wife is to submit to her own husband *“as to the Lord”* (5:22). The term *“as”* indicates a guiding point of comparison for the wife. So, as we think of it from that perspective, what does it mean and what is involved with the duty to *“submit as to the Lord?”*

## I. Voluntarily (Ephesians 5:22-23)

- A. It is important to note that the roles given to husband and wife have nothing to do with strength or intelligence or spiritual rank (Galatians 3:28).
  - 1. It is rooted in the curse (Genesis 3:16).
  - 2. It is rooted in the creation order (1 Timothy 2:11-13).
- B. Yet, God's directive is clear: "*wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord...*" (5:22).
  - 1. In this particular verse, wives are given the duty to "submit"—a voluntary choice.
  - 2. With this in mind, husbands cannot command or demand submission—it is willingly given from a godly wife, not forced by a tyrant.
- C. Of course, the wife's voluntary role of submitting to her husband will be far easier if her husband has submitted himself to Christ first (cp. 1 Corinthians 11:3).

## II. Completely (Ephesians 5:24)

- A. The totality of submission is seen in the phrasing of Ephesians 5:24, "*Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*"
  - 1. The parallel passage in Colossians 3:18 adds, "*as is fitting in the Lord.*"
  - 2. The phrase "*in the Lord*" suggests obeying requests consistent with the Lord's will.
  - 3. The principle in Acts 5:29 would apply to the wife's situation.
- B. Yet, common-sense exceptions aside, the wife's greatest gift to her husband is the grace of her submission—just as the greatest gift a child can give his parents is obedience.
  - 1. There will be times when submission is difficult (cp. Matthew 26:39-41).
  - 2. Yet, the example of Jesus ought to be our guide (Matthew 20:27-28).

## III. Devotedly (Ephesians 5:25-27)

- A. We may get a picture of what the bride ought to be for her husband by noticing the comparative picture Paul paints of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:25-27).
  - 1. The passage pictures a new bride presenting herself to her husband without "*spot or wrinkle or any such thing... holy and without blemish*" (5:27).
  - 2. The bride (the church/wife) is set apart only for her groom (Jesus/husband) and devoted to no one else but him.
- B. Peter paints a similar picture of the God-pleasing bride in 1 Peter 3:1-4.

## IV. Respectfully (Ephesians 5:33)

- A. Paul's focus turns to the husbands in this text, he finishes the thought with a final charge for the wives—"*let the wife see that she respects her husband*" (5:33).
  - 1. First of all, let's remember how the husband is to be loving and treating his wife.
  - 2. Again, when that's the case, respect ought to be easy to offer.
- B. Sarah's example offers us yet one more clue as to how that respect is rendered—in our words and deeds (1 Peter 3:5-6).

Conclusion: As your children see their mothers, do they see the picture of submission they can emulate in their walk with Jesus?