

Ephesians 5-22-24

Preliminaries:

Recommend books

Starbucks cards

Prayer: please join me in prayer...

Introduction:

How many of you like to read instructions?

How many of you like to follow instructions???

Aren't you glad that the person who built your house followed the instructions?

Aren't you glad that the person who built your car....?

Aren't you glad that the person who built your computer...?

Aren't you glad that the pharmacist who filled your prescription...?

Generally speaking, things work out so much better when we follow the manufactures instructions. On the other hand, when we ignore the manufacturer's instructions disaster often follows.

The reason so many marriages fail is because spouses ignore God's instructions. We often think we know better than God, when it comes to marriage. On the other hand, when husband and wife obey God's instructions, marriages, children, churches, and societies flourish.

We must never forget that God created marriage. It was his idea. Therefore, he knows exactly what it is required for marriages to flourish. This brings us to Ephesians 5:22-33. This is the longest section on marriage in the NT. This sustained teaching on marriage focuses on roles in marriage.

We will cover the role of the wife this week. Why? It comes first. Next week, we will look at the role of the husband.

This morning's text may offend some of you. But let me remind us of one simple fact, the Bible is the Word of God, all of it. Therefore, all of it must be obeyed cheerfully. We can't pick and choose what we decide to obey. If you don't like what Ephesians 5 says, you don't like what God says.

With that in mind, this morning's text, inspired by the Holy Spirit, highlights the role of the wife in marriage. It specifically exhorts wives to submit to their own husbands.

To help us understand submission, we will look at four aspects of submission.

First, submission's meaning

Ephesians 5:22–24 (ESV) — 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.

The word submission literally means obey, be obedient to, or be under the control of someone else. In Christian marriage a wife is called to obey her husband.

The wife's obedience to her husband is emphasized three times in this section 5:22, 24, 33. In addition, we see the same command in five other NT texts (1 Cor. 14:34; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim., Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:7).

Notice that women are not called to submit to all men. In 5:22, the wife is called to submit to her own husband.

Let's go back to verse 24.

Ephesians 5:24 (ESV) — 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

What does the word "everything" mean in verse 24? When looking at 1 Peter 3:1-2, it is clear that Paul does not mean literally everything. Let's examine this important cross reference for a moment.

1 Peter 3:1–2 (ESV) — 1 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, **2** when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

According to these verses...

Submission does not mean giving up independent thought

1 Peter 3:1-2 implies that there were some women who converted to Christ before their husbands. In other words, they were thinking independently of their husbands. This implies that they were more spiritually minded than their husbands. It is good for women to think critically, carefully, and independently. If not, the women Peter addressed would not have become Christians.

Submission does not mean giving up efforts to persuade

Peter urges these women to persuade their non-Christians husbands to follow Christ through their conduct.

Submission does not mean doing whatever the husband says

In Peter's culture, it was wrong for the wife to worship a different God's than her husband's God.

One scholar writes,

"The Greek historian Plutarch (c. a.d. 46–127) said, "A wife should not acquire her own friends, but should make her husband's friends her own. The gods are the first and most significant friends. For this reason, it is proper for a wife to recognize only those gods whom her husband worships" (ESV SB)

On the contrary the apostle Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit tells Christian women to disobey their husbands in matters of religion, in order to obey Jesus. This means that a women's ultimate authority is Christ, not her husband.

Back to Ephesians 5: 24... When Paul says that a wife must submit to her husband in everything, he means she must submit to him in every sphere of life, as long as the ask is not contrary Scripture.

Application:

In the submission discussion there are two ditches to fall into. On one hand, there is the ditch of overly nuanced submission. Submission can be nuanced so much that it means nothing. On the other hand, there is the

ditch of underqualified submission. Submission is not qualified at all, which often leads to sinful domination or spousal abuse. This is wicked.

With all of that said, we can't let Paul's command die the death of 1000 qualifications.

Wives are called to submit to their husbands.

With that said...

Husbands!

You must make it easy to submit to. This means you must carefully, tenderly, and humbly seek your wife's input.

You must consider her needs more important than your own needs (Phil. 2:1-10).

Wives!

You must give godly, gentle, and gracious input. But, when all is said and done, you must follow your husband's lead, unless he is leading you into sin.

When we think of submission in the context of marriage, we often jump to the really big decisions. Wives think, "I need to submit to my husband in regard to where we live, where our kids go to school, and where we go to church."

This is good, but submission happens one hundred times a day when we defer to others. Submission is a heart attitude, that is looking for ways to humbly defer to others.

Wives, let me ask you a question—do your actions, words, and attitudes make it easy for your husband to lead your family?

But Dave I'm married to a knuckle head. I guarantee you that there were knuckle heads in Ephesus, when Paul wrote the words of Ephesians 5. Yet, Paul did not say submit to your husband, unless he is a knucklehead. Rather, Paul said, "wives submit to your husbands in everything." (Eph. 5:24)

What if the husband is verbally, sexually, emotionally, or physically abusive? These behaviors are wicked, and they must be repented of. If these things are happening, wives please get the elders involved. If your husband does not stop these sinful behaviors he will be disciplined out of the church and treated as a non-Christian. The elders are here to help you!!!

Let me address the singles...

Single ladies, don't marry a guy unless you really respect him...

Single guys, be the kind of guy that is worthy of respect...

I have provided some application, but maybe you are thinking... why exactly should I submit??? This brings us to the next aspect of submission.

First, submissions meaning...

Second, submission's motive

Why should a wife submit to her husband? Our text gives a few reasons...

Submission respects the Lord!

Ephesians 5:22 (ESV) — 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Why should a wife submit to her husband? To please the Lord! In other words, when a wife submits to her husband, she is ultimately submitting to the Lord, which greatly pleases the Lord. This is only possible when a wife trusts the Lord.

A wife submits, not because her husband is worthy, although hopefully he is. She submits because Christ is worthy. Her submission to Christ is not separate from her submission to her husband, the two go hand in hand. (Col. 3:23, Eph. 6:7)

Sometimes, submission is very scary. Sometimes the wife thinks she knows better, maybe she does. Ultimately, a wife can submit to her husband because she trusts Christ to take care of her.

Submission respects the Lord!

Submission is rooted in headship!

Ephesians 5:23 (ESV) — 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.

Why should a wife submit to her husband? Because her husband is her head. The Greek word for head is the word “kephale.” It literally means authority. The husband’s headship/authority is grounded in the order of creation (see Genesis 1-2; 1 Cor. 11:3-12, 1Tim 2:11-13).

Some argue that the word “kephale” means source, not authority. In other words, the husband does not have authority over his wife, rather he is the source of his wife (whatever this means). I heard this argument 25 years ago, when I was a college student. Responding to this argument, Dr. Wayne Grudem argues that there are **2336** uses of the word “kephale” in ancient Greek Literature. Not once did the word head mean source or origin, every time it meant authority.

Furthermore, there is no sense in which a husband is the source of his wife either physically or spiritually.

What does headship mean? In verse 23, Paul argues that the husband’s headship of his wife is based on Christ’s headship of the church. As the head of the church, Christ rules over the church (cf. 1:22; 4:15; Col. 1:18) but he does this through sacrificing his own body on a cross. This means that a husband rules over his wife by taking up his cross daily to lead her into godliness. More on the husband’s role next week.

Illustration-

A young couple came into a pastor’s office for marriage counseling... their marriage was a mess. After lots of discussion the pastor asked the husband how he perceived his leadership role in marriage. He said,

“In order to make sure there is no question about who is the head of our home I try to make sure both my wife and I let Scripture rule our actions. For instance, if I come home from work and am trying to relax by watching TV or reading the paper, my wife may ask for some help with something in the kitchen, or with the kids (he had three preschoolers, including a set of twins)... To make sure that we both know who the head of

our home is, I flip a coin in my mind. If it comes up heads, I help. If it comes up tails, I don't. That way there's no question of who's in charge." (Chappell, Ephesians, 271)

This is not Biblical headship. This is self-centered pride.

Yes, headship means authority. The husband has authority over the family. But the husband must use his authority to help his wife and kids flourish in every area of their lives.

*Submission respects the Lord
Submission is rooted in headship*

Submission reflects the church!

Ephesians 5:24 (ESV) — 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Just as the church joyfully and willingly submits to Christ in everything so wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

The wife submits to her husband because she realizes that her actions and attitudes are a reflection of the church of Jesus Christ. If she does not submit to her husband, she is effectively saying that the church should not submit to Christ.

Wives, when you submit to your husband, you are painting a picture of one's response to the gospel. You are painting a specific picture of how the church responds in obedience to the love of Christ.

Dave, I hear what you are saying, but I'm still not convinced... This brings us to the third aspect of submission...

*Submission's meaning
Submission's motive*

Third, submission's critics

Let me address the most common questions surrounding this issue...

Is Paul implying that men are better than women?

Absolutely not! The Bible is very clear, from cover to cover, that men and women are equal in value, worth, and dignity. They are both made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-28), they are both saved by grace (Gal. 3:28-29), and they are both given spiritual gifts to serve in the home and church.

We know beyond a shadow of a doubt that submission does not imply inferiority because Jesus submitted to his heavenly father.

1 Corinthians 11:3 (ESV) — 3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

1 Corinthians 15:28 (ESV) — 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

If we say that submission implies inferiority than we must conclude that Jesus is inferior to the father, which is heresy.

Submission does not imply inferiority, rather submission implies great strength and trust.

Isn't it unfair that wives are called to submit, while husbands are not?

All Christians are all called to a lifestyle of submission?

We are all called to submit to the civil authorities (Romans 13)

We are all called to submit to the elders—including this elder (Hebrews 13:17)

We are all called to submit to our bosses (1 Peter 2:18, Titus 2:9)

We are all called to submit to our parents while we live in their homes...

When we are being submissive, we are being the most Christ-like.

Doesn't mutual submission rule out the wife's submission?

Paul tells us in verse 21 to submit to one another. Doesn't this rule out the wife submitting to her husband? No. Why? If mutual submission (v. 21) rules out the wife's submission to her husband, then it also rules out children's submission to parents (Eph. 6:1-4), and employee's submission to their bosses (Eph. 6:5-10), and the churches submission to Christ. This is nonsense.

One scholar writes,

“Submitting to one another means ‘submitting to others according to the authority and order established by God,’ as reflected in the examples that Paul gives in the following verses.” (ESV Study Bible)

Isn't submission an outdated cultural artifact that we can ignore?

Good question, but the answer is no. Paul does not root submission in the culture of his day, rather he roots submission in Christ's relationship to his church, which transcends cultures.

Now that I have addressed the most common objections, let me say this....

When you hear the word submission, don't think of a woman who is uneducated, perpetually pregnant, and stuck in the kitchen wearing a dress and a pair of high heels.

Rather, think of a godly, strong, intelligent, and competent women who trust God.

This is what we see in the proverbs 31.

Proverbs 31:10–31 (ESV) — 10 An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels... **13** She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. **14** She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar. **15** She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens. **16** She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. **17** She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong. **18** She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. **19** She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. **20** She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy. **21** She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet. **22** She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is

fine linen and purple... **24** She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant. **25** Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. **26** She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. **27** She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. **28** Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: **29** “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” **30** Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. **31** Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

This is a picture of the ideal wife. She works very hard, she is wise, she helps the poor, she runs numerous small businesses, her counsel is sought by many, she provides food and clothing for her family, and she is praised in the gates. This wife is the opposite of the proverbial doormat or wallflower.

Ok... I want to submit, but where do I find the strength to do so. This brings us to our last point...

Submission's meaning

Submission's motive

Submission's critics

Fourth, submission's power

Where do we get the power to submit? The Holy Spirit...

Ephesians 5:18–22 (ESV) — **18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, **19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, **20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21** submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. **22** Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

The fruit of being filled with the Holy Spirit is submission.... Wives, how do you know if you are filled with the Holy Spirit? You will desire to submit to your husband.

God has given you a tremendous source of power in the Holy Spirit to do what he requires, including submission to your husband.

Some of you woman may be convicted by your lack of submission. There is hope for you...

Ephesians 5:22–23 (ESV) — **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.

Jesus Christ is the savior. He saves us from sin, even the sin of insubordination. He submitted to his father perfectly and then died in the place of people who fail to submit to others.

As a result, he can declare righteous those who fail to submit to others.

Conclusion:

Let's go back to where we started. When we don't follow the instructions, the results can be catastrophic, when we follow instructions the results can be glorious.

God has given us clear instructions for marriage. Sadly, many of us are ashamed of what the Bible says about headship and submission. Let's not be ashamed of the Bible's instructions. Rather, let's celebrate the Bible's instructions, because obeying the Bible's instructions blesses us and more importantly honors God. Please pray with me....

Jennifer's testimony...