

The Home – Submission to Husbands

Pastor Russ Kennedy

God is the ultimate authority....

God established all authority spheres...

At war with the world and culture

Egalitarianism

Radical equality

Denies roles

Feminism

Attack on Biblical roles

Attack on Biblical authority

In the *Truths We Teach* the Chapel affirms the Cambridge Declaration on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. Please reference our Truths We Teach online.

The Principles to be Affirmed

God has assigned roles within the home. These roles are applicable whether the spouses are believers, unbelievers or a mix. As Christians, we understand that our first and primary relationship with a believing spouse is as a Christian, as brother and sister. The roles that God has assigned should be strengthened and enabled by the Christian relationship. Our equality as humans and as Christians, should support, not deny the authority structure God has placed in the home.

The Headship of the Husband

1 Corinthians 11:2-3

² Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. 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.

Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:22-24 - Emphasis on the Pauline understanding of the word, "head".

²² And he put all things under his (Jesus') feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

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.

Taught by Scripture

The headship of the man in the home is the teaching of Scripture. It is not merely reflecting the culture of the Bible writers. It is the result of God's clear and unmistakable directives. To deny that God has placed the man in charge of the home is to simply deny the Scriptures.

Being head of the home is the husband's position, Managing the home is the husband's activity. Managing the home involves taking responsibility to ensure that:

The needs of the household are being met. This is his vocational task. IT may be shared among the family members, but the "till and keep the garden" was given first and foremost to the husband.

The work of the wife in the house is attended to. Now, this can be an area of discussion and delegation. It is important that a husband recognize the abilities and limitations of his wife. But it is also very important that a husband give his wife freedom to execute and carry out the goals and aims of his oversight. In other words, the husband looks to the model of Christ as head of the church who tells us what He wants accomplished, some of how to accomplish it, holds us accountable to complete the work but give a lot of freedom and liberty to carry it out.

The spiritual and educational training of the children takes place. While a wife may carry out both, she does so as established by the husband. This also means he is to establish how and when the children are to be corrected and disciplined. It is NOT Biblical to say that the wife is responsible for the house and children, the husband is responsible for the provision and work outside the home. The commands of the New Testament in regard to the rearing of children are addressed to the father.

The family is Biblically connected to a gathered body of believers. There are then overlapping spheres of husband over family and elders over church that should wisely and graciously be carried out. A husband should encourage his family's participation in church life and ministry.

His authority is exercised in a way that is pleasing to God. He should look to Christ's love for and headship over the church as the model for his own managing of his household. He is to set goals, priorities, plans and tone of the home. He is to give clear direction and at the same time, freedom to execute well. He is not to be controlling and authoritarian. He is not to use his authority to compel his family to believe or do what is sin. He is to seek to be the kind of leader at home that God is growing as leaders in the church.

Now, much of this is counter our modern culture and even some of what is commonly accepted or taught in the church. However, it does not matter. God puts the husband in charge of his home and God gives him the authority to exercise that headship. God gives clear basic direction as to how that authority is to be exercised. God has given us the model of Jesus as Head of the church to study and meditate on.

Established at Creation

The headship of the husband was established at creation. Consider **1 Timothy 2:11–15**

¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

Adam was created first and was given the commands from God. Eve was created second, was created for the man and learned what God required from Adam. This is not to say that a wife only has her relationship with God through her husband. This order is for headship and for leading in the church.

Required of Believers

Paul, after working through the Christian reality and relationships in Ephesians 1-3 and establishing the Biblical framework for Christian living, then gives the directions for the authority spheres. Every major authority sphere is covered: government, work and home. Believers in every sphere are expected to exercise their authority in a way that pleases God. Believers in every sphere are expected to submit to their authorities in a way that pleases God.

Qualifies for Eldership

Managing and leading the home well as head of the home is a qualification for being an elder/pastor in the church. Consider **1 Timothy 3:1–5**

¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

The way a man learns to manage the church is not in seminary and not in business. He learns to manage by managing his household. The work here is to oversee, to govern, to manage. Therefore, the authority to manage the household is given to the husband. He may delegate as is best suited to both he and his wife. But God will hold him accountable to grow in his ability to manage his household well.

The Submission of a Wife

Now we turn to the submission of the wife in the home. We have already hear a couple of texts teaching this, but consider Colossians 3:18–19.

¹⁸ Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

Taught by Scripture

The Scriptures clearly teach that a wife is to be in submission to her own husband. The way the New Testament writers phrase it places a lady's submission to a man within the roles of husband and wife. The wording is meant to dismantle the idea that women

in general are to be submissive to men in general. Submission in the home is a limited sphere just as submission in the church is also a limited sphere.

This leads to an important question. What is meant by submission?

Submission is the recognition that one is under the authority of another. This is fundamental. If submission or authority are denied, compliance will have to be compelled rather than joyfully given.

Submission is the poise of the heart to do what the person in authority requires, commands or directs. The poise of the heart also prepares the wife to be willing to try to serve what is requested. When a wife or child parses between “told me to do” and “asked me to do” the heart is not submissive.

Submission is the actual doing of what is being directed by the husband. It is more than an attitude. It is also the actions. Now, it is possible for there to be the actions without the right attitude, a grudging compliance instead of a submissive intent.

Submission is the readiness to bend the will and do what is asked even when the wife does not want to. She should address and change what she wants. Conversely, a husband who asks or tells his wife to do something she does not want to do is not abusing her, particularly if what he directs is within the scope of her responsibilities in the home.

Submission is rooted in respect or honor. The word was used to reverence God. It means to recognize and uphold the position of the one in authority. It is required for a wife to respect and honor her husband. Without it, submission will either be subverted or become servile. How a wife views her husband will directly affect how she will respond to him.

Submission learns how to make an appeal. A wife needs to study and learn Daniel 1 where Daniel models how to appeal to an authority who is commanding what may be wrong to do. Consider Sara in her submission to Abraham and when, in her impatience for a son, she disobeyed God. She needs to learn that submission will humbly and joyfully accept the consequences if she must obey God rather than her husband. The wife must also understand that a command to disobey does not nullify the husband’s headship or authority.

Now, much of this is counter our modern culture and even some of what is commonly accepted or taught in the church. However, it does not matter. God puts the wife in submission to her husband in the home and God requires her to recognize and respond to his authority to exercise his headship. God gives clear basic direction as to how that submission is to be exercised. God has given us the model of the church’s submission to Christ to study and meditate on.

Established at Creation

As we have seen, the roles were established at creation. The roles were reinforced after the fall. So the authority and submission of the home *are not the result of the fall*. They were subject to sin and the curse under the fall. But God did not create the headship and submission of the home as a result of the sin of Adam. Clearly, Paul in the New Testament argues for role distinctions and spheres from the order at creation. The effects of this order were amplified and corrupted by the fall. So in the new creation

order of the body of Christ, they are maintained, enabled and reflective of the relationship between Christ and the church.

Required of Believers

Some argue that since believers are equal before the Lord and are required to submit to one another, this means that headship in the home does not imply authority and submission. This is wrong. This is a common failure in the modern culture and gets wrongly imported into Christian thinking. It creates a false either/or and denies the Biblical both/and.

Equality does not depend on function. Equality exists within roles. In the Trinity, the persons of the Godhead are equal in their being and their essence. And, the Son is in submission to the Father and the Spirit is in submission to Father and Son. In like manner, a husband and wife are equal *and* the wife is to be in submission to the husband.

The Obedience of Children

Authority in the home also extends to the children in the home. I will just touch on this subject as we have often spoken in the responsibilities of parents and children. Consider Colossians 3:20-21.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Taught by Scripture

Children are commanded to obey their parents. It is interesting that the word “obey” is used rather than “submit”. It seems that children are commanded and are to be taught to do what their parents tell them to do. Parents should exercise this authority in a wise and loving way. But children are to simply obey their parents with the possible exception where a parent commands a child to do sin.

Wisdom for Parenting

Parents need to use wisdom and think through some issues.

Parents need to be willing to apply correction, consequences and chastening so that a child’s will is conformed to the parent’s commands.

Parents need to be careful and consistent in the use of their authority. Fathers are commanded to give attention to the nurture and discipline of their children.

Parents should be aware of moving from command to counsel. We commend puberty as the time to start treating children as adults in the home. This does not mean that older children are not to obey; rather, it is incumbent on parents to teach their sons and daughters function wisely in the world.

The Problems to be Overcome

Briefly, let me acknowledge and address some problems that arise in the home.

Unbiblical Practice of Headship

Sin can cause a believing husband to exercise his headship in an unbiblical way.

No Leadership

A significant problem occurs when a husband does not lead his home. He simply leaves the managing of the house to others, usually the wife. He does so for a number of heart-oriented reasons. A man who does not manage his home is sinning against God. He is tempting his wife to assume the leadership and will find it very difficult to restore the proper order to his home.

Authoritarian Leadership

Some husbands do not know how to leader and govern their homes. Often from a heart that craves control, they rule their homes as dictators. They try to control everything that is done in the home. They fail to follow the example of Christ. A husband who is manipulative, angry and controls, not manages, his household needs to repent. He needs to manage his home in a way that pleases the Lord

Unloving Leadership

A husband is to love his wife. This is a command. This means that a husband's exercise of his authority comes from a context of love. Loving leadership still exercises authority as head of the home. But it is done in a way that expresses love for the wife. A man who does not love his wife or express that love should repent and begin to love her in his heart and in his actions.

Unbiblical Denial of Submission

Sin can cause a believing spouse to refuse to submit to her husband.

By misapplying the truth of equality

The often quoted and misused verse is **Ephesians 5:18–21**

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.

This is often read as saying that husbands and wives must submit to one another. The effect is to undermine the headship role of a husband. We deny that is the correct interpretation of this text. Note the following.

The phrase is one in a series that are the outworking of being filled with the Spirit (v.18-20).

The submitting to one another is not meant to override the authority structures that follow. Submitting is worked out in a series of authority spheres and relationships.

If submitting means husbands are to submit to wives, then are parents to submit to children and masters to slaves?

The word here means to bend the will to the will of one who is in authority. So, husbands, parents and masters/bosses are put in charge of their respective spheres.

The “submit to one another” of this text then is worked out in the roles and spheres in which Christians, who are equal before the Lord, must submit to another.

A desire to have control

As a result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, God placed Satan, the world, Adam and Eve each under a curse. It was a consequence directly related to their primary roles in life. While the text is difficult, we understand what was meant by a similar text in Genesis 4. I leave that for other studies. Consider what the Lord said in Genesis 3:16

¹⁶ To the woman he said,
“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.

Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,
but he shall rule over you.”

The second statement is indicating how sin will drive a wife to seek to usurp the husband’s authority and take control of the home. This sets up a vicious cycle of the husband exercising dictatorial rule over you. The ESV is expressing how the wife’s desires, wants, treasures will be contrary to the husband’s. Instead then of a loving oversight and managing of the household, the husband will assert ever increasing rule.

It is very important for both a wife and a husband to be aware of this cycle. Rooting it out early will keep from many sins, struggles and sorrows later.

Disqualifying the husband as head

Some in the church have taught that when a husband misuses his authority that he is disqualified as head of the home and forfeits the right to exercise that authority. No Scripture teaches such a thing. The misuse of authority will expose sin in the heart of the husband. But part of submission is to seek to please God by submitting even to a disobedient husband. The unbiblical use of authority by the husband does not:

Disqualify him from being head of the home. He is just an ungodly one.

Disqualify him from leading the home. He is just a sinful one.

Disqualify him from being submitted to. He is just a difficult one.

A Submissive Heart

A wife who truly wants to please God must align her heart with 1 Peter 3:1-6.

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. ³ Do not let your adorning be external— the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own

husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Notice some principles here to meditate on and align your heart with. These principles need to be cultivated when the marriage is good so that they will be solidly in place if the husband becomes disobedient to the Word.

Submission is limited to “your own” husband.

The Bible is not teaching the general submission of a woman to all men. Wives are in submission to their own husbands as it relates to the home and life context.

A wife is to rely on her conduct, not her words.

The tendency is to try to get the husband to do what you want by using words. While communication is important, nagging, manipulation, yelling are all deadly. The raise not lower resistance.

A wife is to cultivate a gentle, quiet spirit.

Do not wait until you are struggling in your marriage. Cultivate it as a core part of your heart. That does not mean that you lose your personality. It means that you express a godly meekness through who you are.

A wife us to study and emulate the example of Godly women.

Peter points to the example of Sarah. There are many others in the Bible. In church history and even in our own church are many ladies, many wives who set an example as this kind of person.

A wife is to trust in the Lord and not fear.

The situation way be challenging. But submission is called for even when it is hard. It is easy to lose trust in the midst of fear. But trust in God will enable godliness even in hardness.

Reflect and Respond

True godly leadership is exercised by a husband who loves his wife as Christ loves the church.

The quality of his leadership will be shown when there are differences and maybe even a lack of submission.

True godly submission is exercised a wife who respects her husband and submits as the church does to Christ.

The quality of her submission is best exhibited when she is being asked or told to do what she does not want to do.

May we all seek to grow in our roles as husband and wife in our homes.