

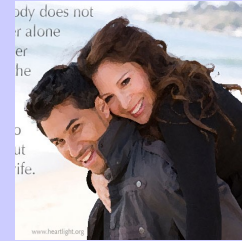
way the holy women of the past did it.

**1 Peter 3:5** this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah ...You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

They put their hope in God. They didn't put their hope in their husband's ability to make good decisions or in their own ability to coach their husbands into making good decisions. They put their hope in God. God will take care of you and guide you and place you just where He wants you to be by means of the ungodly, foolish decision making of even an unbelieving husband. You just need to have enough faith to believe that God is powerful enough to carry out His good plans for even through your imperfect husband. Then the fear is erased, and nothing is left but rest and peace.

## 7 The Meaning of Submission

The following excerpts are taken from part 8 of "Building a Joyful Marriage." The full message is available on [FoodForYourSoul.net](http://FoodForYourSoul.net)



### Selflessness

The most oft-repeated responsibility of a wife in the New Testament is submission (Ephesians 5:22,24, Colossians 3:18, 1 Timothy 2:11, Titus 2:5, 1 Peter 3:1). Without question wives are to be submissive. But what does that mean? To answer that it's important to understand what submission is not.

**Submit as to the Lord**

### What Submission is Not

#### Not blind agreement

Submission is not agreeing with whatever your husband thinks. We know that because of **1 Peter 3:1 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives.** Here the wife disagrees with her husband on the most important, most fundamental issue that there is. He rejects the gospel and she believes it with all her heart. It's impossible to have a bigger disagreement than that. And yet even while differing that drastically from her husband, it is still possible for her to be submissive.

#### Not passive acceptance

The whole objective in 1 Peter 3 is for the wife to *win* the husband. Sometimes teachers say that you should not try to change your spouse. That is wrong. You should try to change everyone you know—especially your spouse. We are not to manipulate one another for selfish ends, but we are to work to change each other for their own benefit. Sanctification is the process of changing from less holiness to more holiness, and God expects you to play a role in the sanctification of the people around you – especially your spouse. The difference between sinful manipulation and the good kind of influence is this: sinful manipulation is when you try to get your spouse to adjust to your preferences in order to make your life more

pleasant, and godly influence is when you try to bring your spouse to greater holiness for the sake of God's pleasure. The goal is to change him in the most fundamental, dramatic way a human being can be changed. If you are fully convinced from Scripture that your husband is wrong about something you should not only disagree with him, but you should try to win him over to the truth (but you must use the 1 Peter 3 method—"without words").

### Not Slavish Subsistence

As we found in brochure #5, leadership in the Kingdom of God is fundamentally different than leadership in the world. In the world, being a leader means being served by those under you. But in the kingdom it's the reverse. If a husband asks his wife to do something for him he is asking a favor, which is fine, but her doing that service for him is a function of her love as a Christian. It has nothing to do with submissiveness.

### Submissiveness Is Not an Indication of Lesser Importance

In the world we tend to think of the one in charge as being more important than those under him, or better than them in some way. But in the Kingdom of God that is not the case. Remember, God the Father is the head over God the Son (1 Corinthians 11:3). God the Son is not of lesser importance or lesser dignity than God the Father, but there is an authority-submission relationship. Furthermore, according to Luke 2:51 Jesus was submissive to His parents. Were Joseph and Mary greater than the Son of God? Were they wiser, smarter, better, more important, more significant, more capable? No. They were infinitely less wise, less smart, less important, less significant, and less capable. They were not better than Him in any way. They were infinitely worse than Him in every way. Yet it was His role to be submissive to their authority and He gladly did so. Authority and submission have nothing to do with importance or ability.

### What Submission Is

The word "submit" simply means to place yourself under someone's authority and to be responsive to that authority. To our culture that is about as offensive and politically incorrect as a concept can be. We not only live in an egalitarian society that hates gender distinctions, but we also live in a rebellious world that hates authority. To call upon wives to respect and obey their husbands is counter-cultural in the extreme. But for the Christian woman it's not the first half of Ephesians 5:22 that come as a shock (**Wives, submit to your husbands**) but rather the last half (**...as to the Lord**). Obey your husband like you obey God! The world doesn't think anything of that second phrase, because they don't care about obeying God. But the more spiritual you are, and the more devoted you are to the Lord Jesus Christ, the more shocking the second phrase is, because our submission to Christ is absolute.

The following is a list of some of the ways we are called to submit to the Lord:

- Out of Love**—Exodus 20:6, Deuteronomy 11:1, 5:10)
- Completely**—James 2:10, Leviticus 20:22, Psalms 119:4, 2 Kings 21:8, Numbers 14:24)
- Wholeheartedly**—(Psalms 119:2)
- Permanently**—(Psalms 119:33,44, 112)
- Immediately**—(Psalms 119:60)
- Exclusively**—(Matthew 6:24)
- Profitably**—(Matthew 25:20)
- Patiently**—(Luke 12:38)
- Joyfully**—(Psalms 2:11)
- With Eagerness**—(Psalms 143:10)
- Above Any Other Authority**—(Acts 4:19, 5:29)
- From the Heart**—(Ephesians 6:6, Romans 6:17)
- As a Way of Life**—(Ephesians 2:10)
- Out of Delight in His Will**—(Psalms 103:21)
- For the Purpose of Serving Him**—(Psalms 103:21, Joshua 24:24)
- Out of Fear**—(Philippians 2:12, Psalms 2:11, Psalms 112:1)
- Delighting in His Commands**—(Psalms 112:1, 119:16, 72, 77, 97)
- With Loyalty and Allegiance**—(Jeremiah 7:23)
- When Unsupervised**—(Philippians 2:12)
- Out of Intimate Knowledge**—(1 John 2:3)
- In Order to Please Him**—(1 John 3:22)
- Not to Please Men**—(1 Timothy 6:14)
- By Loving His Children**—(1 John.5:2)
- Carefully**—(Deuteronomy 5:1, 8:1)
- In a Worthy Manner**—(Ephesians 4:1)
- Without Stain**—(1 Timothy 6:14)

That's how we are to submit to Christ. There is no possible way that the idea of subordination could be expressed in stronger terms than to say wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

### In Everything

Some authorities only have authority over certain aspects of your life. A police officer can write you a ticket for speeding, but he can't tell you what time to go to bed. A teacher has authority in the classroom, but does not have the authority to tell the student which TV shows he's allowed to watch. Your pastor can set policies in the church, but he would be overstepping his authority if he tried to tell you what kind of car to drive. Depending on the authority, there are various spheres in which you are under that person's authority. But what about the husband's authority? How extensive is that? Wives are called to submit "in everything." (Ephesians 5:23) Apart from him telling you to commit a sin, your husband's authority is absolute. It extends into every detail of life.

The command to obey your husband in everything like you obey God is extreme and astonishing and unsettling for the simple fact that your husband is not God. God is perfect; your husband isn't. God controls the future; your husband doesn't even know the future. God is all powerful; your husband can barely get out of bed half the time. God is perfectly loving and gentle and compassionate; your husband can be selfish, and harsh, and inconsiderate. And even on his best days he never loves perfectly. So Why are wives called to submit, and why is it so important?

## The Motive: Headship

Ephesians 5:22 calls wives to submit and then the very next word is "for," which means the next line is going to answer the question, "Why?"

### Ephesians 5:23 ...For the husband is the head of the wife

The wife is never told to submit to the husband because the husband is smarter, or because he is more capable, or because his decisions tend to be better. It may be that none of those are true. The reason for submission is headship. The man is appointed as the head (authority and leader) of the home.

And when it is used to describe relationships between persons, it refers to a relationship in which the one who is called "head" is over others as an authority and leader.

## Authority

When kids are playing and someone starts getting too bossy one of his peers might say, "Who died and made you king?" Sometimes you see what a poor leader your husband is and you feel like saying, "Who died and made you head?" Answer: Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ died and made your husband the head of your home. The authenticity of your husband's position as head of your home is based completely on the authenticity of the authority of Christ, which is founded on His death and resurrection.

**Philippians 2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name**

Christ established His authority through His death and resurrection, and then delegated that authority.

Romans 13:1,2 says that we must be submissive to the authorities over us because **there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted.** Your husband's authority in the home is Christ's authority. Disobeying, rebelling against, or being disrespectful to your husband EQUALS disobeying, rebelling against, and being disrespectful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you leave your kids home alone, and when you leave you

If you leave your kids home alone, and when you leave you point to one of them and say, "He's in charge until I get back. I want all of you to listen to him and to do what he says," if you come back home and find out that they didn't listen to him, they are in trouble for disobeying you. The Lord has pointed to the authorities in our lives and said, "They are in charge until I come back. Listen to them and obey them." And if we don't, we are guilty of rebellion against Christ.

Submit to your husband not because of your husband's leadership abilities, not because of tradition or convention or custom, but because of headship. The Supreme Authority in the universe has placed your husband into the role of head of your home, and has commanded you to submit to honor that.

You are not in a position to make demands on your husband. It is never appropriate for you to *tell* your husband to do anything. If you find yourself saying things like "Don't do that," "Clean up the mess you made," "I told you to take out the trash," you need to remind yourself that a subordinate is not in a position to talk that way to an authority. You can ask him to do things, but when you do make sure it is a real asking and not a disguised telling. Disguised telling is when you put it in the form of a request, but in reality it is an order. "Sweetheart, would you please clean up the garage?" Sounds like a question, but if he tries to answer "no" he discovers in a hurry that it was not really a question. If it is a true question your husband could answer either yes or no without you getting upset or going into a bad mood or getting depressed or scolding him or the silent treatment, or any other form of punishment.

Some women think it is their role to punish their husbands for bad behavior. They say, "If I don't do this he'll never learn!" He will never learn? Is God not capable of teaching your husband? It is not your job to teach your husband lessons by punishing him. If you want to win your husband over to godliness 1 Peter 3 tells you how to do it.

## How to Change your Husband

**1 Peter 3:1 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.**

When your husband is acting like an unbeliever is some way you reach him the same way you would reach an unbelieving husband—not through badgering or punishing or teaching him lessons, but through beauty without words – especially the beauty of purity and reverence and submissiveness.

## The Blessedness of Submission

Wives should submit, then, because of the greatness of the

Wives should submit, then, because of the greatness of the delegated authority. But that's not the only reason. Another

reason to submit is the blessedness of being under authority. Being responsible before God for decision making is a very heavy burden, and it is a wonderful thing not to have to carry that burden. When you and your husband are deciding about some very hard decision, nothing is more freeing and relaxing than to give all your input, offer your best counsel, and then just relax, knowing God has not placed on your shoulders the final responsibility for the decision, and resting in the fact that you can fully trust God in the matter no matter what your husband decides. Whatever decision your husband makes – that's God's will for you! You don't have to worry about whether it was the best decision.

Your husband can't do that. He has to bear the weight of responsibility. He can have some level of peace depending upon how sure he is that what he is doing is best, but he can't really know with absolute certainty. He has to concern himself with whether or not it's a good decision. But the wife is free from that final responsibility.

How tragic it is that God has given women this wonderful gift, and so many women have refused it, and have chosen instead to live a life of massive anxiety and needless stress. They feel like the responsibility to keep the family afloat rests on them, and so they have to figure out a way to manipulate and cajole their husbands into doing what they think is best. And when he doesn't do it they worry and fret and stress and panic and complain and sometimes even nag. And none of it is necessary. Taking control is not an option

"But what if he makes a bad decision? What if he runs the family into the ground or into bankruptcy? What if we lose our home?" When a woman thinks she has to badger her husband into doing what she thinks is best because if she doesn't, things will end in disaster; she is thinking that way because she believes that her seizing control is a valid option. She's like a driver's ed instructor who has his own brake pedal on his side of the car, so if things start to go bad he can take over. He will never just go to sleep and let the student drive, because he has to constantly watch to make sure nothing bad happens. Some wives are like that – they're over there with their foot an inch from the brake pedal, keeping a constant watch on what their husband is doing, and if things start to look bad they feel like they need to take over. And they think that way because they believe seizing control is an option. It isn't. God has not given you that as an option, and coming to grips with that can save you a whole life of anxiety. What does Scripture say about dangers that are outside of your control? Don't worry. Trust God. If it's something within your area of responsibility, then you need to concern yourself with it. But if it is outside your area of responsibility, just relax and trust God. If it's something you have no control over, there is no value in worrying about it. You don't stay awake at night thinking, "What if the clouds and the wind do the wrong thing? I'd better keep guard in case I have to step in and seize control and make sure they go the right direction so that no tornados hit our house." Even the worst control freak realizes that those

things are outside of her control. When you are content to leave those things in the hands of God, but you can't do the same with your husband's decision making, that usually means that you are under the mistaken notion that it is your role to oversee your husband. You want to be a mother to him rather than a wife.

"But his bad decisions have an impact on me. If we go broke, it affects me. His bad decisions can cause suffering for me." True. But so can the weather. A tornado can turn your life upside down – or even end it. But you don't worry about whether or not you should step in and take charge of the whether because you know it's not an option. The reason you struggle with controlling your husband is because you think that is an option. And you think it's an option because you have the power to do it. Trying to control the weather never works, but trying to control your husband sometimes does. If you apply enough pressure, you can get him to do what you think he should do. And so you watch over him like a mother watching a toddler, and you let him function as the head of the home as long as he doesn't do anything too threatening, but as soon as things look like they might not go right you jump in and take control.

After you've offered your wisdom and insights in a respectful way, and your husband then makes the decision, that final decision is outside your area of responsibility. And when something is outside your control the instruction of Scripture is simple – trust God and don't worry. God controls those things, and He promises to work all of them together for your good. That promise is in Romans 8:28. If a tornado hits your house, it's for your good. If the doctor tells you your child has an inoperable brain tumor, it's for your good. And if your husband makes some really foolish decisions that send you into bankruptcy, it's for your good. You can trust God to be doing you only good no matter what happens to you.

Why do you suppose God appointed someone as head of your home who can't even see into the future? Why did God appoint a fallible, sinful person who doesn't always know the right thing to do? Why put someone like that in charge? Because that forces both husband and wife to have to trust God.

There are women who understand all about trusting God when it comes to the weather and sickness and things that are clearly in God's hands. But they struggle to think of their husband's decision making being in that same category. But it is in exactly the same category.

If you can't trust God to take care of you even in the case of foolish decision making on the part of your husband, then placing yourself under his authority is a terrifying thing to do. If you think your well-being is in your husband's hands rather than in God's hands, then you will be so afraid of what might happen that you will never be able to submit. And you will be so afraid that you won't be able to submit. That's why the passage on submission in 1 Peter 3 ends by saying, "**Don't give way to fear.**" How do you overcome the fear? The same