

We come to our fourth Pressing Question this morning, Are you a submissive wife? And I want to consider this topic with the assistance of Ephesians 5:22-24, but—before we come to that, I want to repeat something I mentioned last week—the only way women can become better wives, is to become better Christians...

In other words, I want to remind you that Ephesians ch.5, is essentially related to Ephesians chs.1-4—Paul doesn't start with wives, husbands, and parents, he first starts with Christ—who He is, what He's done, and who we are in and because of Him—thus, we can never separate duty (be it domestic or otherwise), from the gospel...

Now—before I come to this question concerning wifely submission, I trust we all agree we're dealing with a topic that's despised in our day (even by professing Christians)—I suggest there's at least two reasons behind this dislike—[1] it's at times misunderstood or misrepresented (that is, it's portrayed in a way that's unbiblical), and [2] it often runs contrary to the prideful rebellion of native man (and woman)—thus, we want to consider what Scripture teaches (and not what we think, or what society thinks, or even what many professing Christians think)...

I. What Does Submission Entail?

II. How Are Wives To Submit?

III. Why Are Wives To Submit?

I. What Does Submission Entail?

1. The Greek word rendered "submit" literally means—"to arrange under, to subordinate, to be subject, or to obey..."
2. The word simply means "to submit"—to take the place of a subordinate beneath another person's authority...
3. Lk.2:51—"And He went down to Nazareth with them and was subject to them" Lk.10:17—"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name" Rom.8:7—"the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God" Rom.13:1—"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities..."
4. Thus—the word simply means—"to be in submission to"—necessary to the word is the acknowledgement of authority...
5. A person can only submit or be in subjection to, an authority that exists over you—an authority you submit to...
6. According to our text, wives are to submit to—"your own husbands"—the husband has authority over his wife...
7. Now—before I go further, let say something that I intend to underscore later, this authority is God-given authority...
8. That means—this isn't the invention of man, nor is it cultural in nature—this has roots in creation and redemption...
9. Thus—before I suggest what this wifely submission entails, I want to briefly suggest a few things it is NOT...
10. [a] It doesn't mean the husband is smarter than the wife—brethren, frankly put, my wife is far smarter than I am...
11. [b] It doesn't mean the husband is more spiritual than the wife—woman know, believe, and love Scripture just as men...
12. My friend, being the head, doesn't always mean the man is more spiritual, holy, and pious than the woman...
13. In fact, to be frank, I've often found woman just as, if not more sensitive and insightful toward spiritual things...
14. [c] It doesn't mean the husband is more favored by God than the wife—God doesn't like men more than women...

15. Man and woman are equally lost, equally redeemed, equally loved, equally important, and equally necessary...
16. But—wifely submission, as we shall see, simply asserts that God has given authority to the husband within marriage...
17. Thus—fundamentally, I suggest wifely submission includes three things—respect, compliance, and assistance...
18. [1] Respect, v33—"Let the wife see that she respects her husband"—that is—let the wife fear her husband...
19. The Greek word is the generic word for fear, which is used of "the fear of God", throughout the NT Scriptures...
20. When used of husbands, it simply means "honor or respect"—it refers to the treatment of someone in authority...
21. Wives are to respect their husband, as they acknowledge him as their head, or as having a God-given authority...
22. Now—though respect is broader than words, it includes behavior, it largely shows itself in the wife's speech...
23. [a] In the way she speaks OF her husband—that is, the way she speaks about her husband to friends and others...
24. She must show esteem and reverence, guarding his name and reputation, presenting him in the best possible light...
25. John Angell James—"Your respect will be manifest in your words: for instance, in your manner of speaking of him, you will avoid all that will tend to lessen him in the esteem of others; all exposure of his faults or minor weaknesses; all depreciation of his understanding or domestic rule. Such gossip is detestable and harmful, for can any thing tend more to irritate him, than to find that you have been sinking him in the esteem of the public..."
26. [b] In the way she speaks TO her husband, 1Pet.3:6—"Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord"—that is, she respected him in the way she spoke to him...
27. A wife must never speak to her husband as if he were a child, degradingly or shamefully, embarrassing him...
28. John Angell James—"The wife should be careful how she speaks *to* her husband, or even *before* him, in the company of her family or strangers: she must not talk him into silence; nor talk at him; nor say any thing that is calculated to wound or degrade him...she must not endeavor to eclipse him, to engross the attention of the company to herself..."
29. [2] Compliance—regardless how tasteless it is to our present culture, obedience is at the very heart of submission...
30. Tit.2:5—"older women should admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands" 1Pet.3:6—"Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord..."
31. Now—let me remind you of what we learned last week—husbands are to personally, sacrificially, and tenderly, love their wives...
32. Thus—if husbands are loving their wives, they're never going to ask them to do anything, that would harm them...
33. Furthermore, a loving husband doesn't go around commanding his wife to do things, he values her opinion on all matters...
34. Albert Barnes—"Husbands should never 'wish' or 'expect' anything that it may not be perfectly proper for a wife to render. He, too, should consult 'her' wishes; and when he understands what they are, he should regard what she prefers as the very thing which he would command. The known wish and preference of a wife, unless there be something wrong in it, should be allowed to influence his mind, and be that which he directs in the family..."
35. That is—a wise and loving husband, doesn't have to play the "submit card"—he listens to what his wife thinks...
36. Furthermore, a wise and loving husband, when able, allows his wife liberty to make choices within the home...

37. But—at the end of the day, the husband makes the decision, and the wife needs to support him even if she doesn't fully agree...
38. [3] Assistance—also essential to submission is the acknowledgement that wives are to act as helpmates to husbands...
39. I know this aspect of submission again runs contrary to our present culture, and perhaps even many professing Christians...
40. But—wives are intended to assist and help husbands in a way, that husbands are not expected to help wives...
41. Obviously brethren, in one sense husbands must assist wives as wives assist husbands, but that is not what I mean...
42. God made man first, and then He made woman from man, FOR man—to assist him as a helper suitable for him...
43. Gen.2:18—"And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him..."
44. The KJV renders these two words "helper" and "comparable" as "help meet"—a helper meet or acceptable to him...
45. The man was not created as "a help meet" for his wife—the woman was made for man, not man for the woman...
46. Remember—this was before the fall, and reflects what would have been perfectly true in every case, had man never fell...
47. Had man never fallen, every person would have been married, fruitful, and every wife perfectly submissive (Gen.3:16)...
48. 1Cor.11:8-9—"For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man (1Tim.2:13)..."
49. These verses are given as the reason why, women should have a covering, symbolic of man's authority over her...
50. Thus—regardless what the cover is, either an actual covering or else a distinctly feminine hairstyle, it should be evident that women are under authority...
51. Brethren, I know this runs contrary to modern opinion, but marriage is not a 50/50 thing, where husband and wife independently and equally pursue their vocational dreams...
52. What, tragically happens in many homes, even among professing Christians, the husband and wife are in competition...
53. There's no clear understanding, that vocationally, the wife helps and assists the husband in submission to him...
54. Now—how this looks in every home may vary—I'm the last one to impose extra-biblical regulations on people...
55. Husbands have the right and responsibility, to determine how this exactly looks within his own home and marriage...
56. But—neither husbands nor wives have the right to change what God has imbedded in the very fabric of creation...
57. Now—before I leave this first point, I want to suggest Paul provides two important descriptions of wifely submission...
58. [a] It's restrictive—wives are to submit to their own husbands—every wife as a husband to whom she must submit...
59. V24—"Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything..."
60. In other words—Paul is not teaching, that a wife must submit to every husband, or to every man she knows...
61. Every woman, must be submissive to her own husband, regardless whether or not her husband is Christian...
62. 1Pet.3:1—"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives..."
63. Husbands who do not "obey the word" must nevertheless be submitted to by believing and obedient wives...

64. My friends, let me make this very clear—every wife must submit to her own husband regardless of his maturity...
65. He may be immature, he may be ignorant, he may be proud, he may be unloving, he may even be unconverted...
66. Regardless of his moral and spiritual condition, regardless of his maturity or wisdom, wives must submit to them...
67. Thus—let me make this point clearly—if wives are to submit to their own husbands, they answer to none but their own husbands...
68. Wives are responsible to their OWN husbands, and, his views on how his wife honors him and assists him...
69. Thus—for example, since submission entails respect, it's up to each husband to determine precisely what this entails...
70. Not every husband is the same—one man may permit his wife to address him in ways another man would not...
71. Furthermore, since submission entails assistance, it's up to each husband to determine precisely what that entails...
72. For example, wives working outside the home—this again is up to husbands to determine what helps them and the home...
73. [b] It's inclusive—wives are to submit to their husbands in all things, v24—"Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything..."
74. I suggest to you, that by "everything" is meant EVERYTHING—in every area, situation, and season of life...
75. Now—obviously, this needs clarification—let me suggest two instances when wives should refuse to submit to her husband...
76. [i] If he expected his wife to act contrary to the law—in this case, the wife must obey God rather than man...
77. [ii] If he expected his wife to act contrary to conscience—that is, if he demands his wife to violate her own conscience...
78. For example, if a wife was convinced that by "head covering" is meant a literal covering, he should not forbid her to wear it...
79. Yes, he must attempt to instruct and teach his wife, to inform her conscience, but never to violate or transgress her conscience...

## II. How Are Wives To Submit?

1. V22—"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord"—that is—ultimately, in obedience to the Lord...
2. Wives are to submit to their own husbands, conscience of the fact that they do so in obedience to Christ Himself...
3. Eph.6:5-7—"Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men (Col.3:22-24)..."
4. Now—obviously ladies, I am in NO WAY suggesting that wives ought to be treated or viewed as slaves or servants...
5. But, my point in looking at these verses is to shed light on the phrase "as to the Lord"—notice it's used twice...
6. V5—"as to Christ" v7—"as to the Lord, and not to men"—that is—servants are to obey masters—"as to Christ..."
7. They are to understand that ultimately speaking—obedience to masters is obedience to Christ and not man...
8. So too—wives are to know that ultimately speaking, their submission is to Christ, who gives authority to husbands...

9. Thus—ladies there's simply no other way to put it—wives who fail to submit to husbands fail to obey Christ...
10. Now—I suggest to you that this phrase "as to the Lord" is both a powerful motive as well as a blessed comfort...
11. [1] It's a motive—that is, wives should submit to their husbands, knowing they do so, ultimately to Christ Himself...
12. Dear ladies, what a wonderful and important point—you might say, well my husband isn't as loving as he should be...
13. This may be true (it's certainly true no husband loves his wife perfectly), but you have to look past your husband and see Christ...
14. Is He worth your perfect submission—is He not worthy of loving and universal respect, compliance, and assistance...
15. Wives are to be subject to their husbands "as to the Lord"—they must look past their own husbands and see Christ...
16. [2] It's a comfort—that is, wifely submission for some woman is fearful, because it leaves them vulnerable...
17. Perhaps they perceive their husband less loving and caring as he should be—and to submit to them is fearful...
18. Well—dear ladies, I trust this isn't true of you, but if it is, remember your submission is ultimately to Christ...
19. One of the many complaints we hear against wifely submission, is that it leaves the wife vulnerable of abuse...
20. And obviously, there are wicked and foolish men who abuse women, and perhaps in the name of submission...
21. 1Pet.3:5-6—"For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror..."
22. Peter is here addressing woman who are married to disobedient husbands—men that do not obey the word...
23. I can only imagine the potential fear that might accompany such command—to submit to unloving and unwise husbands...
24. In v6 he describes Godly submissive wives in two ways—"if you do good (that is, as previously defined), and are not afraid with any terror (that is, trust God, and be not afraid of submission, even to a disobedient husband)..."

### III. Why Are Wives To Submit?

1. Here we come to a very important part of our study—WHY—is everything I've said merely the reflection of tradition...
2. There's basically two ways many professing Christians attempt to get around what I've said—they reinterpret (or distort) these passages, or else, they simply write it off as cultural...
3. That is—they admit these verses teach wifely submission, but they suggest we've evolved from such thinking...
4. Some people go as far as to admit Paul was a male-chauvinist, who viewed woman as little more than servants...
5. But surely brethren, this is very contrary to the overall unified testimony of Scripture, and in particular, this passage...
6. For the apostle provides two powerful reasons why wives are to submit to their husbands—creation and redemption...
7. V23—"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is Savior of the body..."
8. John Stott—"Two reasons are given, or least implied, for the wife's submission to her husband. The first is drawn from creation and concerns the husband's *headship* of his wife, while the second is drawn from redemption and concerns Christ's *headship* of the church..."

9. [1] Creation, v23—"For the husband is head of the wife"—this refers to God's original order in creation—the woman was made for man...
10. 1Cor.11:8-9—"For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man..."
11. This simply means—from the beginning God intended that man and woman would exist as husband and wife...
12. My friends, if there was never a fall, there would be no singleness nor bareness—in a perfect world, everyone marries and has children...
13. Woman was created for man—she was created to submit to her husband—wifely submission is a creation ordinance...
14. Thus—a non-submissive wife is unnatural—she lives contrary to the reason for which she was originally created...
15. Now—in light of this, can you see how ugly a non-submissive wife looks, how abnormal and perverted she is...
16. [2] Redemption, v23—"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is Savior of the body..."
17. In other words—marriage was created to reflect the relationship that exists between Christ and His Church...
18. Thus—a non-submissive wife is not only contrary to nature, but she distorts the redemptive purposes of God...
19. You see—it's rather easy to see how an unloving husband dishonors God, and distorts the holy gospel of God...
20. But—un-submissive wives equally dishonor Christ, and also distort the gospel of God, for they suggest Christ isn't worth obeying...
21. V24—"Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything..."
22. This is to say—just as husbands are to love wives as Christ loves the church, so wives are to submit to husbands as the church submits to Christ...
23. Thus—in closing, I want to suggest three ways that wives are to imitate the submission of the church to Christ...
24. Or, put another way, five ways the church submits to Christ, that wives are also to submit to their own husbands...
25. [a] Willingly—the church, all Christians, willingly, freely, eagerly, and readily submit themselves to Christ...
26. [b] Joyfully—the church, all Christians, joyfully and gladly submit themselves to Christ—they find delight in it...
27. [c] Sincerely—the church, all Christians, submit themselves to Christ not merely outwardly but inwardly also...
28. [d] Lovingly—the church, all Christians, lovingly submit themselves to Christ, for all that He has done for them...
29. [e] Universally—that is—Christians long to obey Christ in everything, to submit to Him in every area of life...
30. Now—let me finish by reminding every wife something—your acceptance with God is not based on your wifely submission...
31. Your acceptance with God is based on Christ's submission to His Father, as the God-Man mediator between God and man...
32. And let me remind you—His submission to His Father was willing, joyful, loving, and it was also PERFECT...