

## Family Issues 2 – Headship and Submission (Eph 5:22-33)

**Introduction** – While husbands are responsible for all that is going on in the marriage and family before the Lord as covenant heads, this in no way reduces the personal responsibility of the wife before the Lord as an individual. This is no different than the relationship between Christ's full responsibility for the church's sins and the demand for obedience to the law given to the same church. Wives should hear the same rebuke that Paul gives to antinomians in Romans 6 – "*shall I sin since it all falls upon my husband anyway? – may it never be*".

**Empowered Obedience** (Eph 5:15-21) – Christian obedience is works flowing from faith. It comes from the Holy Spirit's filling and we are all called to be filled. For wives, this is going to be manifest in particular ways towards their husbands, and it is going to be a means of God for your husband's sanctification.

**Submission, as to the Lord** (v22) – Volumes have been written to try to get out from under this. Hupotasso (submit), ironically, means "to put in subjection *under*." She is instructed to obey this command '*as to the Lord*.' This assumes she knows what the previous verses were talking about regarding being filled with the Spirit. Her submission to him comes from her '*fear of the Lord*' (v21).

**Headship and Covenant Union** (v23) – The wife is not called to submit to her husband primarily because he is the boss, but because of a covenantal union that places him as the head. His headship is delegated authority; it is not 'earned' authority. It is given to him because of a covenantal relationship established by God, not because he's bigger, stronger, smarter, or less sinful. It is also organic authority, like a head over the body, or like Christ over the church. The authority is tied to union and communion, not to a hierarchical flowchart.

**Submit to him in everything** (v24) – The test of submission is not when a wife is likeminded with her husband. The test of submission is when it wouldn't be her choice. This does not include demands to disobey the Lord, but it does include choices one makes within the bounds of Scripture.

**Learning Submission from the Church** (v24) – Wives are to imitate and speak about the church, who is to be in complete submission to her Head. Today's modern church is guilty of not submitting to Christ in everything. She is characterized as flippant towards His Word, and known to decide for herself what she thinks is right. In this circumstance, a wife has an opportunity to speak to the church prophetically in her actions.

**Learning Submission from Your Savior** (1 Cor 11:3, 1 Pet 3:1) – Wives must learn that submission is not demeaning, for Christ submitted to His heavenly Father. Christ always spoke about He and Father being one, and that everything He did and said was from the Father's initiation. Peter said that wives were to "*likewise submit*." Christ submitted because He trusted God's exhaustive sovereignty and because He understood the nature of God-established authority. Godly submission is never 'doormat' submission.

**Learning Submission from Your Husband** – Your husband, who is to nurture you from the Word, should also be teaching you about submission. But his words must match his life. You should see his submission to his authorities (God, the church, work, government) as examples of submission. His testimony should teach you to trust the Lord in every difficult circumstance.

**Respect: A Choice You are Commanded to Make** (Eph 5:33) – Summing up the covenant relationship, Paul commands the wife to respect her husband. The foundation of your respect is God's sovereignty and the office of husband. But respect must be cultivated and manifested in countless ways. Sarah is commended to you as an example, calling Abraham 'lord' and following him on some of the strangest journeys without fear. How you speak to and about your husband, and the common language and demeanor in the home in the daily activities of your life must reflect this attitude.

**Respect: A Tool You are Given for His Sanctification** (1 Pet 3:1-2) – It is amazing how often a woman who disrespects her husband is the same woman complaining about his lack of leadership. Respect, honor, esteem, deference, and courtesy will equip and encourage your husband and will bless your family. You have more power over your husband for good or ill than you realize (Prov 12:4). Women talk, and men know it. By faith, expect the rumors you spread about your husband to materialize.

**Respect: What to do when the perfume stinks** (Eccl 10:1) – Consider one worst-case scenario. Your husband is a Nabal, a fool, and everyone knows it (1 Sam 25). You, like Abigail, a woman full of good understanding, do not complain openly of your husband's wickedness. The only time she brought up his character was for the purpose of saving his life, his family, and his possessions. A godly wife may intervene on behalf of her husband for the sake of her husband and for his good. She may speak to him about his behavior or wrongdoings, but she may not do so out of bitterness or resentment. She may (and must in some cases) approach her elders for help if he persists in his folly, and it is possible to do so submissively and respectfully.

**Conclusion** – A godly wife is respectful and submissive, which is not to say that she is a passive dish-towel. She sees her role as helpmeet, coming alongside her husband to help him in the work of dominion God has given to both. Her faith is strong in the Lord in every situation, and she is a blessing to her husband as she speaks of the faithfulness he, as a member of the church she is imitating, is required to have as well.

*Dave Hatcher July*

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