

The Respectful Wife – Eph 5:22-24, 33b

Introduction – There needs to be a huge paradigm shift, a deep cultural repentance in the modern church with regard to submission, honor, and obedience to the Lord. And wives play a crucial role in speaking to the world and the church in this. A common complaint when told to respect their husbands is “but he doesn’t deserve to be respected.” Well he certainly may not be. But remember, do you deserve to be loved? Did the church deserve to be loved by Christ? Eve, come alongside your Adam, and learn from the scriptures how to serve him before God.

Submission and Respect – Wives are to submit to their husbands in a particular way and this is summarized in v33b as a particular (and practical) kind of respect. Wives are not to wait until a husband becomes respectable. There is no supposed authority residing in men that requires a wife to respect him. It is not an internal, inherent authority (*dunamis*) but an externally conferred authority (*exousia*). It is delegated authority, not earned authority. And so, it is God whom wives respect when they respect their husbands, and it is God whom they disrespect when they don’t.

Empowered Obedience (5:15-21) – Just as a husband is not to wait until there are feelings of love before he loves his wife, so a wife is not to wait until there are feelings of respect before she respects or submits to her husband. In fact, her obedient submission to her husband is never measured during times she agrees with him or sees it his way – she is to be subject to him “*in everything*” (v24). But where does the power to obey in that way come from? Christian obedience flows from faith; it comes from the Holy Spirit’s filling and we are all called to be filled. Submission and respect is manifested in how you speak to and about your husband, how you respond to his lawful requests, and the common language and demeanor in the home and in the daily activities of your life.

Submission, as to the Lord (vv22-24) – *Hupatosso* (submit) means “to put in subjection *under*.” This submission is to be rendered “*as to the Lord*,” which assumes she knows what the previous verses were teaching regarding being filled with the Spirit. Her submission comes from her “*fear of the Lord*” (v21).

Respect: A Tool You are Given for His Sanctification (1 Pet 3:1-2) – The foundation of your respect is God’s sovereignty and the office of husband. 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). It is amazing how often a woman who disrespects her husband is the same woman complaining about his lack of leadership.

Illusions Abound – Wives are often tempted to believe that they or their husbands cannot change and that things are too far gone. But change is always possible in Christ. Consider these extremes (1 Cor 6:9-11). Here lies hope abounding. In spite of what one is involved in, God says a person can put it behind him or her, just as the Corinthians did. And God has said that you have a particular place in the change that can take place in this covenant.

Not What I Signed Up For – Following their feelings rather than the Word of God, wives can be tempted to act as though they had a right to marital happiness (and always). This is instilled in us through our sentimental, chick-flick mentality of romantic love. What you have been given is a promise and grace of joy in the Lord (Phil 4:4). And the wife who cultivates this kind of personal contentment will also have a greater effect upon her husband.

Children – One of the wonderful blessings for a wife is the gift of children. But with children come other temptations. If she is not content with her husband, she may be tempted to give up on him and simply pour herself into her kids, thinking it is for the kids. Whenever a wife substitutes a child for her husband as the object of her helpful companionship, the relationship to her husband further deteriorates. Sooner or later the relationship with that child will deteriorate as well. But one of the best gifts she can give her children is a demeanor and a home full of respect for their father.

A Helpful, Respectful Companion (Prov 31:10-31) – Several messages could be devoted to this passage alone, but there are couple points to be brought out that weave into what we have been talking about. First, note that this virtuous wife is anything but a doormat. This is a picture of a glorious, lovely, intelligent and hard-working woman. This kind of wife will be able to approach her husband with helpful admonition, advice, and even godly correction. Help, given respectfully, never conflicts with submission. This is because submission requires her to help, to contribute, and to give what she has to offer. Done in submission to God, the man who has such a wife will find that “*he is known in the gates*” (v23 – this is connected to the other activities of the wife and not simply an indication that she is really busy).

Not Usurping – Since the Fall, the wife’s temptation is to use her strength to usurp her husband’s place while at the same time desiring him to lead. She is tempted to nag and not respect him. But if she understands the high-calling she has as the “*lady of the domain*” standing beside her “*lord of the earth*”, she will join him in the conquest of the world with her husband.

Finally – We live in a culture where the church does not know how to submit to her Lord. We live in a world where respect, honor, and deferring to one in a place of authority are ridiculed. Christian wives are in a particular place in this day to speak prophetically through their lives to the church and to the world. Go and respect him for the rest of your life. “*This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*”