

INTRODUCTION

1. We are looking again at Ephesians chapter 5.
2. I would like to invite you to take God's Word as we look at verses 22-24.
3. We are currently examining what happens when you're filled with the Spirit.
4. The apostle Paul states in verses 19-6:4 three consequences that occurs when you're Spirit-filled.
5. He said it would result in singing, thanksgiving, and submission.
6. We've already considered verses 19-20 which speaks of singing and thanksgiving.
7. Now we're looking at submission.
8. In our last study we noted three truths regarding submission: It is God's will; it is required of all relationships; and it is required of the church.
9. Tonight we're going to look more closely at the relationships that are listed in verses 22-6:9 with the first being wives.

10. Paul says in **Ephesians 5:22-24 (NASB77)** ²² Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything.
11. Two times in this passage we hear Paul calling for wives to subject to their own husbands.
12. Those two words, “be subject” come from the Greek word *hupotassomai* which means “to line one’s self under” (Rienecker) or “to rank under” (MacArthur).
13. The word has the primary idea of giving up one’s own right or will, i.e., “to subordinate one’s self.”¹
14. This word refers to a functional lining up and in no way implies a difference in essence...A wife is not a slave, standing in the center of the house awaiting commands...The relationship between a husband and wife is much more intimate, more personal, more inward, and more vital than that. That is indicated by the phrase, “your own husband.” There is a possessiveness here that assumes a wife would absolutely and willingly respond in submission to her own husband—one whom she possesses.

¹ Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers. *The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*. Zondervan. 538.

It is not a reference to any kind of inferiority at all; it's simply a God-ordained distinction in function so that society can be preserved.²

15. A wife is to submit to her husband “not as a slave, but as one who is provided for, cared for, and secured by her husband. It does not have nearly as much to do with what she does for him as what he is responsible to do for her. Headship belongs to the man...Man is constituted in such a way to be the stronger partner. Someone has to be the protector—the one who provides, preserves, and cares—and God designed that it be the man from the very beginning.”³
16. **Colossians 3:18 (NASB77)**, which is a parallel to Ephesians 5:22 says, ¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
17. The phrase “as is fitting” (aneko) is used of actions that are due someone. It could be translated “to be fitting, seemly, and proper.”

² John MacArthur, The Fulfilled Family. Study Guide. Grace to You. 14.

³ John MacArthur, The Fulfilled Family. Study Guide. Grace to You. 14-15.

18. It is used by Paul to Philemon in **Philemon 1:8 (NASB77)**

⁸Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you *to do* that which is *proper*.

19. It carries this same idea in the LXX where it is used of something that is legally binding.

20. Paul is saying that the submission of the wife is legally binding. It is due her as “an expression of necessity, obligation, or duty.”⁴

21. Her obligation or duty is “to the Lord”—the one to whom she is bound.

In **Colossians 3:19 (NASB77)** Paul tells ¹⁹“Husbands,” to “love your wives, and do not be embittered against them.”

22. This statement contrasts with the plight of women in the ancient world.

23. William Barclay writes, “Under Jewish law a woman was a thing; she was the possession of her husband, just as much as his house or his flocks or his material goods were. She had no legal right whatever. For instance, under Jewish law, a husband could divorce his wife for any cause, while a wife had no rights whatever in the initiation of divorce. In Greek society a respectable woman lived a life of entire

⁴ Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers. *The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*. Zondervan. 582.

seclusion. She never appeared on the streets alone, not even to go marketing. She lived in the women's apartments and did not join her men folk even for meals. From her there was demanded a complete servitude and chastity; but her husband could go out as much as he chose, and could enter into as many relationships outside marriage as he liked and incur no stigma. Both under Jewish and under Greek laws and custom, all the privileges belonged to the husband, and all the duties to the wife."⁵

24. That is not true as we will see in Ephesians chapter 5.
25. The woman is elevated and told to submit to her own husband as one who is provided for, cared for, and secured by her husband.
26. There are 4 truths related to a wife's submission to her own husband found in verses 22-24.
27. Notice the first: *The Call for Submission*.

⁵R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon : The Supremacy of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1989). 116.

I. The Call for Submission (v.22)

Paul says again in **Ephesians 5:22 (NASB77)** ²²Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Richard Baxter says, “To be subject and obedient, is to take the understanding and will of another to govern you before (though not without) your own, and to make your understandings and wills to follow the conduct of his that governeth you. Self-willedness is contrary to subjection and obedience.”⁶

A. It is Assumed from Verse 21

The words “be subject” do not appear in verse 22 but are assumed from verse 21. Verse 21 is a general command for all to be in subjection to one another and verse 22 is a specific command for wives to be in subjection to their own husbands.

B. It is to Your Own Husband

1. He is not calling for wives to subject to someone else’s husband; only their own.
2. He states this again in verse 24, “wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.”

⁶ Richard Baxter. The Practical Works of Richard Baxter. Volume 1. Soli Deo Gloria. 438.

3. Paul gave this same command to the Colossians in **Colossians 3:18 (NASB77)** ¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

4. Peter also gave this command to wives in **1 Peter 3:1 (NASB77)** ¹ In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.

Your own husband suggests the intimacy and mutuality of the wife's submission. She willingly makes herself **subject to** the one she possesses as her **own husband** (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3–4). Husbands and wives are to have a mutual possessiveness as well as a mutual submissiveness. They belong to each other in an absolute equality. The husband no more possesses his wife than she possesses him. He has no superiority and she no inferiority, any more than one who has the gift of teaching is superior to one with the gift of helps. A careful reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 will show that God has designed every person for a unique role in the Body of Christ, and the pervasive attitude governing all those roles and blending them together is “the more excellent way” of love (ch. 13).⁷

⁷John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 281.

C. It is to the Lord

She is to submit or line herself under her husband in the same way she would for Jesus Christ.

Since Colossians 3:18 tells us that this is an obligation that the Lord has placed on her as her role in society and in the home, she is to do this unto the Lord.

F. F. Bruce says, Paul “does hold that there is a divine instituted hierarchy in the order of creation, and in this order the place of the wife comes next after her husband.”⁸

Kent Hughes says, “This does not suggest (here or anywhere else in Scripture) that the wife is naturally or spiritually inferior to the husband, or vice versa. There is a hierarchy in the Holy Trinity, and yet equality. Orthodoxy teaches that the Son is simultaneously *equal* to the Father and *submissive* to him. Likewise, *equality* and *submissiveness* can coexist in human relationships, including the marriage relationship.”⁹

⁸F.F. Bruce and E.K. Simpson. Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians (Eerdmans). 289.

⁹R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon : The Supremacy of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1989). 116.

Everything we do in obedience to the Lord should also be done first of all for His glory and to please Him. Those to whom we submit, whether in mutual submission or in response to their functional authority, will often not inspire respect. Sometimes they will be thoughtless, inconsiderate, abusive, and ungrateful. But the Spirit-filled believer—in this instance, the wife—submits anyway, because that is the Lord's will and her submission is to Him. A wife who properly submits to her husband also submits **to the Lord**. And a wife who does not submit to her husband also does not submit to the Lord.¹⁰

Because the obedient, spiritual wife's supreme submission is to the Lord, her attitude is that she lovingly submits as an act of obedience to the Lord who has given this command as His will for her, regardless of her husband's personal worthiness or spiritual condition.¹¹

II. The Motive for Submission (v.23a)

“For the husband is the head of the wife.”

- A. The husband Functions as the Head of the Wife Just as Christ functions as the Head of the Church

¹⁰John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 288.

¹¹John Jr MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Word Pub., 1997, c1997). Eph 5:22.

He occupies the same relation to her that Christ occupies to the church.¹²

1. **1 Corinthians 11:3 (NASB77)** ³ But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

Paul is speaking in relation to a divine creative function that pervades all relationships.

John MacArthur says, “The principle of subordination and authority pervades the entire universe. Paul shows that woman’s subordination to man is but a reflection of that greater general truth. **Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.** If Christ had not submitted to the will of **God**, redemption for mankind would have been impossible, and we would forever be doomed and lost. If individual human beings do not submit to Christ as Savior and Lord, they are still doomed and lost, because they reject God’s gracious provision. And if women do not submit to men, then the family and society as a whole are disrupted and destroyed. Whether on a divine or

¹²William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Eph 5:23.

human scale, subordination and authority are indispensable elements in God's order and plan.¹³

William MacDonald says, "The fact that all believers are one in Christ Jesus does not mean that earthly relationships are abolished. We must still respect the various forms of authority and government which God has instituted. Every well-ordered society rests on two supporting pillars—authority and submission. There must be some who exercise authority and some who submit to that rule."¹⁴

2. God created the woman for the man. And in that creative order, He established the responsibility of headship to be that of the man.
 - a) **Genesis 2:18 (NASB77)** ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

¹³John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1984). 253.

¹⁴William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Eph 5:22.

b) **1 Corinthians 11:8-9 (NASB77)** ⁸ For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

c) **1 Timothy 2:13 (NASB77)** ¹³ For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve.

The husband should be the ever-vigilant and self-denying protector, guardian, deliverer, of his family, though his saving power can never come near the high level of Christ's. ¹⁵

B. The Woman Functions as the Body

The head gives order and direction not the body. The body's responsibility is to respond. This isn't degrading but functional. "When we see a body responding to the mind, a well-coordinated functioning body, the body is honored as well as the mind. But if the body doesn't respond, both are dishonored."¹⁶

Titus 2:4-5 (NASB77) ⁴ that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their

¹⁵*The Pulpit Commentary: Ephesians*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004). 211.

¹⁶ John MacArthur. *The Fulfilled Family. Study Guide. Grace to You.* 25.

children, ⁵ *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, *being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.*

III. The Model for Submission (vv.23b-24)

“He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.”

A. Jesus is the Supreme Model of Submission

He is described here as the Savior of the body who performed the supreme act of submission by giving His own sinless life to save a sinful world.

Verse 25 states how He became the Savior of the body: He “gave Himself up for her.” Verse 2 also mentions that He “gave Himself up for us, and offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

1. **Romans 4:25 (NASB77)** ²⁵ *He* who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.
2. **Philippians 2:5-8 (NASB77)** ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

B. Jesus is the Divine Role Model for Husbands

Just as He loved the church by sacrificing His life to meet their need of cleansing and forgiveness, so are husbands to love their wives.

The husband is to provide for, protect, preserve, love, and lead his wife and family as Christ cares for His church.

Wives are no more to be co-providers, co-protectors, or co-leaders with their husbands than the church is have such joint roles with Jesus Christ. **Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.**¹⁷

Paul ends verse 24 by stating that “wives” are to submit “to their husbands in everything.”

This is “everything” in pertaining to the will of God. If your husband tells you to do something that is disobedient to God, then you have to say what Peter said in **Acts 5:29 (NASB77)** ²⁹ We must obey God rather than men.

¹⁷John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 289.

The key to this is **Ephesians 5:18 (NASB77)** ¹⁸ be filled with the Spirit. When you're filled with the Spirit you will submit "to one another in the fear of Christ" and "wives" will be subject "to [their] own husbands, as to the Lord."

CONCLUSION

1. We all know there is great revulsion against this teaching in our day. People accuse Paul of being a bigoted bachelor, a male chauvinist, a woman-hater. Or they say his views reflect the social customs of his day but are no longer applicable today. Such statements are, of course, a frontal attack on the inspiration of the Scriptures. These are not merely Paul's words; they are the words of God. To refuse them is to refuse Him and invite difficulty and disaster. ¹⁸
2. Wives are you coming under the headship of your husband and lovingly submitting to Him?

Are you submitting to Him as you would Christ?

3. If you're struggling with submitting to your husband, it's because you're not Spirit-filled or you're not saved.
4. Ask Jesus to help you see this truth tonight as we pray.

¹⁸William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Eph 5:23.