

Ephesians 5:21-24 – Living as a Wife in Modern Times

Handfuls, GreekLexicon, TSK, Calvin, Rienecker, Geneva, Family, PNT, JFB, Robertson, Trapp, Clarke, Barnes, Gill, Henry, Vincent, Eclectic Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: Wherever Christianity goes, the position of women (mentally, spiritually, and physically) improves. On the contrary: **In Islam** men may have 4 wives and they are given directions in how to beat their wives, and many of their daughters suffer from genital mutilation. **In Hinduism** women's families have to pay their husbands' family to marry them. If they don't pay this dowry, those women are often mistreated and beaten by their husbands' relatives. Many women were burned alive when their husbands died so "they could go and serve their husbands, as they were the cause of their husbands' death." **In the West**, where we have abandoned God, the preciousness and benefits of women have been destroyed by feminism. Women are trained to think it is virtuous to be like a man and do everything a man does.

On the contrary, Jehovah elevates women. You can see this **elevation of women in Old Testament times...**many, many times...like in the Songs of Solomon! **What love and care** for Christ's bride is pictured for us there! In the Old Testament **men had to give a dowry** for their wives. **God only allowed 1 wife**, and when man did contrary to God's law, only trouble came. **In addition, in the New Testament** Jesus reiterated that **women could sue for divorce**, something prevented by the Jews. Women were **allowed to remarry** if their husbands committed adultery or abandoned them. Also, women were often **recognized for their skill and prominence**.

Why did women's position improve when Christianity appeared? Their position improved because their relationship with their heavenly Father was restored. Creation was being restored!

But along with returning of proper status came a returning of responsibility to the Lord. You will hear about this today.

Our headings are:

The Motive for the Submission of Wives

The Manner for the Submission of Wives

The Measure of the Submission of Wives

Our goals are: **That women will submit to and obey the Lord because of what he has done for them so men will better be able to fulfill their responsibility to their Savior.**

The Motive for the submission of wives

21 **submitting to one another** in the **fear of God**.

1. **Apostle Paul started with a general directive: Christians are to submit to the needs of each other.**

For Christians to survive in their callings and build God's kingdom, Christians must learn to submit to each other's needs-giving priority to each other's needs.

The word for "submitting" is a military word. This makes it clear that **submission is not an option!** Soldiers don't decide if they will obey an order from a general or not.

1Peter 5:5 Likewise you younger people, **submit yourselves to your elders.** Yes, all of you **be submissive to one another,** and be **clothed with humility,** for "God resists the proud, **but gives grace to the humble.**"

2. In our context today, the Apostle Paul specifically taught that wives must submit to their husbands.

A wife is to submit to her (own) husband, which is helpful for him.

When she doesn't submit to her husband she is dishonoring him. For example, when a woman prays in worship. 1Corinthians 11.

But be clear about this: **A wife's submission to her husband is a religious duty – a duty to God.**

3. The motive for a woman submitting to her husband is that she (not her husband) fears God.

It is natural and normal, because of sin, to hate submission. But **because a wife has a holy reverence for the nature and work of God for her, she submits.**

But notice what God does not say. He does not say that the woman is to submit to her husband **because he is kind** to her or **because he is a Christian,** or **because he is sweet!**

She submits to her husband because she fears God. If a wife had to submit to her husband because of his kindness or sweetness, **she would have regular grounds to rebel!** She submits to her husband because she fears God.

4. Lessons:

a. The "fear of God" is the motive for all obedience. (It is a Christian way of life!) **Because a woman fears God, she will love her husband and she will submit to and help him.**

b. Women are given religious equality in the Gospel (no gender is chosen over another) – but she is not equal in authority. Because we are sinners, if we are equal in authority, there will be chaos. Equality in authority is an impossibility.

c. A woman's submission to her husband does not mean that he is smarter. She may very well be more educated, more intelligent, and wiser than he.

The Manner of Submission of wives

22 Wives, submit to **your own husbands,** as to the Lord. 23 **For the husband is head** of the wife, as also **Christ is head of the church;** and He is the **Savior of the body.**

1. A wife submits to her husband as the church submits to Jesus.

2. So how does the church submit to the Lord? Willingly!

The church willingly submits to him because Jesus is her head. “Head” means “authority.” She belongs to him.

The church willingly submits to him because Jesus is her Savior. He died for her.

The church willingly receives the Gospel and the sacraments from Jesus. He nourishes her.

But don't lose the main point here: The **Bride willingly submits** to the Lord Jesus...

3. And how does a wife submit to her husband? Willingly!

Sarah called Abraham “Adonai.” Adonai means “lord.” It was a title of respect. Sarah did not try to rule him.

1Peter 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, 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, **being submissive to their own husbands**, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, **calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good** and are not afraid with any terror.

4. Some get into trouble when they try to take the analogy of the Lord and the husband too far.

They argue that **since the church submits to the Lord because of what he has done for her**, the **wife is to submit to the husband because of what he does for her!** But that is wrong! The woman is to **submit to the Lord because of what the Lord has done for her**, and the woman is to **submit to her husband also because of what the Lord has done for her!**

Yes, the husband rules, protects, and provides his wife. But the focus of this teaching is that you are to submit to your husband **because you submit to the Lord**. After all, no husband can fully rule, provide, or protect his wife! And no husband is worthy of being submitted to!

5. Lessons:

a. In our modern society it is almost as if you want to cringe and apologize if you have to say that the woman is commanded to submit to her husband. But beloved people of God, God's law is not up for a vote. You aren't in a democracy.

b. If a woman submits to her husband, and if the husband makes it easy for the woman to submit to him, there is nothing more blessed, there is no greater peace in this world. So submission to Christ, which results in submission to your husband, is good for you. **When this does not take place, there is no worse place to be than in a family that is full of fighting.**

c. You cannot obey Christ without yielding to your husband.

d. Because women must submit to their husbands, they can't rule in the church. It is true a woman has many ways in which she is superior to a man: she is usually more lovely, gracious, beautiful, thoughtful, and tender. But these gifts are not as suited for ruling in the church. This addresses an issue of the day: **There is a huge fight over complementarianism (a wife supports her husband) and egalitarianism (a woman is equal to a man in all things).** But God has given a wife distinctive duties that a man is unable to fulfill. A wife was made differently and has different skills. So a wife must not try to take over her husband's role and the man must not abandon his role (as men often do).

e. When people say the "woman is the neck" and the "man is the head," they are reflecting a pagan mentality. A woman is not to manipulate her husband to get her way. It is a wicked (or unlearned) woman who wants to rule her husband. Remember part of the curse God put on Eve was that she would desire to rule over her husband! And he, of course, gave up his leadership!

f. If a wife sees her husband likely erring, she should make an effort to convince him of his error. That is part of her complementary role. She is his adviser. If she doesn't do that, she is failing the one who died for her!

The Measure of the Walk of Wives

24 Therefore, **just as** the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their **own husbands in everything.**

1. "Therefore" should better be translated "but," but the meaning doesn't change too much.

2. So what is the measure of the submission of a wife?

A wife must submit in all things lawful, just as the church submits to the Lord in all things.

A wife is to submit to her husband even when he is bull-headed.

A wife is to submit to her husband even when he doesn't rule, provide, and protect perfectly.

A wife is not to submit to her husband if he tells her to do something wrong – break even 1 of God's laws and violate her conscience.

3. A wife is to submit to her husband "continually," for this is the grammatical tense.

A wife is not to obey when he is nice...but even when he is nasty. Remember, **the measure of so great a love is not conditional on his loving you**...that is not being emphasized here.

The only measure of non-submission is when the man's will conflicts with God's will.

4. The only reason a woman can walk this way is because she fears God and God has endowed her with the wealth of the church.

When you **don't submit** it is a **sign of arrogance and a lack of proper fear.**

Pride leads us to demand rigorously from others what we think they owe us; humility, leads us to give to others what Christ teaches us that we owe them. Which one fits you?

5. Lessons:

a. A wife is to submit to her husband cheerfully and faithfully in all lawful things.

b. It surely would not have been easy to submit to a husband, especially at a time when marriages were loose, but that is the Word of God. Society doesn't determine what marriages are to be like. Submission to one's husband is based on a wife's salvation in Jesus Christ.

c. There are two reasons a woman is called by God to submit to her husband: A woman's submission is for order, as established by God as the order of creation.

Genesis 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."

1Timothy 2:13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

The husband was recognized as the head from creation. Eve was created for Adam, not him for her. He is the head. Also, the woman is the weaker vessel.

A woman is to submit because she was deceived first.

1Timothy 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

Conclusion:

A wife must submit to her husband because she fears the God who saved her. A wife must submit to her husband willing, just as the church submits to the Lord Jesus. A wife must submit to her husband in all things lawful.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Libanius, an old pagan writer said: Oh, what women these Christians have! Are you one of these? Young woman, are you working to be one of these? Do you have a heart of submission? What about you married women, is submission in your hearts?

2. Your obedience must not be forced or pretended, but rather springing naturally from the affection you have received from the Lord. Yes, it is wonderful to have natural affection for

your husband, but he isn't always lovable. But Jesus is! And more, he loved you enough to die for you.

3. If you don't submit to your husband you are cheating him and robbing God of the honor he demands. More, your sons see you...your daughters see you...your unsaved family and friends and neighbors see you... What will they think of your salvation if you disregard your Savior's orders?

Finally, there is no good life without being Christ's child. If you want to be his child, ask him to make you his child! He can do it. He wants to do. He can and will do it because Jesus died in the place of sinners as you.