

# The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Woman of Grace: “Obedient to Their Husbands” (Titus 2:5e): Pursuing Submission In a World Filled with Rebelliousness Titus 2:5

Submission in Biblical terms is when we submit to wanting God’s way.

Since the Garden of Eden, and mankind’s Fall into sin—we humans have wanted our own way.

In Matthew 6, Jesus reduced life to one simple goal—seeking God’s rule over each day of our life.

Remember Christ's simple yet powerful words? Please open there with me:

*Matthew 6:33 "But seek **first** the **kingdom of God** and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. NKJV*

## Seek Submission to God’s Rule First

When sin entered the world, the woman desired to rule over the man; the man desired to rule over the woman, and both departed from their God-ordained roles in life. The Fall has impacted every part of our lives, including our marriages—as husbands and wives compete for first place.

Now, instead of being the Christ-like leader of his home, as the Biblical head over his wife, the typical man has become either dominant and forceful—or passive and uncaring.

In response, the typical wife has either resisted her husband’s control, or by his passivity had to become the leader she was never designed by God to be.

That is all because of the sin and Fall of mankind: all the distortion of marriage began way back in the Garden of Eden!

Biblical submission in marriage was designed by God; and His desires for godly marriages can only be understood and applied, when viewed in the proper context of His Word.

God commands each of us to first submit to Him (Matthew 6:33, James 4:7), and to renew our submission to His rule over our lives on a daily basis.

Then, after that chosen lifestyle of submission to Him, God's Word goes on to describe how submission to God impacts every other sphere of life:

- Citizens are to submit to their rulers (I Peter 2:13);
- Congregations are to submit to their elders (Heb. 13:17);
- Younger believers are to submit to older (mature) believers (I Peter 5:5; Titus 2), and so on. Because:

## **Mutual Submission is Part of God's Plan**

Remember the "Spirit-filled" life described in Ephesians 5:1-20? It culminates with the great imperative of Ephesians 5:18. Turn there with me next.

*Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit**, NKJV*

What happens when God's plan is followed? When we embrace a Spirit-filled walk the Holy Spirit graciously fills our hearts with a submission that overflows into every aspect of life.

Our topic this morning—grace-prompted submission for wives fits as just one piece of a much larger plan.

The clearest statement of submission for a wife comes in the middle of this much larger teaching about Spirit-prompted submission. If you trace the word and concept of submission in Ephesians 5:21-6:9, it is actually stated or implied seven times. This is the larger context of submission:

- We all are to submit to each other (5:21).
- Wives are to submit to their husbands (5:22).
- Husbands are to submit to being the picture of Christ and the church (5:23-33).
- Children are to obey (submit to) their parents (6:1-4).
- Workers (called bondservants) are to submit to their masters, as in an employee-to-employer relationship today (6:5-8).
- Masters (business owners and managers of today) are to submit to their heavenly Master (6:9a).
- Everyone is to submit to their Master in heaven (6:9b).

Please stand with me as we read Ephesians 5:21-23:

*Ephesians 5:21-23 (NKJV) submitting to one another in the fear of God. 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.*

## **Pray**

When we submit to God: we trust Him with our life, we stop seeking our own way—and He directs our steps. That is Proverbs 3:5-6 living!

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. NKJV*

Following God through life, starts with submission; and that is exactly where we begin our study of what God desires from every woman. Paul is explaining to Titus that:

## **Godly Wives Submit to Their Husbands**

God's final lesson for women in the church is submission. That is the clear message we see in Titus 2. Unfortunately, the KJV and NJKV obscure this clear message Paul gave to Titus.

*Titus 2:5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, **obedient to their own husbands**, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. NKJV*

Listen to how the ESV, NIV and NASB render this word correctly, as it is translated everywhere else it shows up in the New Testament:

- Titus 2:5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and **submissive to their own husbands**, that the word of God may not be reviled. ESV
- *Titus 2:5 to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, **and to be subject to their husbands**, so that no one will malign the word of God. NIV*
- *Titus 2:5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, **being subject to their own husbands**, that the word of God may not be dishonored. NASB*

God's Spirit led Paul to use the word (**hupotasso #5293**) translated "be subject to" because it does not mean 'obey'.

God does not say wives "obey your husband", like He commands children to obey their parents. Rather God says that a godly wife accepts and submits to the role in marriage that God has designed for her; and that she willingly subjects herself to God's order for her marriage, because:

## **Submission is Biblical**

Biblical submission is only understood in context of all that God has said. Submission is not just for women, nor just for wives—it is commanded at every level among all

believers. Submission is an attitude of humbly living out what God has called us to be and to do. Among believers submission is always a two-way subjection and never one-way.

God has established roles for the church and the home. Men are to fulfill the place of the leader as fathers and husbands. When a wife willingly follows her husband she is acknowledging to God her husband's role as planned and directed by God's Word.

No teaching of Christ's church is more disliked within and without than this doctrine. However, God blesses those who honor what He values. Biblical submission is vital for godly living.

In the church, the husband to whom Titus 2:2 was written was to have repented of any behavior that would be seen as impatient, unfaithful, unloving, or tyrannical. The wife has already been instructed that God expects her to never be rebellious, undermining her husband's authority or contradicting his leadership. This godly submission is part of spiritual maturity.

Believers who consider marriage should always come to an understanding of the implications of Biblical submission for their lives together. It is impossible to have a godly marriage when both or either partner wishes to remain independent.

There are some decisions that a couple will eventually face that no matter how long they discuss them—they will not agree. It is at that point that the godly wife submits to her husband's role—and he leads as best he can with his understanding of God's will.

This submission described in God's Word never means or implies any inferiority (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:24; Col. 3:18; I Peter 3:1, 5), because:

## **Submission is Mutual**

God designed marriage roles in the context of a spiritual partnership, godly love, and a Biblical covenant. In God's plan a husband's role is not to make every decision in the marriage, nor does the role as leader make his every decision a correct one. Paul describes this amazing partnership in I Cor. 7:1-40 and Eph. 5:22-33.

Thus mutual submission means a husband should always consider his wife's opinion or he is foolish. Paul wrote to husbands in Eph. 5:26, and described a leadership that involved sacrificial love for the ones being led. A husband who misuses his role as leader is just as sinful as a wife who refuses to follow.

When both marriage partners are believers and want to honor the Lord, submission is not a problem. Godly husbands seek to be servant-leaders who lead and serve in Christ's love as we see in John 13:1-7 as Jesus washed His disciples' feet. Godly wives respond in Christ's love, submit and follow their husbands.

This means that godly couples come to the place of mutual submission, as revealed by the following questions. Biblical submission is reflected by a positive response to these questions.

- **Husbands:** Are you ready to answer to the Lord for the decisions you make in when you have overruled your wife's opinions, and gone forward with what you thought was best in the situation?
- **Wives:** Can you voluntarily submit to your husband's decision after you have shared your heart, and still differ on the decision?

As we live out our marriages and personal lives before a watching world we either point them to an Awesome God or we give them ammunition to use against us and God.

When we don't live the way God asks us to live we are denying not only God's Word but also Him who gave us His Word to live for the glory of our Redeemer and Savior who died to purchase us.

## **Energized by Grace— We Obey God's Word**

That is why this grace-energized submission is so important. Note what Paul said when godly submission (or any of the other six elements of Titus 2:4-5) is lacking: God is not glorified and His Word is discredited. Look back at those words that conclude v. 5.

*Titus 2:5 ...that the **word of God may not be blasphemed.** NKJV*

For the world to be convinced that God can save them from sin they need to see people who live holy lives. God is mocked when we do not live what His Word commands us to live (Mat. 5:16; I Pet. 2:9).

A wife's proper relationship to her husband is as a lovely act of worship of Christ in our heavenly Father's eyes. Submission "as to the Lord" provides daily opportunities for the wife to worship the Lord through her gender-specific role within three realms: the church, the marriage, and the family. Pleasing God by doing what He asks is reflected in the following truths:

**Truth #1: Submission is a choice.** Believing wives are asked by God to submit as an obedient response to God. God never *makes* us obey—He *asks* us to obey. Husbands are not told to demand submission, but to win it by love (Eph. 5:22; I Pet. 3:1).

The Holy Spirit applies submission for a godly woman by the grammar of the Scriptures. Submission was inspired as a *present tense* (that means "ongoing") *imperative* (that means "non-optional"). So submission is a not a choice of whether to obey or disobey a husband, *but a choice to obey or disobey the Lord.*

**Truth #2: Submission is unto the Lord.** Submission is really between a woman and the Lord. It is a choice to do what He says, whether it is agreeable to her, understandable, or even possible humanly speaking.

It is also only presented in a positive way (what she should do), and never negatively (what she should not do). It is "as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). The same One who said, "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*" (John 14:15) also said, "*[Be subject] to your own husbands ...*" (Ephesians 5:22).

**Truth #3: Submission allows us to be what God made us to be.** When we see submission as God designed it to be, we find as Christ did—a lifelong meal prepared for our enjoyment by our Creator: "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work*" (John 4:34).

Did Jesus just dutifully obey? No, He delighted in obeying His Father. When a godly wife obeys the Lord in this area, God Himself begins to work out the details of His plan in her life. So:

## What Happens When a Wife Submits to Her Husband?

When a godly wife lovingly and respectfully submits to her husband's direction, she begins to reflect a lifestyle like the Proverbs 31 woman: she chooses to display a servant's heart toward her life partner.

Starting with some of the truths from Proverbs 31, we can see a beautiful description of a godly woman of submission.

- A godly woman of submission **draws her husband.** A godly wife realizes how hard it is for her husband to live and work in the world. Temptations swirl around him all day long. Weariness and discouragement come at him from all sides. So she decides that home will be a magnet for him—that beckons her husband to come.

Home becomes his place to refocus, be refreshed, and be renewed. Godly wives are the guardians of that refuge their husbands need: "*The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain*" (Proverbs 31:11).

- A godly woman of submission **pleases and honors her husband.** What man can ever resist this kind of a woman? She has a lifelong desire to do what pleases him:

*"She does him good and not evil all the days of her life"* (Proverbs 31:12).

Only the Lord has a higher place for this godly wife. No house, no job, no child, no ministry can distract her; she wants to please and honor the man God made for her. That is her calling and role given by the Lord himself.

- A godly woman of submission **blesses her husband**. The Lord said that our words flow from our heart. That means a godly wife, full of the Holy Spirit, would never speak wickedly about her husband or to him. She gives her mouth to God and meditates upon:

*"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness"* (Proverbs 31:26).

She honors him in her words, attitudes, and actions: *"Let the wife [see] that she respects [her] husband"* (Ephesians 5:33b).

- A godly woman of submission **serves her husband**. The Lord designed the men to be out "sweating" to provide, and the women to be inside making his entire world ready for his homecoming. A grace-energized wife directs the house, the children, the schedule, and the meals to all make her husband's life a joy:

*"She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband [also], and he praises her: 'Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all' "* (Proverbs 31:27-29).

The reason the Proverbs 31 woman is so amazing is that her marriage was at the center of all she did. It was her primary ministry!

- A godly woman of submission **forgives her husband**. Christ's love causes a Grace-energized wife to forgive her husband's failures, weaknesses, and struggles. God's grace allows her to look at him with eyes of love and to think the truth. Love him as Christ loves you is her motto.

*"Love suffers long [and] is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails ..."* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a).

- A godly woman of submission **waits for her husband**. Many wives are miles ahead of their husbands and can get so frustrated at their plodding. Don't discourage your husband; don't push him—wait for him.

*"Walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:1b-3).

- A godly woman of submission **inspires her husband**. That is what Peter said.. A dynamic ongoing relationship with Christ is the key to being enabled to

lovingly and respectfully submit to your husband's leadership. So, maintain a spiritual life full of devotion to God

*"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, when they observe your chaste conduct [accompanied] by fear" (1 Peter 3:1-2).*

## **Submission is a Divine Calling**

Submission in Biblical terms is when we submit to wanting God's way.

Wives, you are called by God to be in submission to your husband— to be his unique and suitable helper. Do you want to follow God's way?

Knowing what God wants is of little value unless it is applied to your relationship with your husband. Knowing these facts will not promote oneness in marriage. Wanting to do them will.

The Lord asks you to show that you accept your God-given role by choosing to want to live the life of a woman of godly submission by:

- drawing your husband;
- pleasing and honoring him;
- blessing him;
- serving him;
- forgiving him;
- waiting for him; and
- inspiring him.

Pleasing God means we personally, daily apply these spiritual disciplines and make them our chosen lifestyle.



## What Biblical Submission Is Not

The idea of wifely submission is therefore not a very popular topic in our day. Some resistance to submission is simply sinful rebellion against the will of God; but sometimes it reflects a wrong understanding of what the biblical wife's submission really involves. Therefore, to clarify a wife's role in biblical submission, we need to correct common misconceptions, and then discuss what Scripture really says about submission.

God says, in the second chapter of Genesis, "[It is] not good for man to be alone: I will make a help meet **for him**" (Genesis 2:18, KJV). The key word in that verse is the word "for." God made the woman for Adam—to complete him by adding a quality of life that previously did not exist.

Eve was a precious gift to Adam—to fulfill him as a person. And the Lord said that this was "very good." (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:23), and Galatians 3:28 all assert the spiritual, mental, and physical equalitarian status and dignity of women and men. However, in spite of this, there are still five common misconceptions about submission:

- **Misconception #1: Submission is only for women.** Actually, we are all commanded to submit to one another in Christ's body. So this is a universal responsibility, not merely for wives. (Eph. 5.21; Phil. 2.3-4; I Pet. 5.5; Rom. 13.1; Heb. 13.17)
- **Misconception #2: Submission is bondage.** Wrong. Jesus said that submission to obey what God has commanded is actually a tremendous picture of love. (Jn. 14.21)
- **Misconception #3: Submission means muting.** Never. The Scriptures which describe godly wives never state or imply that she may not speak. Rather, she is to become the treasured confidant, advisor, and completer for her man who stands in front protecting her—not silencing her. (Pr. 31.26; Ac. 18.26; Judges 13.21-23)
- **Misconception #4: Submission means invisibility.** Actually, a submissive wife opens the doors to endless opportunities because by obedience she frees God to give all that He in His plan wants to give to her. It is rebellion which hides anyone's true potential for God. (Proverbs 31 woman)
- **Misconception #5: Submission means inferiority.** God has ordained gender-specific roles for men and women within the church and home. The Scriptures never imply that a woman is anything less than equal with a man. In history many women have excelled men in many areas. But to excel with God, submission equals obedience to a God-given role. Jesus said, "*I can do nothing on my own initiative, as I hear I judge; ... I do not seek my own will but the will of Him who sent me*" (John 5:30, NASB).