

## God's Design For Marriage (Part 2) – Eph 5:22-33

Eph 5:22-33. We just started a new mini-series on this passage, because there's so much here, that's so important. God's design for marriage. And the more we adhere to it, the more he's *glorified*, and the more we're satisfied. Like following the plans of a good architect for a skyscraper. The more you stick to the blueprint, the happier *you'll* be, and the more famous he'll be.

But it starts with some groundwork. Some foundations from *last* week.

Husbands and wives are equal in value (Gen 1:27; Gal 3:28)

Husbands and wives are mutually dependent (1 Cor 11:11-12)

Get those things wrong, or lose sight of them, and you'll get the rest wrong.

Including the principle that . . .

Wives should submit to their husband (Eph 5:22-24)

That's the first aspect of God's design here in Eph 5. And the point we're still on. And husbands, this isn't just for your wife. To the extent that you fail to realize God's design for *her*, is the extent to which you'll make it harder for her to apply it. Husbands who are *clueless* about submission, make it difficult for their wife.

But that doesn't negate the command. V22 – *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*. Not grudgingly or bitterly, but joyfully and willingly. Because . . .

- **Biblical submission is a voluntary disposition and desire to joyfully yield to the authority and discretion of another**

It's an attitude and desire of your heart to *want* to follow your husband.

Unfortunately, it's often resisted with . . .

- **5 Common Objections**

1. "Submission is oppressive"

When it's actually freeing.

2. "Submission is wimpy"

When it's actually a sign of strength.

3. "Submission is harmful"

When it's actually healthy; just like *any* aspect of God's design for life. Objections we need to combat in our *own* minds, and refute in others.

4<sup>th</sup> then, is that . . .

4. "Submission is mutual"

That's where we left off. With *some* people who say, "Yes, wives need to submit to their husband, but husbands need to submit to their wife as well. It's a mutual thing."

And they base it on v21. *Be filled with the Spirit* [Paul says] . . . submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Advocates of mutual submission say, "See. There it is. We're supposed to submit to *one another* in marriage and everything. Everyone to everyone else."

But that's not what it *means*. For a *host* of reasons. 5 of them in fact. Starting with this:

**A. The phrase "one another" in v21 doesn't necessarily imply mutual submission.**

"One another" is one word in Greek (*allelon*), and while it *could* mean "everyone to everyone else," it doesn't *have* to; grammatically.

Like in James 5:16. *Confess your sins to one another* it says. Does that mean everybody should confess their sins to everybody else? No. That would be impossible. And inappropriate. The same is true in several *other* verses. Like 1 Cor 11:33, and Gal 6:2, and Rom 15:14.

So while the phrase "one another" *can* mean everybody to everybody else, like in the command of Jesus to love one another (Jn 13:34); it doesn't *have* to mean that, and *doesn't* in all cases. It's determined by the context.

And the context here in Eph 5 is submission. Indicating that we are to submit to those in *authority* over us. There's nothing mutual about it.

B, the second reason submission is not mutual, is that . . .

**B. The meaning of the word doesn't allow for mutual submission.**

The word submit. "Hupotasso" in Greek. By definition, it doesn't mean mutual. Because two people can't yield to the authority and discretion of each other at the same time. If one goes one way and the other goes another, mutual submission is meaningless.

**C. The use of the word doesn't allow for mutual submission.**

In the 40 New Testament uses of "hupotasso;" including "submit, submission, and be subject to;" it's used to describe the position of one person under the authority of another.

Like the submission of Jesus to his parents. (Lk 2:51) He was under their authority. Same for citizens subject to *governing* authorities; Rom 13:1. And believers subject to God; Heb 12:9. The word is *never* used with a mutual connotation, and it's *always* used in a *singular* direction; one person submitting to another.

**D. The analogy of v24 doesn't allow for mutual submission.**

V24. *As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands*. It's an analogy: Husbands are to Christ, as wives are to the church. And if *mutual* submission is the point, then according to the analogy, husbands should submit to their wives, and Christ should submit to the church. Which is heretical.

**E. The meaning of the word *head* in v23 doesn't allow for mutual submission.**

*Wives* [v22], *submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*. [23] *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church*.

The Greek word for *head* is "kephale," and means leader and authority. *The husband is the* [leader and authority] *of the wife even as Christ is the* [leader and authority] *of the church*. That's how the word for "head" is used in the *Bible*, and that's how it's used in *other* Greek literature of Paul's day.

Some people, however, assign a different meaning. Saying *head* means "source." And therefore submit means "draw from." So that v22 would read, "*Wives*, [draw from] *your own husbands* [as your source; whatever that means], *as* [you draw from] *the Lord* [as your source]."

Whether that makes sense or not, there's no linguistic *evidence* for such a meaning. It's outright fabrication; to skirt God's design. Head means leader and authority, and submission means yielding to it. 5 reasons it's not mutual.

Which brings us to the 5<sup>th</sup> objection. That . . .

### 5. “Submission is cultural”

Some people try to explain submission away by saying it no longer *applies* to us. “It’s cultural; just for Paul’s day. Like wearing a head covering in 1 Cor 11. We don’t have to do *that* anymore, so we don’t need to *submit* anymore.” That’s the argument.

But it’s not legit because head coverings don’t *mean* the same thing they did then, and submission is based on something timeless. That’s the bottom line. Because of the answers to 3 questions. Questions that can and should be applied to *all* matters of cultural relevance in the Bible.

Here’s the first:

#### A. Does the practice mean the same thing now as it did then?

Does the action that’s commanded, carry the same meaning? In the case of 1 Cor 11, the answer is no. It says that *a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head*. (10) She should wear a hat. Because a hat in those days, symbolized that she was under the authority of her husband.

But in our day, it’s just a fashion statement. Like any *other* piece of clothing or jewelry. It has nothing to *do* with authority. So wives need not do it. It’s cultural.

But submission is different. Because it *does* mean the same thing. Then *and* now. It’s still the voluntary disposition to joyfully yield. So it *can’t* be cultural.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> question to determine whether submission is cultural or not, is this:

#### B. Can the practice be separated from the principle?

If the answer is yes, it’s cultural. Like in 1 Cor 11. The *practice* is wearing a hat, and the *principle* is honoring authority. So the question is, can a wife show submission to her husband’s authority *without* wearing a hat? Can the principle be separated from the practice? And the answer is yes. A wife can still show submission without wearing a hat.

But the *same* cannot be said of submission *itself* with respect to headship; in Eph 5. Fail to submit, and you fail to honor your husband’s authority. They go hand-in-hand and can’t be separated.

So the practice of *head* coverings can be dismissed as cultural, but the practice of submission can’t.

And then . . .

#### C. Is the practice based on something timeless?

In other words, is the *basis* for the command, something that’s always been true and always will be? If so, it can’t be dismissed as cultural. Temporary.

That’s the case here in Eph 5. Where Paul bases his command to submit, on Christ’s headship over the church. A fact that’s timeless.

Y23 again. After saying *wives, submit to your own husbands*, Paul says *For*. Indicating that what follows, is the reason or *basis* of his command. *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church*.

Since Christ’s headship over the church is timeless, so is the principle of a husband’s headship over his wife; and her corresponding submission. So submission can’t be temporary or cultural.

3 questions, with one conclusion: submission is *not cultural*. The 5<sup>th</sup> objection we need to be aware of, to guard our hearts and help others. Because all 5 are false.

On the other hand, Paul lays out 4 aspects of submission here in Eph 5, that are *true*.

#### • 4 Uncommon Truths

Uncommon, because God’s design for marriage is so unique, and so few accept it; so few apply it. Which makes me think so highly of so many of you. As wives. Because you *do* accept it. You *do* apply these truths in your marriage.

Here’s the first:

#### 1. Wives should submit to their husband in everything (v24)

Straight from v24. *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands*. Not just the things you agree with, or the *good* decisions he makes, but *everything*. Even the bad ones. *Everything* means everything.

But does that mean you should do so silently? You know, just *withhold* your opinion when your husband’s about to drive over a cliff?

Sometimes. True. **1 Pet 3:1** says – *Wives, be submissive to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word [the Word of God; to exercise good judgment among other things], they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives*.

Sometimes you *should* remain silent. Because there are bigger things at stake than just the decision at hand. Things like faith, and repentance, and salvation.

➤ But that doesn’t mean you should remain silent *all* the time. Because helper “fit for” that you are, Gen 2:18, he *needs* your thoughts. He *needs* your opinion. God put you together so that you would complement him; *offset* his weaknesses. So it would be an *abdication* of your responsibility to withhold your opinion all the time.

But make sure it’s expressed with a genuine reminder that you’re *with* him. That you’ll support him no matter *what* the decision. And husbands, make sure you *receive* her input. God has *put* you together, and most of your decisions should be *made* together.

But push comes to shove, in the event of a disagreement, God expects wives to submit. It’s part of his design.

➤ Now, that usually raises some “What if” questions. Like, “What if my husband is a jerk and doesn’t *deserve* my submission?” Let me put it this way. His lack of love toward *you*, does not excuse your lack of *submission* toward him. His failure doesn’t alleviate your responsibility. You made a covenant.

“Okay, but what if he asks me to do something wrong?” In that case, you need to gently but firmly refuse. *Everything* doesn’t mean sinful things. That would violate *other* parts of Scripture. But even in resisting, you should express your *dislike* of doing so. And then there’s this one. “What if he’s hurting me or putting our family at risk?” For

that, God has provided several measures of *protection*, and you need to take advantage of them. Because the Bible does not teach *doormat* theology. Where you let your husband walk all over you no matter what. That's completely contrary to Christ's love for the church. The analogy and pattern for husbands in v25.

If he's *neglecting* you or *abandoning* you, get help. Go to a sister in Christ, or your Discipleship Group, or one of our pastors. And the same goes if he's abusing you *verbally*. Go to the church and get help.

But if he's abusing you *physically*, or putting your *family* at risk, get out of the house. Get out of harm's way, call the police, and *then* call the church. If he's hurting you, your responsibility to stay and submit just ended. I'm not saying you should automatically divorce him; I'm saying you should get out, get safe, and get help.

2 scenarios that warrant a *lack* of submission: he asks you to do something wrong, or he's hurting you and the kids. Short of that, you should submit *in everything*.

Second, the second uncommon truth in God's design, is that . . .

### **2. Wives should submit to their husband as their leader (v23)**

We talked about *this* under objections 4 and 5; from v23. *The husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* Just as Jesus is the leader and authority over the *church*, so too the husband is the leader and authority of his *wife*. Which means you need to *follow* him.

Unfortunately, far too many husbands fail to *lead*. Leaving a vacuum. And sometimes that vacuum needs to be filled. Like raising your *kids* in a godly manner. But don't compensate for his lack of leadership in *all* things, or he'll never step up. Better to let his failure show, and submit even in that.

### **3. Wives should submit to their husband as to Christ (v22,24)**

V22 says – *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*. And v24 says – *As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands*.

Wives, you should submit to your husband like you should submit to Jesus. Which means you better get your relationship with him right, or you'll never get your marriage right. Biblical submission in marriage, starts with biblical submission to the Lord.

And then last, the last uncommon truth, is that . . .

### **4. Wives should submit to their husband with respect (v33)**

That comes from v33b. Paul is at the *end* of his thoughts, and re-caps them by saying – *Let the wife see that she respects her husband*. Holds him in high regard. Instead of looking down on your husband, or thinking poorly of him, you should *esteem* him. Admire him. Appreciate him.

To which you might be thinking, "Pastor, you obviously don't know my husband." And you're probably right. But I *do* know, that your *respect* for him, will go a long way toward encouraging him to live up to it. Like the positive reinforcement we show kids. It encourages good behavior. When you submit to your husband with respect, it encourages him to be worthy of it.

Plus, he yearns for it. Did you know that? Your husband *yearns* for your respect. That's

why he tends to withdraw or get angry when he doesn't receive it. But when he does, when you show it and express it through your submission, it floats his boat like nothing else.

4 uncommon truths, in God's design for marriage. And the more you make them *common*, in *your* marriage, the better it will be.

Pray – Lord, help us in this. Help each and every wife as they live these things out. And each and every husband to make it easy; a duty of delight. We trust your design, Lord. And pray that your joy will be our strength. Your presence our peace. And our marriages, a source of satisfaction for us, and glory for you.

## **You Are Loved**