Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Wives, Marriage, and Submission
Scripture: Ephesians 5
Code: BQ92611

Because so much of the church has long disregarded the full teaching of Scripture, many believers find some of its truths to be unfamiliar and even hard to accept. And because the church has been so engulfed in, identified with, and victimized by worldly standards, God's standards seem out–of–date, irrelevant, and offensive to modern mentalities. His way is so high and so contrary to the way of the world that it is incomprehensible to many in and out of the church.

Few areas of modern living have been so distorted and corrupted by the devil and the world and caused the church so much confusion as those of marriage and the family. It is these issues that Paul confronts in Ephesians 5:22—6:9. He expands and clarifies the general principle of mutual submission ("be subject to one another in the fear of Christ," v. 21) by giving several illustrations from the family, beginning with the relationship of husbands and wives. Scripture makes clear that there are no spiritual or moral distinctions among Christians. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). There are no classifications of Christians. Every believer in Jesus Christ has exactly the same salvation, the same standing before God, the same divine nature and resources, and the same divine promises and inheritance (cf. Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; James 1:1–9).

But in matters of role and function God has made distinctions. Although there are no differences in intrinsic worth or basic spiritual privilege and rights among His people, the Lord has given rulers in government certain authority over the people they rule, to church leaders He has delegated authority over their congregations, to husbands He has given authority over their wives, to parents He has given authority over their children, and to employers He has given authority over employees.

In Ephesians 5:22–24 Paul begins this list by outlining the role, duties, and priorities of the wife in relation to her husband's authority First he deals with the basic matter of the submission.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands,(Ephesians 5:22a)

Wivesis not qualified, and therefore applies to every Christian wife, regardless of her social standing, education, intelligence, spiritual maturity or giftedness, age, experience, or any other consideration. Nor is it qualified by her husband's intelligence, character, attitude, spiritual condition, or any other consideration. Paul says categorically to*all*believing wives:**be subject to your own husbands**.

As indicated by italics in most translations,**be subject**is not in the original text, but the meaning is carried over from verse 21. The idea is: “Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ [and, as a first example,]**wives, … to your own husbands.”***Hupotasso*means to relinquish one’s rights, and the Greek middle voice (used in v. 21 and carried over by implication into v. 22) emphasizes the willing submitting of*oneself*God’s command is to those who are to submit. That is, the submission is to be a voluntary response to God’s will in giving up one’s independent rights to other believers in general and to ordained authority in particular—in this case the wife’s**own husband**.

The wife is not commanded to obey (*hupakouo*) her husband, as children are to obey their parents and slaves their masters (6:1, 5). A husband is not to treat his wife as a servant or as a child, but as an equal for whom God has given him care and responsibility for provision and protection, to be exercised in love. She is not his to order about, responding to his every wish and command. As Paul proceeds to explain in considerable detail (vv. 25–33), the husband’s primary responsibility as head of the household is to love, provide, protect, and serve his wife and family—not to lord it over them according to his personal whims and desires.

Your own husbandsuggests 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).

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