

Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 5:22-24 - Wives Submit to Husbands - Part 2

This morning we're continuing our look at what it means when God commands wives to submit to their own husbands. If you remember this is the household code section of Ephesians where Paul explains God's plan for how the household is to operate and he begins with the role of wives.

The role of wives is to submit to their husbands - last week we laid the groundwork for that. That groundwork is critical to know because the world really does hate the biblical concept of submission. Even in the curse God said that Eve's desire would be to rule over Adam, flipping the proper order. So what Paul says here goes against not only the grain of culture, but also accords with the affects of the Fall. And I think has infiltrated into many areas of life even as Christians.

We often allow ladies to venture into areas that really undermine the biblical admonition here. Maybe they don't seem harmful on the surface, but they don't do anything to prepare them for their tasks as wives and mothers. I think we see this prominently in sports or academia or careers that undermine basically all of these admonitions.

Competitive sports teaches women to dominate. It's no secret that women's college sports and professional sports are filled with lesbians. Why is that? Because they are being taught to do the things men are designed for.

Academia - especially collegiate - is filled with liberal ideology. I don't know how many Christian parents I've talked to who have sent their daughters - and sons - off to a university hundreds of miles away and they sit under hundreds of hours of teaching from liberal, atheistic professors who assign thousands of pages of reading from similar authors and they're often amazed that their daughters come back indoctrinating into a worldview that hates the Lord. Maybe some endure it, but has it helped them in their love for Jesus, has it helped prepare them for being an amazing wife and mom according to the Word of God?

Same with high powered careers. If you become good at being the boss babe at work, it's really hard to shut that off when you come home. And I don't know how many times I've seen families get stuck in the loop where the wife makes more money - sometimes a lot more - and the logical solution to life's monetary problems is for dad to stay home and take care of the kids while mom works, completely inverting the design of God in the home.

I bring these things up because these principles don't only apply to you who are currently husbands and wives. They apply to what you're teaching your children and how you're training your sons and daughters and grandkids.

Last week, we really just covered the general concept of submission and how it plays out in **Vs. 22**.

The rest of the passage really just fleshes out how that works and what that looks like. I mentioned I have basically 9 observations. So let's work through those.

So observation 1 is the initial command to submit.

2) Wives, submission is to your **own** husbands. Read 22

Sometimes you have to say the obvious thing out loud but wives submit to their own husbands.

Although **Vs. 21** says we are to have a general posture of submitting to one another in the church as a whole, counting each other more important than ourselves and deferring to one another.

The issue here is that in the home wives specifically submit to their own husband, not to just any husband. Other husbands don't have authority over my wife. My wife is not called to submit to just any man in the sense of obedience.

I mean to flip it around, if someone were to command your wife to do something and said to her “You need to submit to me,” you’d probably take issue with that and you should. Why? Because it’s improper order. They are trespassing the proper bounds of the marriage relationship. There may be a general sense in which we preference each other and esteem each other - but not in an authoritative sense.

So wives don’t just submit to any man who is a husband, and husbands you don’t have authority over other men’s wives.

The command here is to a wife concerning her husband. That’s the context. And it’s the same in all the marriage passages - Colossians and 1 Peter - both say explicitly submit to your own husband.

I mean, imagine the chaos if any man could come and command your wife to do whatever. The disaster would happen because there’s been no covenant, no union, her life doesn’t depend on theirs. There’s an intimate binding that happens in marriage where the wife and husband have a special union that affords these commands.

Sadly there are churches - and especially cults - that get this very wrong. Either that the wife submits to no men at all or that the wife submits to every man. And usually if it’s the latter, there’s rampant sexual immorality in the cult as well.

Turn to 1 Cor 14 for a second. I want to show you that the order of operation in a wife’s life is really God, husband, other men. That’s true even in the church where elders do have some amount of authority in the lives of the saints. But look here and notice where male authority resides. **Read 33b-34**

So women are to be silent in the church. They aren’t to have a teaching role. This doesn’t mean absolute silence but there’s no instruction, no theology that should be happening, no authority being exerted.

But what happens if a pastor says something or one of the elders say something that your wife isn’t sure about? She has difficulties with something said or done? What then? Who does she go to? Her husband at home. Why? Because he’s her head and he’s the primary authority in her life.

I’m guessing that not all of you agree with 100% of what I ever teach. That’s okay. But especially you wives, if you are struggling with something I’ve said your first move is to talk to your husband because he’s your covenant head in marriage. He’s your filter for what is said and done here. And even though I have some amount of authority as a pastor, he’s the one you are to look for for primary spiritual authority in your life.

So even in spiritual matters, unless there is rank heresy or disobedience to the Word, your husband’s authority outweighs the pastors authority. You are called to submit to your **own** husband. Back in **Eph. 5**.

So the command is submit, submit to your own husbands.

3. The command to submit is a command to the wife.

Paul aims this command at wives, not at husbands. What that means, gentleman, is that this is not a command for you to dominate your wife and make her submit. God doesn’t say “Men, force your wives into submission.” We never see that.

The command is to wives, not husbands. You can’t browbeat her and shame her and yell at her when she’s stubborn or even just struggling to follow. Your wife is not a child. She doesn’t get disciplined like your children. It’s just not there.

Well what happens if she doesn’t submit? I don’t know, it’s tough isn’t it?

What happens when you don’t lead well? When you fail at communication, when you sin against her, when your vision for your family is muddy or non-existent. Are you good with her nagging you and berating into leading? No, of course not. So this is hard in both directions.

But we need to understand that the commands are to specific people. Ladies, if you don't submit to your husbands it can cause a lot of difficulty in your home, but that's really between you and the Lord. That's all on you.

And if your husband refuses to love and to lead, that's all on him. And I'll just tell you this dynamic is hard and real. And we have to give grace to each other when we fail in our roles.

Husbands, you'll fail in your role and I think it's safe to say you'd want your wife to be gracious. And wives, you'll fail in your role and you want grace too.

Husbands, you might bring up the issue: "Baby, I know this is hard, but I really just want you to trust me and follow my lead in this decision." Then wives, it's all on you to follow.

If this is a persistent problem, then there may be other issues going on. Communication issues, how you talk about things. Unresolved tensions, bitterness that carry over.

But all that to say, husbands, it's not for you to force your wife to submit.

4. Husbands are never called to submit to their wives.

This is a short point, but I think it's important in the grand scheme of things. Never in the Bible anywhere do we see husbands commanded to submit to their wives. The command to submit is one directional because husbands lead the family.

Now, like I mentioned last week, husbands should delegate things to their wives. And especially you should delegate to their strengths. We should seriously consider our wives' opinions and preferences.

My wife and I recently decided to repaint the inside of our home. We have different tastes and styles. We're picking out this creamy color that will go throughout the house. I like one shade of cream and she likes the other. You know which one we went with? The one she wants. This is her office, her kitchen, her life she spends all day in. I want her to enjoy it to the max. It's not that I'm submitting to her, it's that I want her to flourish and enjoy things.

When I take the kids to go do stuff - hiking, shopping, trip, whatever; usually we hop in the van and I go through each kid and ask if there's a song they want to listen to and we just kind of rotate through songs. I wouldn't pick these songs - but I want them to enjoy the ride too.

These kind of things aren't an issue of submission. It's an issue where we take into account other peoples' preferences and the things that make them happy. Just to really clear, men: when you're leading your wife and kids, the goal here is sanctification and joy in your home. That's your goal. That things might be harder for a season but ultimately you are positioning them to be more like Jesus and have more joy in the long run.

It's not just everyone has to do it all your way cause you're in charge. The goal of leadership is loving your family.

5. Wives submit **as to the Lord.** Read 22

What does that mean? It's super simple: imagine it's Jesus telling you to do something and then respond like you would respond to Jesus.

That's what "as to the Lord" means. As you would submit to the Lord, in the same manner, with the same joy.

There are times when my kids are playing outside. And I'll send one kid out to tell the others to come in. That messenger - the herald of Dad - has no authority on his own. But he does have authority derived from me. So when tells the other kids that Dad said to come in for dinner, who are they really obeying? Dad. Or, who are they disobeying if they don't come in? Dad.

Same is true in the home. Husbands have authority from God in the home. It's authority given by God.

So this principle is simple, but it's not easy.

I remember 20 years ago my boss told me I had to go do inventory. We hadn't done inventory in weeks and it close to the end of the year and inventory had to be accurate for tax purposes. I was in granite fabrication at the time and our company had hundreds, if not thousands of slabs. I couldn't just count them, I actually had to measure them and they're all different. It's freezing cold and I couldn't get help because it's Christmas time - our busiest season - and I guess Santa doesn't come unless you have granite countertops.

And I'm just mad. I didn't even have a coat because I've got an office job and this is going to take forever and I've already got stuff to do which means I'm now working late on no notice. Not happy.

What's the mindset? The mindset has to be: What if Jesus told me to do this? I get a text message from heaven - it's the Lord - and all I get is "Hey go count slabs in the cold with no coat and you'll need to work late." What would my response be to the situation?

Ladies, that has to be the mindset you have when your husband calls you to something that isn't on your bingo card that day. You're tired, you're juggling babies, trying to get some schooling done, trying to get dinner done, trying to get anything done. And he asks you to do something or not do something.

It could be big, or it could be small. For some ladies submission isn't always hard when it's the big decisions of life. Those we have time to think about and plan and pray about and process.

For some ladies, it's harder to submit to random small things throughout the day husbands do. Husbands, you come home and tell the children to do this or that and she's already got them doing something. You're interrupting her flow. Do you have the authority to do that? Of course. Is it helpful and wise? Maybe not.

I come home and often I'll get bombarded with dozens of requests. I think the best answer is: have you asked mom? Does mom have you doing something?

Husbands, you want to do a new project and she already asked you to do 4 other projects that would make her life easier and those somehow gone off your radar. She's called to submit, but would you be okay if your boss did that to you at work?

You make plans without telling her, you buy things without knowing the budget. It always amazes me when husbands tell their wives they have financial goals and then completely upend those goals by what they spend. And then shrug likes it's no big deal. Yeah you can lead your wife that way. We'll see how that strategy plays out for you.

When we lived in Kentucky I had 2 jobs. Two different bosses. One was a terror and I actually figured out strategies to get him out of the office so we could get our stuff done. Just talk about the things we needed to buy and he would disappear like David Copperfield. The other boss also told us to do hard things, he had extremely high standards, but he was encouraging and helpful and communicated well and we knew he was on our side and he gave us a lot of latitude to do our jobs. And every one of us would storm the gates of hell for him.

Which authority do you want to be?

Ladies you are called to submit to your husbands just like you would submit to Jesus. Joyfully, willingly, quickly, knowing he does love you.

Gentlemen, we don't need to make submission as hard as possible. It doesn't mean we cower or avoid the issue. It does mean we approach the subject with wisdom and grace. In fact, I think we should make it as easy as possible. I wonder sometimes if we had to submit to our own leadership for 2 weeks if we wouldn't make some changes to how we do things.

So if your keeping an outline: Submit to husbands, submit to your own husbands, this is a command for the wife, husbands are not called to submit, and wives submit as to the Lord.

6) Here's the why: God has given husbands authority in the home. **Read 22-23**

Here's the why: because the husband is the head of the wife, just like Christ is the head of the church.

The issue here is authority. That's what the word "head" indicates. Just like Jesus is the head of the church - he has authority over the church - so too husbands have authority over their wives.

This is not a bug, this is the feature of the marriage. God has crafted men and made men to have authority. God has crafted women and made women to follow that authority and be a helper for their husbands. When those roles were reversed it means that we're not operating like God designed. **Turn to Gen 2.**

This is where it all starts. Genesis 2 is the foundation for the marriage union and the roles and design God has made. These are ways from **Genesis 2** that we know God designed husbands to have authority. I'm going to take some observations from Wayne Grudem here:

1. Adam was made first. **Read 2:5-7, 15-17**

So God makes Adam. The Garden is his, he's commanded to work it and keep it. That's his purpose, his call, his role and function. God designed men as workers to take dominion.

2. Eve was created to help Adam. **Read 2:18-20**

So Eve doesn't get half the Garden to do whatever she wants and accomplish her goals. That's what modern feminism teaches us. Marriage is a 50/50 thing. Wives can do whatever they want, lead whatever lives they want, their husbands should support them in all their endeavors. Nope, that's not the design.

She is specifically made and designed to help her husband accomplish the commands that God gave him. Twice she is called a helper.

1 Cor. 11:9: Neither was man created for two man, but woman for the man.

Ladies, you were designed by God in the womb to help specifically your husband - your husband. God made you specifically for him, he fashioned you for him to help him. This is a good thing. It's the beautiful design of God.

3. Adam named Eve. **Read 3:19-20, 4:20-21**

So 2 things to note here. The ability to name something or someone implies authority and care and purpose. I name my kids because I have authority to do so. No one else has that, except them when they're an adult. Why do wives take the name of their husbands? Authority has shifted.

Naming also implies care. Names mean something, and often just the name shows special affection. My wife calls me J - no one else does. My parents call me Jas - no one else does that. Because they have affection for me - Adam not only has authority but care and affection.

4. The Serpent comes to Eve. **Read 3:1-7**

Why does this matter? Because the serpent is crafty, what he tried to do was upend the creation order. He pitted Eve against Adam to bring sin into the world. He divided and conquered by going to Eve. By the way, did you notice: when were their eyes opened? Only after Adam ate. He represented the whole human race. It was only after he ate that both their eyes were open - he's the head.

5. God calls Adam to account first after the fall. **Read 3:8-12**

The woman who was deceived and it was the woman who ate first, so then why call Adam? Because he was in charge. He had the authority and he blew it.

6. Adam represents the human race, not Eve. We won't turn there, but that's what Romans 5 teaches: in Adam we all die. Not only is he the head of Eve, he's the head of all of us.

So all that to say, aside from even the explicit explanation of the husband's authority in Ephesians, God makes it clear husbands have authority as early as Genesis 2-3.

7) Your head is designed to save you. Read Ephesians 5:23

Remember that the relationship between Christ and the church is salvation. Christ is the Savior. He rescues his bride from death and hell and ruin. That's his role in our lives.

In the same way, husbands are saviors - lower vase s - of their wives. Husbands, your leadership and love toward your wife is never to be ultimately for her harm. It's for her good. It's to save her and rescue her. Not from hell, but from sin or worldly influences or deceptions. You are called to guard your wife.

Ladies, when you submit to your husband understand that that is his ultimate goal. Or it should be. All of his leadership is for your sanctification and protection and provision.

It's like in the military. Your commanding officer is there to help win the war. He's there so you don't die and your family back home doesn't die. You submit to him because you know his goal is success for your unit and for the country. His good and your good are the same.

That's how it is in the home. Sometimes ladies, your husband has to tell you - or should tell you - to stop doing things because they're not good for you. Maybe you need to stop going to that place, stop working on that project, stop hanging out with that person, stop working that job.

I was talking to a guy recently and his wife wants to pursue this education thing and a job and be involved in all these things. And I asked him, what do you think about all that? He said I don't like it. Why not? Because it's not good for her. I can see she's on edge, she has no peace, her time at home is suffering. There's pride involved, she feels like her goal is to make money.

I said, you should just tell her to stop. I mean, nicely. But husbands, if you know your wife is going off a cliff in life, you need to tell her. You need to give her direction. And wives, you need to what? Submit.

God has given us to each other for our sanctification. Wives if your husband says "Hey, baby, I love you but I think you need to not do this anymore." You should understand that he's trying to love you. You should not dismiss that.

The reverse is true too: ladies if you're husband is really involved in stuff that's detrimental, you should bring that to him. The difference is that he is over you and is charged with your sanctification directly.

So the wife submits knowing the husband is out for her good.

8. The wife and husband are patterns of Christ and the Church. I've said this several times, but I just want to reiterate it again quickly here. The roles of husbands and wives are mirroring Christ and the church. **Read 24**

This is the picture: As the head, Jesus died for the church to save the church. This is the core of the gospel.

And therefore the church always submits to Christ. So if a husband refuses to love his wife or refuses to lead his wife, his portrayal of Jesus in the marriage is warped.

But also if the wife refuses to submit, her portrayal of the church is warped. We're acting out the roles of the gospel in our marriage.

Final Observation.

9. Submission is broad. Read 24

What issues should the wife submit to? Paul is clear: in everything. Again, not sinful stuff - we've covered that.

In every area of the home. It could be what you wear, what you cook, the curriculum you use for the kids. It could be what car you buy, house you buy. The temperature you set your thermostat to. Where you spend the holidays, medical decisions, disciplining the kids, meals to cook.

There's no sacred space of autonomy in your life. Just like Jesus has broad authority in your life, so does your husband.

There was a dust up on the inter webs last year about this issue. And the question was posed: Is it okay for a husband to tell his wife to only wear red dresses? That was the entire question, no other context, no other information.

And my thought was: well, it's weird, but it's not sin. I mean Best Buy and Target have dress codes. Hospitals and law offices have dress codes.

I was amazed at how many people said no. "This is completely out of bounds. The husband has no authority to do such a disgusting thing. This husband is clearly a megalomaniac, he has some sort of control freak disposition, he probably beats his wife and abuses her." On and on. Over a hypothetical about red dresses.

Now, to be fair, that might be weird. Maybe it's unreasonable or demanding. Maybe she doesn't like red. But in the hubbub of everyone claiming abuse over a fictitious situation there were quite a few women who said: "You know what, if my husband really just wanted me to wear red, I'd do it. I'm his, he's mine. If I worked at an office I'd have a dress code too, so who cares. So if wants to give me some money for a new wardrobe so that I look good for him that's fine."

Which of the two responses better shows submission in everything? The latter. The Church submits in everything to Jesus, her Lord and Savior. And as a picture of that gospel, wives submit in everything to their husbands.

For their good and the glory of God.

Pray