

What Wives Wish Husbands Knew

Session 3—Submission

“I Wish You Knew What Submission Meant”

Life has a way of playing tricks on you and that's as true in my world as it is in yours. One of those tricks life plays on us is that we are sometimes coaxed into seeing ourselves in a more favorable light than is deserved. The peril of my vocation is that as ministers, we are often “exalted above measure.” Think about it. A pastor is the:

- **parson** (person)
- **episcopos** (overseer)
- **elder** (ruler)
- **angelos** (messenger)

Pretty heady stuff. Very often so many see only a highly spiritualized version of the real person:

- He's somewhat more than a layman, somewhat less than a god.
- Too pious to wear shorts and too dignified to watch American Idol.
- God cleaves the rocks to bring him water and supplies fresh manna and roast quail in his study, a dimly lit, inner sanctum—with old grayish books everywhere that are almost too fragile to touch—but he reads them.
- He's wise beyond his years; you couldn't prove it week by week, but from time to time he's asked to go to far off places, like Oklahoma, to teach—they must know.
- He can name all twelve disciples, without singing the song.
- The more you decry your holiness the more humble you appear and the more humble you appear the more people will exalt your holiness.

The peril of your world as a man, as husbands and fathers, is that you've most likely been given permission by the church community to see yourself in a light that is demonstratively undeserved, intellectually dishonest, emotionally unhealthy and biblically unsupported when it comes to the topic of submission.

I. Your wife needs a leader in the home...she doesn't need a boss.

You are not your wife's boss—you are her servant-leader—but you are not her boss, supervisor, superior, or project manager. God is...but you aren't. And unless and until you've been elevated to the level of the trinity, it's time to abdicate your position as the sovereign ruler of the kingdom of mansoul.

Godhood isn't a comfortable place—unless you're God. But in our culture it's a demagoguery that's hard to escape—until you go home.

- Family's are kind of slow to notice the presence of godhood in the house.
- They've noticed the malodorous air wafting forth from your holy socks...pun intended.
- They know only too well what too many slices of pizza does to you.
- They've heard you talk about faith and trust in God and seen you hit the roof when the roof needs repaired, as if God didn't even exist.

- Elijah called down fire from heaven—you can't get the fire place started.
- And you somehow look far less Spurgeon-esque at home in your munsingwear than others have envisioned you.
- There's no fooling the people you live with.

I rather expect it's the same for you. There's a de-godding, de-mystifying power in the home. At home everything that's not real just sort of gets peeled back and you can see what's really there. I like that too. Because it makes it real easy to figure out just exactly who you are. All you need to do is ask.

If they feel free to answer honestly, you'll find out in a hurry. Because no one knows you like your family does. They know you—the real you. And if you'll let them clue you in you can make some great discoveries about yourself, and you can make some valuable progress.

For that reason, among many, many others, I've developed an appreciation for the home and home life that borders fanaticism. I think every member of a family has as his or her life-long responsibility, to be and to do whatever is necessary to make their home what it ought to be—none more so than men, the servant-leaders.

II. The Issue of submission

I think the key to accomplishing that responsibility is submission—undoubtedly among the most misunderstood concepts in all of the Bible...

- To begin with, there are only five or six occurrences that I can find in the New Testament where the issue of gender submission is mentioned.
- But only two of those have to do with husbands and wives, Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, where the entire chapter indicates a reciprocal responsibility of all believers to humbly submit to the well-being of others, and certainly that would include a husband's behavior toward his wife.
- The others focus on male and female relationships but not as married to each other.
 - Most speak of a woman being submissive to a man.
 - But when the issues of submission and marriage are mentioned, the Bible clearly teaches that our goal is mutual submission or joint servitude.

ILLUSTRATION

It's interesting to me that among the comments I received about gender submission in the home, and I got a lot, men assume they understand it, while women admit openly their frustration with and their ignorance about the submission issue.

In other words, men tend to think they know what the Bible's position regarding submission is, but women say they don't know what it is really, but they seem to know instinctively what it isn't...and what it isn't is what their husbands assume it is.

ILLUSTRATION (Bill Gothard argument...)

What is a woman to do if her husband tells her he doesn't want her to read her Bible, pray, or attend church. He said she should obey him...because that was her biblical responsibility.

My question, which went over like a ham at a Jewish picnic, was; if his answer is correct, and she shouldn't read her Bible, attend church, or pray as a sign of submission to his authority over her...where does her obedience to him stop as it relates to her own ability to be a priest before God, and to claim responsibility for her own actions?

- What if he tells her to steal money from the church where she works as a secretary?
- What if he tells her he wants her to go bar-hopping with him and get drunk together?
- What if he tells her to have sex with him in the living room as the kids are coming home from school so they'll understand sex is a natural and beautiful thing? (Which I later found out was his way of laying ground work for sexually assaulting his own daughters).
- What if he tells her to have sex with another man while he watches and tapes it?
- What if he tells her it's none of her business what he does in his free time or with whom he does it?
- What if he tells her he's going to quit his job and by using their kid's college money, left to them by her parents, take early retirement, so he can spend more time with his family?
- I didn't have to imagine these scenarios...they're real, and I've looked into the faces of the women whose husbands provided this kind leadership in their homes...

It's a non-sequitor to assume that you have to obey any authority over God, even when they command you to sin, unless the sin is particularly heinous.

If it's ever wrong to disobey God it's always wrong to...otherwise there's no logic to it, and no one would ever be able to figure it out.

If it's ever right to tell an earthy authority "no" when commanded to disobey God, then it's always right to tell them "no" when they order you to disobey him.

That's the heart of soul of *hupotasso*. Any time that chain of command steps out of line, you do what the commander in chief has commanded.

FIRST DISCUSSION:

- Agree or disagree; you are not your wife's boss?
- Agree or disagree; your wife doesn't need another boss?
- Agree or disagree; the church community, unintentionally, has promoted an unfair or untenable position regarding gender submission, specifically as it relates to wives being obedient to husbands? Be prepared to give examples where possible without offending.

III. The Biblical concept of mutual submission is neither feminism nor chauvinism.

There's a white-hot, radical feminism running loose these days that insists on a declassification of the sexes. On occasion, to prove they are superior to men, some women have taken to wearing athletic supporters and burning their bras. They're kind of anti-God it seems—accusing Christianity of being anti-female, with the apostle Paul as its champion on one end of history and Bill Gothard its champion on the other.

(Factually, the only place Paul touches on equality of the sexes is in Galatians 3:28, and there he endorses it).

On the other hand there are those men who, misunderstanding their roles as leaders in the home, have been given to a Genghis Khan-ism that very often becomes controlling and brutal to their wives...all the more dangerous because of their fondness for quoting, if not understanding, Ephesians 5:22. Both positions are equally unfair, unkind, and unbiblical.

Listen, some women can hit a golf ball farther than some men; and some men can out-shop some women. What does that prove? Absolutely nothing.

HUMOR

"My dad can whip your dad." Said the other kid: "That's nothin', my mom can whip my dad!"

IV. Submission Means Loving and Loving Means Serving

If you love you serve. That's all there is to it!

QUOTE

"He who does not show his love does not love," said Shakespeare in Two Gentlemen of Verona.

As husbands we are required, by biblical injunction and precept, to provide leadership for our family through a submissive demeanor.

- A. Be careful to understand God's will as a leader in your home.
- We're living in tough times and only the wise are going to do well.
 - So make the most of it by understanding God's will and doing it (vv 15-17).

Ephesians 5:15-17

Therefore be careful how you walk (*peripateo*, to conduct), not as unwise men, but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but understand (*sunemi*, the ability to see things in relation to each other) what the will of the Lord is.

- B. Be spiritually controlled and empowered in all that you do.
- To do God's will requires the controlling power of the Holy Spirit and he demands that we all be lovingly submissive to each other (vv 18-21).

Ephesians 5:18-21

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation (*asotia*, excess, squander), but be filled (*pleroo*, constantly filled and controlled) with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹ and be subject (*hupotasso*, to line up under as in military rank) **TO ONE ANOTHER** in the fear of Christ. (emphasis added)

ILLUSTRATION—glass filled with water, glass in stream...

C. Be Christ-like, particularly toward your wife.

- The model that we're to follow as husbands that love our wives, is Christ and the love he demonstrated for his church.
- Husbands have the responsibility of learning how Jesus loved the church, and then emulating that loveliness for our wives.

Ephesians 5:22-25

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head (*kephale*, authority, direction) of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, he himself being the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject (*hupotasso*) to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love (agape) your wives, just as Christ also loved (*agape*) the church and gave himself up for her.

SECOND DISCUSSION:

- Why would men, generally speaking, resist rethinking the meaning of submission?
 - Fear of losing control?
 - Fear of being unbiblical?
 - Fear of _____?
- What steps can you take, if indeed you think any steps are necessary, to correct your thoughts and behavior toward women in general, and toward your wife specifically?
- How do we correct this in the church, again, if correction is needed?

Conclusion (Calvin Miller)

Let me remind you what some of these Old Testament guys did for the woman they loved...

- After spending 7 years as an indentured servant to earn the right to marry the beautiful Rachel...
 - Instead Jacob got tricked by his father-in-law, Laban, who brought Leah, a heavily-veiled schnauzer, to the wedding instead.
 - As if it were nothing, he gave him another 7 for Rachel.
- Who can forget Hosea's love for Gomer?
- Samson whipped 30 Philistines all by himself for his bride.
- To win the hand of the lovely Michal, David collected 200 foreskins which, according to a footnote in The Reader's Digest Version, the Philistines were very reluctant to donate.

There is much that you and I can do for the women we marry to provide them with protection but without being controlling.

There is a way to be chivalrous without being chauvinistic, to lead and yet obey the Scripture's command to be submissive to the needs of our family.