

Biblical Marriage Study

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Study #7

What the Bible says about the wife's role of submission in marriage.

The last two times we focused on the husband's duties in marriage—spiritually and physically. This time we will focus on submission as an important aspect of marriage and the Christian life—specifically as it applies to the wife—knowing that it might not be an easy discussion. Next time we will talk about the husband's need for submission in marriage.

Let's look first at an example Jesus gave us. Would someone please read John 13:1-17?

Washing the dust off a guest's feet as the guest entered the house was a common servant's task of New Testament days. What was the message Jesus sent to the apostles by His example?

- 1. He acted out an example of service/submission for them.*
- 2. He showed them that being committed to being a servant involves willingly serving.*

How does this story relate to the words of Jesus in Matthew 20:25-28?

It shows that Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve."

Someone read Ephesians 5:21-24. What is the admonition of verse 21?

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

What does having reverence for Christ have to do with submitting to one's spouse?

According to Matthew 22:36-39, a part of the greatest commandment is to love (agape) your neighbor as yourself. To agape is to accept and to serve. To serve is "to submit to." Therefore, if one has reverence for Christ, he or she will obey Christ and agape his or her spouse.

What is the imperative of verse 22?

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord."

How does this fit with the last phrase of Genesis 3:16?

God stated an order of authority between the husband and the wife.

Some say this doesn't apply to contemporary marriages. But it is interesting that Ephesians 5:22 is an extension of Genesis 3:16 and Ephesians 5:31 is a quote from Genesis 2:24. What might this indicate?

Ephesians 5 is a restatement of God's intent for marriage as far back as the time of Genesis 3.

What is the extent of the admonition of Ephesians 5:24?

Wives are commanded to submit to their husbands in everything.

What does “everything” encompass?

Everything! Social, spiritual, economic—every area of life.

Is this consistent with Genesis 3:16?

Yes.

Is this fair?

God is sovereign. His will is fair by definition. He is the Creator—God.

How can a wife respond to this admonition so as to please God?

By making Christ’s words in John 14:21 a commitment for her life with a promise from Christ—“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.” Thought by thought, feeling by feeling, breath by breath, and act by act choosing to submit to her husband as an act of obedience to God.

What if the husband is not worthy to be submitted to?

That is God’s problem. Notice there is no condition given for the admonition, no “if... then you should submit.”

How should one deal with these difficult admonitions of God in Scripture if he or she disagrees?

According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” To respond is an exercise of faith in God. To fail to bring one’s life into subjection under God is to reject Him as Lord, to be unrighteous, to displease Him.

Can you think of any differences in the created nature of the average man and woman that would support the logic of this assignment of leadership?

In general God has created man with a nature that is rational, objective, and cognitive (reasoning). Woman tends to be emotional, intuitive, and empathetic (feeling). Man’s role can be compared to that of a lion hunter who must be single-minded, rational, considering and calculating the objective possibilities of the object of his focus. Similarly, woman’s role can be compared with a wild horse tamer who functions best out of intuition and feeling, considering the needs and feelings of the object of her focus.

Someone read Ephesians 5:30-33. How does this fit with the Genesis 2 passage?

Apparently God intends marriage to be a witness to the world of the maximum possible relationship. He intends unity in the marriage.

What are the spiritual consequences of a wife refusing to honor the admonition of God to submit to her husband?

The spiritual witness is diminished. Refusal to submit is essentially denial of the sovereignty of God. To refuse God's will is to sin, to be unrighteous, and to be willfully separated from God. The result is likely to be disharmony and disunity because of the lack of God's lordship and blessing.

Someone re-read verse 33. What is the command for the wife?

To respect her husband.

What does respect mean?

Synonyms are: relate to, acknowledge, observe, be considerate, revere. If a man is shown respect, he will often rise up to the degree of respect shown.

In light of what we have studied about marriage thus far, how important are submission and honor in the marriage relationship?

Christ has clearly defined our role as Christians. It is to serve others. In a marriage we must be committed to serving each other. How can we ever fulfill this in the community if we cannot do it with the person we have chosen as our spouse?

How do we determine our spouse's needs?

Ask!