

## 17. Learning to Submit as Husbands

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit. We saw that those who are filled with the Spirit will have three attitudes present in their lives. First, they will have a song in their hearts. Second, they will have an attitude of thanks to God in all things. Third, they will have an attitude of submission to one another. In addition to this attitude of submission being shown between all Christians, we see specific instructions for six key relationships where we are to practice submission. In our last topic, we saw the instructions of how a wife shows submission to her husband. In our topic today, we will see how a husband shows submission to his wife.

Ephesians 5:25-27 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” First, we see that a husband is to submit to his wife by loving her just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. In 1 Peter 2:21 we read, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” In this verse, we see that Christ gave an example for husbands by the way that He gave His life for the church.

Then, 1 Peter 2:22-24 says, “‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” Christ did not sin. Christ did not speak deceit. Christ did not revile. Christ did not threaten. Christ committed himself to the Father. Christ suffered for the sake of the church. These six things are six things that husbands will do in their relationship with their wife if they follow the example of Christ. Then, 1 Peter 3:7 adds two additional things, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” Husbands are to show an understanding attitude. Husbands are to also give honor to their wife.

Second, we see that a husband is to submit to his wife by sanctifying and cleansing her “with the washing of water by the word.” Here, we see that a husband is to help his wife in her spiritual growth by sharing the Word of God with her and explaining the Word of God to her. 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Some wives may have much guilt or shame because of their past life. Here, we see that a husband is to purify his wife from the past by helping her to understand the greatness of the forgiveness of God. A husband does this by helping his wife to understand what the Word of God teaches about the forgiveness of God.

Third, we see that a husband is to submit to his wife by helping her become a glorious wife without spot or wrinkle. The word that is translated “glorious” means *that which is honorable or esteemed*.

Proverbs 31:28 says, “Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband *also*, and he praises her.” Here, we see that a submissive husband gives praise to his wife for her godly life and character. He wants others to know and recognize her ministry for the Lord.

We see how much a husband is to love his wife in the following verses. Ephesians 5:28-30 says, “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” Here, we see that a husband is to love his wife in the same way that he loves his own body. Most men take very good care of their bodies. Men do not treat their flesh with hatred. Instead, they provide the things that their body needs.

We see that there are two specific ways that men care for themselves that they are to show in their care and concern for their wives. First, a man nourishes his own body. The word that is translated “nourishes” means *to bring up or to nourish to maturity*. The only other place this word is used is in Ephesians 6:4 where we read, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” In this verse, we see that “nourishing” or “training” means *to bring them to spiritual maturity*. A husband is to have a great concern to help his wife grow to spiritual maturity, so they can serve the Lord together as a team.

Second, a man cherishes his own body. The word that is translated “cherishes” means *to keep warm or to cherish with tender love*. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 where we read, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children.” When a mother is nursing a baby, she holds that baby close to her and keeps that baby warm as she feeds it so that the child receives tender love. As a husband treats his wife with tender love, he gives her great security, because she knows that she is greatly loved by her husband.

These two things are also two ways that Christ shows His love to the church. We are reminded that Christ treats us with tender love because we are members of His body, His flesh and bones. The word that is translated “members” speaks of the parts of the body. Romans 12:4-5 says, “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” Christ shows great love to every Christian because every Christian is a part of His body. Then, 1 Corinthians 12:26 says, “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.” A loving husband will suffer with his wife when she suffers and rejoice with her when she rejoices.

Ephesians 5:31-33 goes on to say, “‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband.” Here, we see that Paul quotes from Genesis 2:24 to help a husband understand the plan of God for marriage. Adam and Eve had no parents yet God said to Adam in Genesis 2:24, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and

mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” God gave Adam a principle for all future generations since he had no parents to leave.

The word that is translated “be joined” means *to be glued or welded together*. Here, we see that a husband shows his submission to his wife by helping her to know that they are one in their relationship with each other. A wife receives real security by knowing that her husband has committed himself in a marriage relationship that is permanent and will last as long as they live. One day, the Pharisees questioned Christ about divorce to try and justify themselves. Christ answered in Mark 10:7-9, ““For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Here, Christ made it very clear that marriage is for life and a husband is to demonstrate that permanence as a part of his submission to his wife.

Paul said that this kind of a marriage relationship demonstrates a great mystery. A mystery was something that was not revealed in the Old Testament that has now been revealed in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the people thought that the statement to Adam was just about human marriage. Here, Paul reveals the mystery that the godly submission of a husband to his wife, by making their marriage permanent, is actually a demonstration of the fact that the church is the bride of Christ and Christ has committed Himself to the church in a permanent relationship. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:2, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.” The church is the bride of Christ and a husband models that unity by being joined to his wife.

Paul concludes the section on the mutual submission that there is to be between husband and wife by reminding both the husband and the wife of the meaning of submission in the marriage relationship. A husband is reminded that he is to show his submission by loving his wife as he loves himself. A wife is reminded that she is to show her submission by respecting her husband. 1 John 4:18-19 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” Just as an understanding of our relationship with Christ takes away our fear, the relationship of a godly husband and wife will also take away their fear.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to apply submission in their marriages by giving an example for them to follow. If we as a husband and a wife will model the kind of submission described in this passage, we will give our children an example to follow that will help them to build a strong marriage that will last throughout their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to practice submission in marriage.