



Submission & Harmony



So now we find ourselves back to the word submission. Let us consider this verse first in the examination of this chapter.

“...Yea, all of you be submitted one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.” I Peter 5:5b NKJV

It is every Christian’s duty, even obligation, to be mutually submitted to one another in humility. This humility is a means of grace in the Christian life. This submission is regardless of any marital or age consideration. It is a foundational act of faith and therefore a foundational means of grace. If we understood the importance of mutual submission and cooperation we would have stronger ties of love and unity within the whole of the Body of Christ. Leaders would walk humbly with those they serve, while congregations would work in cooperation with their pastors and elders. Younger believers would see the great wisdom in submitting to elders and the senior believers would give place for the young and enthusiastic. Parents would see their need to cooperate with their kids and children would see submission not as a family/trust issue but as a faith issue. And then we have married couples.



It's not often that we hear, "*Husbands submit to your wives*". But, believer to believer, husbands have a righteous duty to move in humility and cooperation with their wives - not as authority figures, but as equals and joint heirs in Christ. Pride stands in the way of receiving grace. Pride facilitates God's resistance toward us; therefore, isn't it likely that pride would facilitate anyone's godly resistance? In other words, since we are all created in God's image and likeness, it is not reasonable to conclude that the divine nature in us would also resist pride. But don't we?

Don't we find ourselves repelled by displays of someone's arrogance and pride? Don't you avoid the chronically proud? Don't you find that especially with strangers, you sometimes feel like the cat with his fur stroked backwards? You find yourself resisting even their suggestions, which somehow appear self-serving or pompous. It is almost instinctive. We are repelled by pride (the arrogant kind) in the same way God is repelled. It is our nature, because it is His nature.

Now consider the spiritual dynamic of marriage. If one party introduces a spirit of pride or control into the union, the natural counter reaction is that of repulsion or rebellion. And this may happen so subtly that it is not recognized for what it truly is until much damage has been done. Unfortunately, religious tradition has played a role in continuing a cycle of pride and resistance within the marriage.

With legalistic misinterpretation of scripture, both Old and New Testament, coupled with a modern view of current Middle Eastern and Islamic societies, we have led ourselves to believe in a sexist, male-dominated view of scripture and Biblical Christianity. This, however, is not the case. First, scripture can hardly be called sexist, even when the majority of heroes are men. Women are ranked highly throughout scripture. Honor is given to such women as Sarah, Hannah, Deborah, Ruth, Elizabeth and Mary. Miriam of the Old Testament and Anna in the New are mentioned as prophetesses. Philip's four daughters are mentioned as prophesying. Lois, Eunice, Phoebe and Priscilla, among others, are commended. Junia (a woman) is even listed among the apostles.

Israel may have been surrounded by sexist nations and may have reflected an apparent chauvinism in comparison to the modern age. But life in ancient Israel cannot be compared to modern Islamic society. Our use of words such as "rights" and "equality" are irrelevant in ancient Biblical society. Women received high esteem. Women were mightily used of God and were an integral part of His divine plan.

Similarly, New Testament passages have been misused to perpetuate a spirit of control in the Church. Neither the Holy Spirit nor Paul meant to portray women as second-class Christians, in subjection to men and without value other than as sexual outlets and mothers. Within the Church, men and women are equals and of



like value. It is in relationship to the family that wives are instructed to submit to their own husbands.

Here is the additional act of submission. First, husbands and wives submit to each other because they are Christians; then the wife submits to her husband as the spiritual head of the home. This is after they have walked in mutual, Christian submission one to another. It is upon that foundation that the submission of a wife to her husband can be built or even expected. We cannot expect a wife to submit to the headship of her husband in Christ until they have submitted to one another under the headship of Christ Himself.

One Flesh Unity

Husband and wife become one flesh. It is in the sexual union that this is physically demonstrated but it is in mutual trust and cooperation that it is spiritually demonstrated. Paul spoke¹ to the church about being one body. He said that one part cannot say it has no need of another part, but that the body though made of many members is still one body. Paul was addressing issues of pride within the Church, the Body of Christ. Husbands and wives have a similar need. They are each part of the other. No one part can exclude the other out of pride. Once married, a couple will grow in the one-flesh need for each other.

Sexual union is only a token of the one-flesh relationship. Perhaps it is because of its basic nature to the human condition that God chose to use it as a picture for the intimacy He desires with us, His people and between husbands and wives - living prophecies of His desire for union and intimacy with His creation.

In sexual intimacy between a husband and wife, it is our weaknesses that are exposed to one another. Our most private selves, our weakest parts, are shared, joined and given completely to one another. This is meant to picture the whole of the one-flesh relationship. It is not our strengths and greatest attributes that hold us together. It is our shared weaknesses, the humble exposure of our hearts and the linking of our private passions that produce a strong Kingdom building marriage. For in our weakness, He is shown as strong, and He makes us strong.²

1. 1 Corinthians 12
2. 2 Corinthians 12:10



Proper Order

Building in the proper order and sequence is important. No one would build the roof before laying the foundation. Nor would one build the second story before digging the basement. There is a proper order in building, even in marriage. The marriage should be built in this order and periodically inspected.

- #1 The spiritual elements are foundational. Know God's will and have a vision for your lives together. Build upon the areas of service and selfless activities.
- #2 Deal with your heart. Your heart is your inner being, not necessarily your emotions. The heart is built and nurtured by the Word of God and our obedience to it. Work on issues of faith, hope and love. These are inner issues and are of real spiritual substance.
- #3 The mind should follow the heart. Faith in God's Word and trust in Christ and His Holy Spirit will renew the mind, conforming it to the will of God. Create koinonia, true commonness of thought which leads to action. Bring thoughts captive to obedience in Christ.
- #4 The physical union of the marriage is the prophetic act which speaks of future things. Sex outside of marriage, outside of covenant, or illicit sex defiling the marriage will defile the future and the harvest. Improper seeds are sown producing a counterfeit covenant relationship.

What's Good For the Church Is Good For the Marriage!

- PRAYER** Prayer is essential to the spiritual life of anyone, but especially the corporate life of the church and the marriage.
- SUBMISSION** Submit to God and most issues are dealt with. Mutual submission will take care of everything else. And just in case you can't agree together, repeat steps one and two before moving on.
- WORSHIP** Being together in the presence of the Lord will allow the corporate Body and the marriage to unite and have the mind of Christ.
- SERVICE** Finding a place of service will give flesh to the vision and a means to focus energy outside of self and personal pursuits, no matter how good they might be.



Communication

Communication is key to harmony. Ephesians 4: 29 says this:

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

Colossians 4:6 says:

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how you should answer every man.”

The Apostle James knew that the ears of a man cannot work properly when his mouth is moving. He taught in chapter one and verse nineteen:

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath:”

And Proverbs 16:24 says this about our words:

“Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”

It is not only important to communicate the right, correct and accurate words - it is important to communicate the right spirit.

Common Pitfalls

Withdrawal or passiveness will kill harmony. Prayerfully seek out the root causes for any withdrawal or passiveness. It may be part of depression, or it may be generational. Seek out the root and destroy these behaviors.

Deadline pressure is a deceptive killer. Usually one is deceived into believing that it is okay to make decisions on short notice. Avoid this wherever possible. Sometimes planning ahead or saying NO are the only tools you have.

The fleece is an age old Christian practice which looks more spiritual than it really is. On extraordinary occasions God has answered by fleece. But it should not be the method of choice. We have a God who speaks.

Squeaky wheels get our attention. Some people have learned to only respond to squeaky wheels, while others have learned to squeak. This is not productive communication or a healthy life style.



AFFIRMATION

It is my decision and my chosen course of action to live in unity and harmony with My God, my spouse and my family. I will pursue humility of heart and cooperation with others in the plan of God. I will submit to my spouse, because as children of God we are working toward the same goal - the Kingdom of God. I know that the very strength of God will be found in harmony, which is righteousness. I have no righteousness of my own, but I am called to be the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. I will apprehend His grace for His righteousness to be worked out in my life and relationships.