

## Harmony at my House (Part 1)

### *The Spirit-filled Wife*

**Text:** Ephesians 5:22-24

#### **Introduction:**

1. In Vs. 18, we have the command to “be filled with the Spirit”. The Apostle then proceeds to demonstrate the fruit that flows out of a Spirit-filled, Word-filled life.
2. The Spirit-filled life produces:
  - Harmony in God’s House (Eph. 5:19-21)
  - Harmony at My House (Eph. 5:22-6:4)
  - Harmony at the Work House (Eph. 6:5-9)
3. Expositors: “The great Christian law of mutual subjection or submissive consideration is now to be unfolded in its bearing on three particular relations which lie at the foundation of man’s social life – those of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants.”
4. Family life as God ordained it works! The world has disregarded God’s design for the home and family and the result has been carnage, wreckage and chaos. Spurgeon said, “When home is ruled according to God’s Word, angels might be asked to stay with us, and they would not find themselves out of their element.” The problem is that “too many homes are an outpost of Hell instead of a parcel of Paradise!” (Wiersbe)
5. The kind of family life described in these verses is only a possibility for those who are:
  - Saved – “in Christ” (Chp. 1-3).
  - Spirit-filled (5:18).
  - Harold Hoehner: “The present context is very much related to the previous context, for only believers filled by the Spirit are able to please the Lord by fulfilling their duties and are able to live blameless lives in close and continual contact with their family or employment relationships.”
6. This section dealing with husbands and wives is the largest section with 12 verses. Children and parents are discussed in 4 verses and slaves and masters in 5 verses. This highlights the importance of Christian marriage! Marriage is the bedrock of society. Strong homes, churches and nations are only possible if there are strong marriages. No wonder Satan has concentrated so much on attacking marriage as ordained by God – divorce, polygamy, co-habitation, infidelity, adultery and now the Sodomite agenda.
7. In this message we will consider what God’s Word has to say about the Spirit-filled wife in the home under three headings.

#### **I. THE EXHORTATION TO SUBMISSION (VS. 22)**

Having issued the general exhortation in Vs. 21 for believers to submit one to another, the Apostle Paul now proceeds to discuss specific examples of submission that God requires. It is significant to note that in each case, the Word of God begins with the role of the subordinate.

##### **A. The Mandate to Submit (Vs. 22a)**

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1. The Definition of Submission – ‘submit’
  - a. What submission is **NOT**
    - i. Submission is not subjugation. Subjugation “the act of subduing and bringing under the power or absolute control of another.” A wife can appeal to her husband. She can have her own thoughts and opinions and share them with her husband.
    - ii. Submission is not slavery. A wife is her husband’s equal and counterpart to be loved, respected, cherished and adored by him. She is not his slave or piece of property! She is not a doormat! Illustration: Christian husband I heard of who would deliberately think up hard things to ask his wife to do to sets her submission to his authority.
    - iii. Submission isn’t about equality. It is about God’s lines of authority. We all submit to authority (e.g., pastoral, civil etc...). By submitting to those authorities, we do not cease to be equal with them in standing. In fact, the concept of all members of society having equal standing before the law is a Christian concept. Even within the Trinity we discern an authority structure yet there is perfect equality between each Member of the Godhead.
    - iv. Note: We should not be surprised that the natural man without God can’t make sense of God’s Divine order and structure for the Christian home.
  - b. What submission **is**
    - i. The word ‘submit’ is the same word as the one in the previous verse. It means “to be subject, subordinate; to order oneself under a leader.” (Hoehner) The word was “used in a military sense of soldiers submitting to their superior or slaves submitting to their masters. The word has primarily the idea of giving up one’s right or will.” (Rogers Jr & III) The word is in the present tense which points to the ongoing nature of this submission. It is a quality that is to be cultivated and developed.
    - ii. The word is used to describe Christ who was “subject unto” His parents (Lk. 2:51). It is the same word used to exhort Christians to “be subject” to civil authorities (Rom. 13:1). It is also translated “be under obedience” (1 Cor. 14:34), “under” (1 Cor. 15:27), “obedient” (Tit. 2:5). To be “under” your husband does not mean in the sense of being inferior to him but in the sense of being under his leadership.
    - iii. Question: What about the husband? The husband is the authority in the home in God’s created order and does not submit to the wife in the sense of her being an authority over him. However, he can and should submit to his wife in the sense of giving up his own rights yielding in love to his wife’s needs, desires and wisdom at times. Not every discussion and decision are a test of his leadership!
2. The Decision of Submission – ‘yourselves’

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- a. Notice that the verse does not say “husbands make your wives submit”. Some men have taken the verse that way and misuse it. The initiative for submission is to come from the wife. The husband’s job is to provide the environment of selfless love in which his wife’s followership can thrive and flourish.
  - b. This means that submission is a voluntary thing. It cannot be forced.
3. The Direction of Submission – “unto your own husbands”
    - a. The command is not for a woman to submit to all men generally but specifically to her own husband. The word ‘own’ means “one’s own, private, peculiar, unique possession.”
    - b. Note: The words “husband” and “wife” in this verse are often translated “man” and “woman” elsewhere in the New Testament. To be a husband, you must be a male and to be a wife you must be a female! These words are always gender specific in the New Testament. The word translated ‘husband’ never refers to a woman and the word translated ‘wife’ never refers to a man.

### B. The Motive to Submit (Vs. 22b)

1. “as unto the Lord” = the wife’s submission is to be done as if she were doing it for Christ. And ultimately, when we submit to God-ordained authorities in our lives, we are doing it for Christ. He is to be our focus.
2. Note: When we are out of line with God’s authorities in our lives, we are out of sorts in our fellowship with our Saviour also.

## II. THE EXPLANATION OF SUBMISSION (VS. 23)

### A. The Headship of the Husband (Vs. 23a)

1. ‘for’ = a reason is given as to why the wife is to submit. It is a part of God’s functional order for the home. The wife is to submit for two reasons:
  - a. Because of the Lordship of Christ – “as to the Lord” (Vs. 22).
  - b. Because of the Headship of the Husband (Vs. 23a).
2. 1 Cor. 11:3 “But I would have you know, that the **head** of every man is Christ; and the **head** of the woman is the man; and the **head** of Christ is God.”
3. The word ‘head’ in the Bible is used literally in reference to the human head and it is also used figuratively to refer to a position of authority.
4. The word speaks of authority and direction. The husband is God’s authority in the home over the family and he is to lead the in the ways of God. Sadly, today the problem is not always that the wife doesn’t want to submit. A Spirit-filled Christian wife wants to follow a spiritual husband. Often the problem is that men won’t lead their families! If you are the head of your home, why are you acting like you’re the tail???! If you are the head, why are you acting like a boy with his mother rather than a man with his wife?!
5. Headship = leadership, not dictatorship. Leadership according to the Bible is a servant-leader model as espoused by Christ. Dictatorship on the other hand is a high handed, autocratic, controlling, self-centered kind of leadership. Leadership in a godly

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sense is about being a servant. Leadership for a dictator is about total power and control.

### **B. The Headship of Christ (Vs. 23b)**

1. What is similar in Christ's Headship – as Christ is the head of the spiritual body the church, so the husband is the head of the one flesh, marriage unit. Christ is said to be “head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22), the “head of the church” (Col. 1:18) and the “head of all principality and power.” As Head, Christ supplies nourishment, unity and growth to His body (Col. 2:19).
2. What is different in Christ's Headship – there is a second clause that states that “he is the saviour of the body”. This reveals that Christ's relationship to the church is on a higher plan to that of the husband with his wife. The husband is not the wife's Saviour. The husband is the head only whereas Christ is both head and Saviour.
3. Wuest: “Christ, who resembles the husband in respect to headship, at the same time differs from the husband. The husband is the head of the wife, and in that he is like Christ; but Christ is also that which the husband is not, namely, Saviour of that whereof He is Head.”

## **III. THE APPLICATION OF SUBMISSION (VS. 24)**

### **A. The Example for the Wife's Submission (Vs. 24a)**

1. “as the church is subject unto Christ” = she is to submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ.
2. Note: All through this section on the husband-and-wife relationship there is reference back to the relationship between Christ and His Church. Christian marriage is supposed to picture that sacred and beautiful relationship Christ has with His blood-bought church.

### **B. The Extent of the wife's Submission (Vs. 24b)**

1. The church is subject to the Christ in all things. There is no area of the Christian's life that does not come under the Lordship of Christ. The church benefits from this submission to Christ. It is the pathway to blessing. In like manner, a godly woman should benefit from submitting to a Spirit-filled husband.
2. In a similar way, the wife is not to be independent from the husband God has given her. She is to work under his leadership as long as it is exercised within the boundaries of God's Word. This does not mean a woman can't exercise initiative nor does it mean she has to check every tiny detail with the day-to-day running of the household with the husband. That would be impossible! But she is to work within the framework he sets for her and accept his leadership in all areas.
3. Practical Suggestions
  - a. Uphold the authority of your husband in the home. Do not usurp his authority, especially in front of the children. If need be, resolve a difference in private discussion but try not to “have it out” with your husband in front of the family.
  - b. Remember that unlike Christ, your husband isn't perfect and he will make mistakes in his leadership. Forgiveness, grace and patience are needed. Remember, you are his helpmeet and over time you can help him become a better leader.

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- c. Bring things to his attention. Value his leadership in the home. No secrets! Some wives deliberately keep their husbands in the dark about things.
- d. Try to view his position as head as a blessing rather than through a feministic perspective.

### **C. The Limits of the wife's Submission (Vs. 22; Acts. 5:29)**

- 1. At this point, the question often arises as to whether there are any limits to submission if the Bible says she is to submit in "everything". The answer is "yes". There are Divine limitations to the husband's authority.
- 2. This command must be understood within its immediate context and the context of other Scriptural truths. The following two qualifying questions can be asked to help a wife determine whether she is to obey her husband or not:
  - a. Does it pass the "as to the Lord" text (Vs. 22)? Can what I am being asked to do be done as unto Christ with a clear conscience? We believe in individual soul liberty and a wife should not be constrained to do something that would violate her own conscience before the Lord.
  - b. Does it pass the "obey God rather than man test" (Acts 5:29)? Will obeying my husband mean disobeying the Lord? The wife is not to submit to her husband in anything sinful including abuse.

### **Conclusion:**

- 1. Challenge to wives: Do you know something of the filling of the Spirit in your relationship towards your husband? If you are in submission to Christ, then you will also be in submission to your husband. Do you have a Christian mindset concerning your role as a wife or a worldly mindset?
- 2. Challenge to husbands: Are you being a good leader for your wife to follow? Are you spiritually strong or weak?