

SUBMISSION

Read Ephesians 5:22-33

Christian or cultural?

- Is Paul's teaching here locked into first century culture?
- It is more closely locked in with redemption
- Marriage is seen as a reflection of the love of Christ for his church (not the reverse)
- This is unchanging

Men and women

- *Standing* Equal before God (Galatians 3:28 etc).
- *Gifting* The Spirit is poured out on both men and women (Act 2:1ff; John 20:1ff; Act 2:17ff)
- *Ministry* There are women among Paul's fellow workers (Acts 18:26ff; Romans 16:3,7,12 etc)
- *Home life* Husband and wife are to submit to each other (Eph 5:21ff).
- *Church leadership* No record of women elders in any NT church; although there are women in ministry

Be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18)

This command is followed by a series of participles (19-21)—

- Addressing
- Singing
- Making melody
- Giving thanks
- Submitting

All these apply to us all. We are all expected to submit to one another.

What are the roles of a wife?

(This section is written by Vanessa Chant)

Submission

- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21)
- Submit to your husband as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:25)

Submission does not mean subjection.

Greek = *hupotasso* ie literally to put oneself under another (to lift them up?) The English word derives from the Latin *submitto* (*sub* = under; *mitto* = send). Compare *hupokouo* = be subject to, obey. Usually used of soldiers and children, not wives.

To submit means being willing to give way to another in order to help them.

- It is something we do voluntarily. Paul does not say, ‘Husbands make your wife submit,’ or, ‘Force them to submit.’
- Nor does it mean any sort of legalism.
- Nor does it mean that as women, what we want need, feel, and experience is not important.

However, if we are not afraid of submission and we submit to Christ, we have a chance of getting it right. And of course if we are being loved as Christ loved the Church there will be no problem with submission.

In *The Sacred Marriage*, Gary Thomas asks, ‘What if God designed marriage to make us holy, more than to make us happy?’

Marriage is journey, that’s why commitment is so important. It is like the seasons of Spring, Summer Autumn and Winter. The winters do creep in sometimes, but they do move on.

Identity

My understanding of my identity helps me to define my role. My identity comprises —

- Gender (intuitive or cognitive?)
- Faith
- Personality
- Talents

My identity is unique. I am God’s workmanship (Ephesians 2:10)

How do we define our roles as a wife?

My role is influenced by —

- Culture — includes family, geographic and socio-economic factors
- Family of origin — role expectations may be handed down from generation to generation
- Education—what have I been taught?
- Spirituality—faith in Jesus and the fullness of the Spirit affect all my relationships

We need to separate roles and tasks, what I am from what I do.

- ROLE — a role is who I am
- TASK — a task is what I do

Roles do not change. But tasks do. The allocation of tasks needs to be fair.

What are the most important roles for a wife?

If I understand who I am, I can be—

- Companion—even in Eden Adam was lonely without Eve (Genesis 2:18). Friendship undergirds marriage.

- Inspirer—men need to be inspired; if they are dragged down at home, they do not function well anywhere.
- Lover—it is important to meet each other's needs here (1 Cor 7:5)
- Mother
- Nurturer
- Comforter
- Homemaker
- Counsellor
- Evangelist—mothers have the best opportunity to bring their children to Christ. The best time to start evangelising is the day they are born! The 2-4 age group is especially important. It is surprising how much is learned, in those years.

(To be continued)

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

1. Submitting to one another follows from being Spirit-filled (18-21). How does being filled with the Spirit help us to submit? (Galatians 5:16-23 might help you here.)
2. What does it mean in practical terms to submit to one another? (21) Give examples of situations from your own experience or observation where godly submission has been practised.
3. Which do you think is more difficult? For a wife to submit to her husband or for a husband to love his wife? Give reasons.
4. 'Both submission and love require sacrifice.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
5. A bride ought to be pure on her wedding day (27). Why do you think this is important?
6. What if a woman is not a virgin when she is married? What does this passage suggest? (25, 26)
7. Is the church already pure etc? (26, 27) If so, in what sense? (Compare 1 Cor 6:10, 11; Col 2:9-14)
8. If the church is a model of what a bride should be, what does verse 27 tell us about the wedding day?
9. Read 1 Peter 3:1-7. How does Peter describe true beauty?
10. Finally, here's a question for the theologians: What does Eph 5:26 mean?

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of Tabor College, Australia. He is married (to Vanessa) and they have three adult children and twelve grand-children.