

Position Is Not Value: What Submission Actually Means

Ephesians 5:22-33

Key Thoughts

1. **Submission is position, not value.** Paul's word means to arrange yourself under, and an Ephesian heard a formation word: troops in order, each one stepping into place. It is voluntary, it is an act of the will, and it says nothing about a wife's worth.
2. **Obedience is the default, and God is the ceiling.** A wife submits and obeys even an unbelieving husband (1 Peter 3:1-2). The one exception is an instruction that violates God's Word, and even then the apostles stayed submitted by accepting the punishment for refusing.
3. **As to the Lord is the litmus test.** A wife can only submit to her husband the way she submits to Christ. The marriage holds up a mirror to the walk with God, and the test runs both directions.
4. **Headship is service, not a throne.** The head is the one placed over, responsible for, and joined to. Christ, the head of the church, came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).
5. **Christ is the measure, not yourself.** Verse 29 sets the floor: a man feeds his own body and keeps it warm without deliberating about it. Verse 25 sets the ceiling: Christ gave Himself for her. A husband who hates his own flesh is not released from the command, he is told to stop using himself as the standard.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul's word for submit means to arrange yourself under, and the form of it says you do this to yourself. Why does placing yourself there land so differently than being placed there by someone else?
2. Read 1 Peter 3:1-2. Peter says an unbelieving husband may be won without a word by his wife's conduct. What does that say about a life lived in alignment with Christ when words are not welcome?
3. In Acts 4:18-19 and Acts 5:28-29 the apostles refuse a direct order, and then accept the punishment for refusing. How does taking the consequence prove they were still submitted?
4. Jesus prayed in Luke 22:41-42, *not My will, but Yours, be done*. If submission did not make the Son less than the Father, what does that settle about position and value inside a marriage?
5. Ephesians 5:26-29 names four things Christ does for His bride: sanctify, cleanse, nourish, cherish. Which one is hardest for a husband to actually do, and why does it get skipped first?
6. Personal: verse 33 tells husbands to love and wives to respect. Name one specific thing you will do this week that your spouse would recognize as love, or as respect.

Applications

1. **Read one short passage, on purpose.** Husbands, read Mark 10:35-45 and watch how the Head you are imitating handles power: He came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Wives, read 1 Peter 3:1-6 and watch what Peter calls precious in the sight of God. Both are short. Read your passage twice this week rather than reading more.
2. **Remove one thing that defiles.** Run your home through the Philippians 4:8 filter. Name one show, feed, habit, or conversation that defiles rather than builds, and take it out this week instead of tolerating it.
3. **Take the litmus test.** Ask honestly what your marriage is telling you about your walk with God. Bring that answer to God in prayer, and to one trusted believer for accountability.

Closing Prayer

Father, You are the God who arranged all things under Your Son, and the Son who took the lowest place in order to serve. Thank You that position has never been a measure of worth in Your kingdom. Teach our wives to arrange themselves under their own husbands as unto You, with the gentle and quiet spirit that is precious in Your sight. Teach our husbands to love as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her: to guard what enters our homes, to lead from Your Word instead of our own opinions, to feed our wives toward growth, and to be the warm place. Forgive us where we have used Your order as a weapon, and where we have ignored it as an inconvenience. Keep us from measuring ourselves by ourselves, because Christ is the measure. Make our marriages a clear picture of Christ and His church, until the day the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready. In Jesus' name, amen.