

## Submission: A Not-So-Bad “S” of the Bible | Ephesians 5:15-6:9

1. In the Light, pay careful attention to how you walk in these dark days
2. In the Light, be filled by the Spirit (fully influenced by the Spirit)
3. What does that look like? Speaking, Singing, Making Music, Giving Thanks, Submitting to one another

Every believer is obligated to extend submission to the other, out of reverence for Christ, as part of being filled with the Holy Spirit. No exceptions. Jesus is our example.

“Submission is voluntary placement of oneself under the authority and leadership of another. *hupotasso* (ὑποτάσσω) (Holman Bible Dictionary)”

How does the cross apply to the household standards of the day? How does imitating a Lord, who transforms human authority, speak to the prevailing cultural worldview?

This passage needs to be read with Paul’s own world and culture in mind:

- If you’re a wife in a formally patriarchal society, you were legally treated as minors, considered ontologically inferior, generally considered weak willed, less intelligent, emotionally volatile.
- If you’re a slave, you are in an economic system that assumes you are property and non-persons incapable of reasoning.
- If you’re a child, you had no rights and were to be “seen, not heard.”

Paul seeks not to directly dismantle social order, but to confront our obsession with power and control, honor and selfishness, and transform it from the bottom up and the inside out completely.

### Jesus turns Submission on its head.

*[Paul] “effectively undermines the assumed privileges of the patron in the patronage system without denying social realities of power and dependency” (Westfall, This is a Great Metaphor!, Reciprocity in the Ephesian Household Codes, 561, as quoted in Cohick NICNT, 343)*

#### 1. How Jesus submits

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others. Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross. Philippians 2:3-8*

#### 2. How Jesus exercises authority

*Jesus called them over and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:25-28*

*You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you. John 13:13-15*

Neither authority nor submission nor hierarchy are inherently bad concepts, but in Christ they are not mutually exclusive postures.

## **What does that look like? Mutual Submission as a principle applied**

### **Husbands submit**

- Husbands love their wives. This is an imperative.
- Christ's loving and giving are the foundation for what husbands' submission (love) looks like.
- This is a submission that all followers of Jesus are called to (5:2)

### **Wives submit**

- Wives respect husbands who love and care. This is indicative.
- Christ's loving and giving are the foundation for what wives' submission (respect) looks like
- This is a submission that all followers are called to (5:21)

A husband submits to his wife by loving his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up to death on the cross so that the church might live. Any hierarchy is undermined by voluntarily giving up honor and finding the wife worthy of self-sacrifice

If Paul were consistent with his times, he would have asked the wife to sacrifice herself (body) for her husband (head). This reciprocal relationship looks like the one with power and privilege laying it aside in service of others.

*"In calling for a reversal of privilege, Paul also challenges conventional definitions of masculinity. Death by crucifixion, hanging naked before others, was one of the most shameful phenomena in Paul's day, and Hebrews remarks that Jesus 'endured the cross, scorning its shame (Hebrews 12:2).' Crucifixion took away a man's control of his situation, emasculating him. In the Roman world, masculinity and authority are closely linked, and a free man would expect to exercise power over women and slaves or suffer shame in the eyes of the community." (Cohick, 361, NICNT)*

Paul describes Jesus as doing what would have been referred to as "women's work" in feeding, nurturing, making clothes, washing clothes, spot-cleaning and ironing all in service to his bride, the church. These tasks might appear demeaning, but are reordered by Christ's own example. They are meaningful and full of virtue.

If all people look in the face of Christ and see how to submit to one another in reverence to him there will be unity and harmony, flourishing and fullness of his Spirit. He silences our desires for power and control, either to gain or retain, and shows us a kingdom that is humble and meek.

The point: Every believer is obligated to extend submission to the other, out of reverence for Christ, as part of being filled with the Holy Spirit. No exceptions. Jesus is our example.

What does submission in your life look like? How does Jesus' example exhort you further?