

North Summit Church
The Freedom of Submission
August 17, 2025

Announcements:

- **Sunset Fire** - Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ to each other. Keep it up! If you have needs please let us know.

[Prayer]

Introduction

- When we hear the word "submission," many of us instinctively recoil. Our culture has taught us that submission equals weakness, that it's the opposite of freedom and strength. We've been conditioned to believe that true fulfillment comes from getting our own way, from being in control, from never having to yield to anyone else's authority.
- **Illustration:** Think about a world-class violinist. Is that musician most free when they ignore the conductor, play their own tempo, and disregard the sheet music? Or are they most free when they submit to the conductor's direction, follow the composer's intent, and play in harmony with the orchestra? The answer is obvious. The violinist finds their greatest freedom, their most beautiful expression, when they willingly submit to the structure and authority that brings out the best in their gift.
- This is the best picture I can think of to illustrate what God designed submission to be - not the crushing of the human spirit, but the pathway to true freedom and flourishing. The tragedy is that our rejection of God's authority in our lives - our refusal to submit to His loving design - has produced all the evil, chaos, and brokenness we see in our world today.
- Today, as we continue our series "Devoted: All of Life for the Glory of God," we're going to discover that submission is not the enemy of freedom but its very foundation. We'll see that the spiritual discipline of submission is actually God's gift to us, designed to free us from the exhausting burden of always needing to get our own way and to align us with the beautiful order He created for our good and His glory.
 - And like any discipline, it isn't easy, because it pushes against our bent towards rebellion that sin has left on our human hearts.

- You could even say that it is the foundational spiritual discipline, because every discipline helps us to trust in God's sovereign hand, as He works all things together for our good and His glory.

Let's begin by reading our main text from **Philippians 2:5-11**

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Point 1: Submission Breaks the Chains of Self-Will

- The first truth we must understand is that submission doesn't enslave us - it liberates us from the tyranny of our own will.
- Before we knew Christ, we were enslaved to what the apostle Paul calls "the desires of the flesh and the mind" in Ephesians 2:3. We were captives to our own appetites, prisoners of our own pride, slaves to our own stubborn determination to have things our way. And if we're honest, even as believers, we still struggle often with this.
- **As one writer puts it, "Submission is the spiritual discipline that frees us from the everlasting burden of always needing to get our own way."**
 - Think about how exhausting it is to constantly fight for control, to always demand that circumstances bend to our preferences, to never yield to anyone else's wisdom or authority.
- The poet George Matheson captured this paradox beautifully when he wrote: **"Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free; Force me to render up my sword, and I shall conqueror be."**
- This seems backwards to our fallen thinking, but it reveals a divine truth built into the fabric of creation.
- When we surrender our will to God, we discover genuine freedom. When we stop fighting against His authority, we find peace. When we quit trying to be the CEO of the universe, we can finally rest.

- **Personal Testimony** - "You're not going to fix it, that's my job." Just be faithful and rest in my sovereign hand.
- Jesus himself modeled this for us. Look again at **Philippians 2:6-7: "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant."**
- Jesus, who had every right to demand His own way, freely chose submission. And in that submission, He accomplished the greatest work in history - our salvation.
- The call to follow Christ is fundamentally a call to this same freedom through submission.

Mark 8:34

"If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

- This isn't about self-hatred or losing our identity. It's about discovering who we really are when we're no longer enslaved to the idol of self. It's about finding our true selves in Christ rather than in our own limited understanding and desires.

Proverbs 3:5-8

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones."

- Notice that promise at the end - submission to God brings "healing" and "refreshment."
- **It's not punishment; it's medicine for our souls that are sick with self-will.**

Point 2: Submission Aligns Us with God's Good Design

- The second truth is that submission isn't arbitrary - it aligns us with the beautiful order God created for human flourishing.
- When God created the world, He didn't create chaos. He created order, structure, and harmony. Within that design, He established spheres of authority - not to oppress us, but to protect and bless us.

- We see this throughout Scripture.

Romans 13:1

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."

Ephesians 5:22-24

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands."

Ephesians 6:1

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

- Now, before anyone gets uncomfortable, let me be crystal clear - these passages are not about one group of people being inferior to another. They're about God's wisdom in creating ordered relationships that allow communities to flourish.

But notice something crucial in Ephesians 5:21, which comes right before the passage about marriage:

Ephesians 5:21

"submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

- **The foundation of all biblical submission is mutual submission to Christ.**
 - We're all called to "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." This isn't age or gender specific.
 - Men and women, boys and girls, leaders and followers - we're all learning to prefer others, to honor others, to hold the interests of others above our own.
 - Leadership, which the Bible describes as headship, is first and foremost about responsibility not authority. And that responsibility is to lay down our lives for those God has entrusted to our care.
 - We will never be the business leaders, or husbands or father and mothers God designed us to be without first understanding that our positions of authority are not for our own glory.

- Just as Paul reminds us that the glory of a husband is his wife, it is a picture that submission has more to do with receiving the loving and honoring and cherishing that is displayed for us in Christ.
- This also reflects something beautiful about God Himself.
 - Even within the Trinity, there's an economy of order. The Son submits to the Father, not because He's inferior, but because that's how perfect love functions in perfect relationship.
 - Our submission mirrors this divine pattern.
- When we embrace God's design for authority and submission, we're not being diminished - we're being aligned with reality. We're participating in the harmony that God intended from the beginning.
- The Fall fundamentally disrupted this divine order through rebellion against God's authority. Every evil in our world can be traced back to this fundamental rejection of God's loving rule. But submission restores us to our proper place in creation - as beloved creatures under our loving Creator, as children under our perfect Father.

Point 3: Submission Leads to True Shalom

- The third truth is that submission doesn't lead to oppression - it leads to shalom, to the peace and wholeness that God intends for our lives.
- Shalom is a beautiful Hebrew concept that means much more than the absence of conflict.
 - **It means completeness, wholeness, right relationships in every dimension - with God, with others, with creation, and even with ourselves.**
- When we practice the discipline of submission, we experience shalom in tangible ways:
- **First, we find peace through surrender.** When we stop fighting against God's will, we discover the deep peace that comes from being aligned with ultimate reality. We no longer carry the crushing burden of trying to control outcomes that were never ours to control in the first place.

John 8:31-32

"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

- The truth that sets us free is that God is God, and we are not. When we embrace that truth through submission, we find liberation from anxiety, from the need to have all the answers, from the exhausting attempt to be our own savior.
- **Second, submission restores harmony in our relationships.** When we learn to hold things lightly, to watch over the spirit in which we treat others, to honor them and prefer them and love them, our relationships are transformed. We're no longer fighting for position or demanding our rights. Instead, we're free to serve, to bless, to build up.
- **Third, submission gives our lives meaning and direction beyond ourselves.** When we submit to God's authority, we're participating in His kingdom, joining His redemptive purposes, becoming part of something infinitely greater than our small, self-centered concerns.

Mark 8:35

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

- This isn't a cruel paradox - it's the beautiful logic of God's kingdom.
 - When we lose our lives in submission to Christ, we find our true lives.
 - When we give up control, we discover purpose.
 - When we surrender our will, we experience freedom.
 - **The foremost symbol of this truth is the cross.** Jesus didn't just experience a "cross death" - He lived a daily "cross life" of submission and service. And we're called to this same constant, everyday "cross life" of submission and service.
- **Remember - as Ephesians 1:11 reminds us we serve a God who "works all things according to the counsel of his will", and His will is always for our good and His glory. We can trust Him completely because His love for us is perfect and His wisdom is infinite.**

Conclusion:

- Let me bring us back to where we started. We began by acknowledging how the word "submission" in our worldly understanding can often make us recoil, and how our culture tells us it's the enemy of freedom and strength.
 - This is because many don't understand what it means to be someone worthy of submission.

- But when we submit ourselves to those who have first and foremost submitted themselves to Christ, it becomes a beautiful interplay of mutual submission, honor, respect and love.
- This is the heart of what Paul is saying in Romans chapter 12:

Romans 12:9-10

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

- Remember the illustration of a violinist who finds their greatest freedom not in ignoring the conductor and sheet music, but in submitting to them.
- This illustration points to a profound spiritual truth. Submission is not the enemy of freedom - it's freedom's foundation. Through the spiritual discipline of submission:
 - We are freed from the chains of self-will and the exhausting burden of always needing to get our own way
 - We are aligned with God's good design, participating in the beautiful order He created for our flourishing
 - We experience true shalom - the peace, wholeness, and harmony that our hearts long for
- The evil and chaos in our world didn't come from too much submission to God's authority - it came from rejecting that authority. Every broken relationship, every injustice, every form of suffering can be traced back to the fundamental rebellion that says, "I will not submit to God's loving rule over my life."
- **But here's the beautiful truth** - we don't have to stay enslaved to that rebellion. Through Christ, we can learn to submit. We can discover the freedom that comes from trusting that our heavenly Father's will is always for our good. We can experience the healing and refreshment that Proverbs 3:8 promises to those who acknowledge God in all their ways.
- Like the violinist who finds their greatest expression through willing submission to the conductor's direction, we find our greatest freedom, our deepest purpose, our truest selves when we willingly submit to the loving authority of our God.

This is what it means to be devoted - to offer all of life for the glory of God. And it begins with the daily discipline of submission, learning to say with Jesus, "Not my will, but yours be done."

Stand as we close in Prayer:

Heavenly Father, help us lean not on our own understanding but humbly submit to your authority. May we look to Christ's ultimate example of humility and self-sacrifice on the cross. By the power of your Holy Spirit, help us daily take up our crosses and follow you, dying to self and living in you to your glory. Free us from the chains of self-will and give us the grace to find our freedom in submission to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.