

Mutual Submission and the Fear of God

Today's Reading: Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3–8 | Audio: Day 3

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

— Ephesians 5:21 (KJV)

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves... Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

— Philippians 2:3, 5 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

Paul's instruction is not given only to one group—not only to wives, husbands, children, or people who are not in charge. It is for every believer. Mutual submission means every follower of Jesus carries a posture of humility. We do not enter relationships asking, “How can I get my way?” We ask, “How can God be honored here?”

Paul also gives us the motive: “in the fear of God.” Our humility is not based first on how another person treats us. It is based on who God is. If I only serve when someone deserves it, that is not submission—that is a transaction. If I only listen when I feel respected, that is not surrender—that is negotiation. If I only humble myself when a certain response is guaranteed, I am still trying to stay in control. But when I submit in the fear of God, I am saying, “Lord, I am doing this unto You. I am responding to Your authority. I am trusting Your way.”

This does not mean we ignore harm. It does not mean we enable abuse. It does not mean we pretend wrongdoing is acceptable. Biblical submission is never permission for someone else to sin against us. It does mean that in ordinary relationships—family, church, friendship, community—we choose humility over pride, service over self-importance, and obedience to God over the need to be seen as right.

Philippians 2 points us to Jesus. Though He was equal with God, He took the form of a servant. He humbled Himself. He did not cling to status or use His position to protect Himself from sacrifice. Jesus shows us that true strength bows first.

That is difficult in a culture that teaches us to protect our image, assert our rights, and make sure no one gets ahead of us. But the kingdom of God moves differently. Humility is not weakness; humility is strength under surrender.

Think of an ordinary moment at home. Someone leaves a mess. Someone speaks sharply. The flesh rises up: “Why do I always have to be the one?” But the Spirit whispers, “Serve. Speak gently. Do not make this about winning. Make this about Me.” Those little moments matter. They form us.

DAY 3 • JOURNAL & RESPONSE

REFLECT

1. *Where have you been keeping score—serving only when it is deserved, or listening only when you feel respected?*

2. *After today's practical step: what did serving unseen reveal about your heart? Were you content to be unnoticed if God was pleased?*

RESPOND: TODAY'S PRACTICAL STEP

- Perform one act of service for someone in your household, workplace, church, or community—without drawing attention to it.
- Do not announce it. Do not hint at it. Do not wait for appreciation. Just serve.
- Afterward, sit with God and answer the second reflection question honestly.

What I did, and what it stirred in me:

DAY 3 • PRAYER

PRAY

Lord Jesus, You humbled Yourself and became a servant. Give me that same mind. Teach me to submit in the fear of God, not because others always deserve it, but because You are worthy. Free me from pride, from self-protection, and from the need to be noticed. Help me to serve quietly, love sincerely, and honor You in the way I treat others. Let true strength be formed in me through humility. In Jesus' name, amen.

My own prayer:

REMEMBER THIS

True strength bows first.

Going Deeper: Mark 10:42–45 • John 13:12–17 • Romans 12:10

This devotional is a tool for reflection, not a substitute for pastoral care or professional counseling. If what surfaces feels too heavy to carry alone, please reach out to a pastor or a trusted, qualified counselor at New Life Tabernacle Carrollwood.