

Week of Sept 2-8

IT'S MUTUAL!

Scripture Reading: Read Ephesians chapter 5

We live in a day and age where the term “submissive” is almost a dirty word, particularly when it’s used in the context of marriage. It’s not seen as a blessing but as a curse, as belonging to a day and age from long ago when men were owners and wives were not much more than property. Unfortunately, the church through the ages hasn’t always helped its case when it comes to submission. Numerous men have used Paul’s instructions to wives to intimidate, dominate, and bully their spouses, so as to get their own selfish way. How tragic and how contrary to Paul’s teaching!

Part of the problem also rests in the fact that Bible translators and preachers too often divide this chapter into artificial sections with no respect for context. For example, how often have you heard a message on marriage begin with verse 22: “*Wives, submit to your husbands...*” But, what about verse 21 that precedes this verse: “*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*” Huh? Submit to one another? Wait a minute. When did Paul stick that verse in there? Let’s see...when he wrote the letter!

Seen through this light, the rest of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6 takes on a far different meaning, doesn’t it? Wives submit to their husbands by honoring and respecting them and following their lead. Husbands also submit to their wives’ needs by loving them, cherishing them and laying down their lives for them. Children submit to their parents by honoring and obeying them. Parents, in a way, submit to their children’s needs by raising them in the nurture and training of the Lord, by not exasperating them and by not using them to meet the parents’ own ego needs. Paul even applies the principles of mutual submission to the relationship between slaves and their masters, a condition so prevalent in the Roman world. Slaves were to submit by obeying their masters and serving willingly but slave masters were also to submit to the needs of their slaves by treating them as they themselves expected to be treated, that is, kindly and fairly and without threatening them.

When you read through Paul’s application of mutual submission, one other point becomes amazingly clear. The ones who thought they had power in the relationship (i.e. the husband, parents, slave masters) actually have a greater responsibility for they were never to use their power for their own advantage but they were to utilize any power on behalf of the other partner in the relationship. For example, as Christ took the initiative to submit to the cross and die for the church, the husband is to take the initiative to so love his wife that he is willing to sacrifice himself for her so that she can step into God’s destiny. Talk about the high cost of submission...for the husband! By the way, when a husband loves and lives like that, very few women I know would have a problem submitting in response. Just saying☺!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Have you been practicing mutual submission or have you been demanding your own way? In prayer, evaluate the relationships in your life in light of today’s devotional. Repent if necessary and allow the Holy Spirit to make the necessary adjustments.

Take-a-way: *Biblical submission is not one way. It’s mutual!*