

Fulfill Your Responsibilities! (Part 1) – Eph 5:22-33

Eph 5:22-33; We're in the middle of our All Out Of Love marriage series – having already talked about God's *purposes* for marriage, our *commitments* in marriage . . .

And the leading indicators that make for a good *spouse* in marriage

Which leaves our responsibilities – the things God *expects* of us in marriage

And I'm going to spend the next 2 weeks unpacking them; Hopefully as a gentle reminder and blessed encouragement for you

➤ But before we get there, I want to establish some **Foundational Principles** with you, that are critical for a proper understanding of all this; The first of which, is that . . .

Husbands and wives are equal in value and equal in worth

That's the first foundational principle I want you to grasp

Our respective responsibilities in marriage do not denote privilege or rank

Make sure you get that right; Or the whole thing will be wrong

Gen 1:27 says – *God created man* [mankind] *in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* Both of them

Men *and* women, husbands *and* wives – are created in God's image; *Both* reflect his

goodness and greatness; *Both* represent his attributes and intent; *Equally*

Not male *more* than female; Not female more than male; But *equally*

And both, as followers of Christ, have the same *standing* before God

Gal 3:28 says – *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Before God, we have the same standing; The ground at the foot of the cross is level

We have the same privilege as his image bearers, the same access to his presence, and the same inheritance of eternal life

Which makes us *equal* in value and *equal* in worth*****

Second, is that . . .

Husbands and wives are mutually needed and mutually dependent

They're needed *differently*, and dependent in different *ways*; But nonetheless, it's mutual

1 Cor 11:11-12 says – *Nevertheless* [that is, despite the fact that husbands occupy a position of leadership and authority in marriage], *in the Lord* [i.e. under his authority and in his strength] *woman is not independent of man nor man of woman*

IOW we need each other; Mutually

For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman; Without man in the *first* place, woman wouldn't be; And without women, men wouldn't be

Which makes us mutually dependent (**Summary**)

Equal in value and worth, and mutually needed and dependent

2 foundational principles, that are critical for properly viewing and understanding the

Core Responsibilities we're called to *fulfill* in marriage

And it's Eph 5 that clues us in to them ; So follow along with me as I read v22-24, and

v33 – focusing first on the wife's responsibility

[22] *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* [23] *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. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

[33] *However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

The first responsibility Paul addresses here is for wives; And that is . . .

Wives – submit to your husband (v22-24)

That's your core responsibility to fulfill in marriage; And Paul's explicit about it

V22 says – *Wives, submit to your own husbands*; That's pretty clear

Submit, as in voluntarily yield to his discretion and decisions; Place yourself under his authority; That's what it means to submit in a generic sense

But *biblical* submission includes something else – joy and desire; IOW grudging submission is not biblical submission; It's not *true* submission in God's eyes

Biblical submission is a voluntary disposition and *inclination*, to *joyfully* yield to the authority and discretion of another; In this case, a wife toward her husband

It's an attitude of her heart to *want* to follow him, and an inclination of her will to say *yes* to his leadership; That's submission in God's eyes

➤ What's not, is spineless consent, degrading humiliation, demeaning servitude, or passive resignation; That's not biblical submission in the least

Nor does it mean you have to put your will to death, or permanently zip your lip

If that's what you've resigned yourself to you're not fulfilling your responsibilities as a wife; Or if that's what you've been *forced* into over the years – you need to get help

And we have it; We have *Marriage Mentors* – trained/ready to come along side you . . .

We have a *Discipleship Class* starting in a few weeks, to help you identify and grow in your particular area of difficulty . . .

And we have *pastors* on staff to meet with you and point you in the right direction

If you need help, get it; There's no shame in that

➤ But whatever you do, don't dismiss this; Submission is a responsibility; And just b/c you've been burned, or hate the whole idea due to pride . . .

Doesn't mean you can rationalize it away

Like saying it doesn't apply b/c it's cultural – “It was just for Paul's day”

You can't do that, b/c the analogy Paul cites in v22, *transcends* culture

Submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. Is our submission to the Lord cultural?

Only for Paul's day? The neither is a wife's submission to her husband

The analogy doesn't allow it

○ Nor can you explain it away by saying that *mutual* submission is in view here That b/c v21 says we are to submit to *one another* – the wife is to submit to the husband, and the husband to the wife

But that's not legit b/c the meaning of the *word* doesn't allow it

In the 40 or so NT uses, the word submit is used to describe the position of one person under the authority of another, by virtue of their roles

So mutual submission in the same relationship, is a contradiction of terms

You *can't mutually submit* if one person is in authority over another

- Not only that, but if mutual submission were in view here, then v25 would read – “Husbands, *submit* to your wives;” But it doesn’t
Nor could it, b/c that too would run contrary to the analogy, of Christ loving the church
The *meaning* of the word doesn’t allow for mutual submission, and neither does the *analogy*
- So the phrase *submitting to one another* in v21, must mean – “as appropriate, in light of the relationship;” Which the context bears out in the following verses
Wives are to submit to their husbands, the church is to submit to Christ, children are to obey their parents, and so on
Submitting to one another means “as appropriate, in light of the relationship”

Which brings us full circle to the core responsibility – that wives are to submit to their husbands; Far from conveying a lack of worth or privilege or value . . .
It’s simply part of God’s design, to give us the absolute best, in marriage

- Now, with that said, there’s 4 main aspects of that responsibility from this passage, that brings this into our living rooms
The first being, that wives should submit to their husbands . . .

- **In everything (v24)**

V24 – *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

That means even when you don’t *feel* like it; Even when you disagree; Even when he’s being dumb; Even when he’s going to make a bad decision . . .

Submit in everything, means everything

But that in *no* way means you have to remain silent; That may be the best approach in *some* situations, but definitely not all

In fact most of the time you should *express* your opinion, helper that you are, and the decision should be made *together*; Husbands, did you hear that? Together
B/c two heads are almost *always* better than one

- But wives, that doesn’t mean you should “go off” on your husband either; There are good ways to express your opinion, and bad ones
Good ones include a respectful tone, soft words, and the right timing
Not to mention a genuine reminder from you, that if he decides contrary to your opinion, that’s okay; And you’ll fully support him anyway; You should tell him that

What you shouldn’t do, is nag, yell, scream, bawl, pout, or leave a note that says, “I’m mad at you; You’re on your own for dinner”
Speak up, yes; And express your thoughts, absolutely; But do so well

- Now, *that* usually raises 3 “What if” questions; Like . . .

1. What if my husband is a jerk, and doesn’t *deserve* my submission?

Let me put it this way; His lack of love toward you, does not excuse your lack of submission toward him; His failure doesn’t alleviate your responsibility

And if that’s you these days, you might think of your submission as bowing down before your husband, so God can get better aim☺

You still need to submit, even if he’s difficult

2. What if he asks me to do something morally or legally wrong?

If that’s the case, you need to gently but firmly refuse; And then get help, get some support; B/c God never intended us to do this alone, or live as silent sufferers
Sufferers, maybe; But not silent ones; Get some help and support, so that you can stand *firm* in your resistance

But even in resisting, you should show him your *dislike* of doing so, and express to him your *longing* to see him lead in *righteousness*

3. What if he’s hurting me physically, or putting our family at risk?

If that’s the case, God has provided several measures of protection, and it’s your responsibility to take advantage of them

B/c the Bible doesn’t teach *doormat theology* – where you let your husband walk all over you no matter what

If he’s neglecting you or abandoning you – go to the church

Start with a sister in Christ, then your Small Group leader, then one of the pastors
And the same goes if he’s abusing you verbally – go to the church and ask for help
God established the church as an instrument of holiness in our lives, and sometimes even *unbelievers* will listen

But if he’s abusing you *physically*, or putting your family at risk – get out of the house, call the police, and *then* call the church

If he’s hurting you, your responsibility to stay and submit just ended

I’m not saying you should divorce him, though that *might* be appropriate – I’m saying you should get out, get safe, and get help

But short of that, short of physical abuse or moral wrong, you should submit to your husband in *everything*

2nd, submit to your husband . . .

- **As your leader (v23)**

That’s v23, where Paul gives a reason for the wife’s submission

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.

Just as Christ is *the head of the church* – our leader, authority, provider, and protector . . .

So too, the husband is *the head of the wife* – *her* leader, authority, provider, and protector; In which case you need to follow him

And if he doesn’t lead, if he’s passive in his role – don’t take the reins; He’ll *never* lead if you do that; It will only make the problem worse

If you continue to compensate for his lack of responsibility or laziness, he’ll just continue to wallow in it; You’ll enable him

In fact, aggressive leadership on the wife’s part actually *encourages* passiveness on the husband’s; Don’t do it; Let things fall through the cracks; Let it show

Sometimes 2 steps backward, *is* the way forward in dysfunctional marriages

Sometimes you have to let it get worse, before it can get better

And if he still doesn’t step up and wear the pants – then once again, get some help

Just make sure you’re not *wearing* the pants, so he *can*

Submit to your husband as your leader

3rd, submit to your husband . . .

- **As to Christ (v22,24)**

V22 says – *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*; And v24 says – *As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

As to the Lord, and as the church submits to Christ

That's how wives are to submit to their husbands

Meaning what? Grudgingly and partially? Is that how you submit to Christ? I hope not

B/c he's looking for *wholehearted* submission; *Eager* submission; And once again, *joyful* submission; And the same should be true with your husband

➤ The problem is, far too many wives fail to submit to their husbands, b/c they fail to submit to Christ; Far too many wives have an authority issue with their husband . . .

B/c they have an authority issue with God

If you don't fully submit to him, you'll *never* fully submit to your husband

If you're going to have any hope of getting your relationship with *him* right, you have to get your relationship with *Jesus* right

Then and only then, will you submit to your husband *as to Christ*

And last, submit to him . . .

- **With respect (v33)**

V33 says – *Let the wife see that she respects her husband*

Let her hold him in high regard; Instead of looking down on him or thinking badly of him – you should esteem him, and admire him, and appreciate him

Even when you don't want to

It's like respecting the law – you follow it and uphold it because it's the *right* thing to do, it's what those in authority *tell* you to do, and it's the *best* thing to do

Society works best that way

And the same is true of respecting your husband – you follow and support him because it's the right thing to do, it's what God tells you to do . . .

And it's the best thing for your marriage

➤ Especially so, b/c every husband *yearns* for the respect of his wife; Yearns for it

And when he doesn't receive it, he tends to withdraw, or get angry

And then he thinks – “Why would I ever treat *you* well, if you don't treat me well?”

It's sinful and immature, but that's what he thinks; Making his love for *you*, dependent on your respect for *him*; It's not right, but that's what's going on many times

Resulting in a downward spiral

But that doesn't relieve you of your responsibility to respect *him*; You made a covenant

And if you fulfill it, chances are, he will too (**Summary**)

Pray – God, for those who chafe against this, will you break through to their heart? For those who doubt this, will you convince them? And for those who love these truths as much as any other, will you fill and fuel them, as they strive to fulfill them