

## Ephesians Ch 5 Vs 22-33

(Submitting to one another)

Currently we find ourselves right in the middle of this chapter and in our last gathering we spent a significant portion of our time in consideration of both the will of the Lord and the earmarks of the “Spirit filled life”. Which is what we’ll pick up on this morning, but I want to take just a second here to simply list out for you the 6 things that I shared with you that the scriptures state plainly to us concerning what God’s will is for us. Because after the bible study last week I had a few people approach me on that, and some had in there notes 4 things, others 7 things, because I didn’t number them as we were going. and I know that several of you take notes so I want to give you these specifically so that you’ll know where to validate them for yourself.

#1 Regarding all of mankind it’s God’s will for all to be saved. and You can correlate that to scriptures such as 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:9, 1 Tim 2:3-4 and of course John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world, (the whole world, everyone in it not desiring any to perish) that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever would believe on Him would not perish but have everlasting life.”*

#2 It’s God’s will that every believer be filled with the Spirit, vs 18 of our present ch (read).

#3 Kind of coinciding with being filled with the Spirit, (the Spirit being the source of a believer’s ability to walk in the Light and in wisdom,) is your sanctification, your being set-apart to God for His plan and His purposes. That you be holy for the Lord your God is holy and we referenced the 1<sup>st</sup> 8 vs of 1<sup>st</sup> Thess Ch 4, vs 3 being the central theme which states, *“For this is the will of God, your sanctification.”* and Then it goes on from there being a bit more exhaustive in some of what that entails ending up with the fact that if you reject that command you’re not rejecting any man or man’s opinion but God Himself Who has given you His Holy Spirit so that you might be sanctified. To purposefully reject His will for your life is more or less a slap in the face to the Spirit of Grace, the bible refers to insulting the Spirit of Grace in the book of Hebrews and counting the blood of the covenant a common thing and trampling it under foot. and A sobering warning is given in regards to that, and the judgment that follows a purposed rejection and using of the grace of God to justify willful transgression in our lives. It’s God’s will for you that you be sanctified, set apart to Him, in the world but not of the world, remember that.

#4 It’s God’s will for us that we subject ourselves to the ordinances of the land, 1 Peter 2:13-17, unless of course it violates the written word of God in which case God’s word is to be heeded above mans. Along with that and included in #4 is willing submission to our church leaders (Heb 13:17), so #4 is submission to the government of the land and the church.

#5 Is sort of a hard one maybe to swallow and that's that there will be times in our lives whereby God's will, will bring us into either suffering, persecution, tribulations or possibly all 3. Jesus Himself being our illustration in that, the understanding being that no servant is above his master and if Jesus suffered then we can know that there will be times that we (seemingly) will suffer unjustly. and You can look at scriptures such as John 16:33, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim 3:12 to testify to that reality, Heb 5:8 tells us in regards to Jesus that, "*though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.*" and So if suffering was required of Jesus, then believe me when I say that to some greater or lesser extent it will be required of everyone who believes as well, and it will work out different purposes in each of our lives. Be it trust, obedience, humility, character, perseverance or any number of things that God wants to develop in our lives. and

Then finally #6 was thanksgiving, 1 Thess 5:18 says, "*in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*" So understand the will of the Lord, it's not some mystically deep experience, but rather it is very practical, and it's through the practical that God will work supernaturally in your life.

Then we came to this section of which we're right in the thick of concerning what it means to be filled with the Spirit. and In short it's to be totally controlled by the Spirit through willing submission to His work in your life, using the word of God to guide you and direct you. and We briefly looked at a few of the characteristics of the Spirit filled believer as found in vs 19-21, those being worship of God both corporately and personally, the Spirit of God will work in you the worship of God. 2<sup>ndly</sup> there was the giving of thanks, and in the context of understanding that it's God's will for you to be thankful, it's only natural then that the Spirit of God would work thanksgiving to God in your heart as well.

Of course Scripture has all kinds of examples of people who were thankful to God in spite of their circumstances, we read in Daniel ch 6 vs10 where Daniel knelt on his knees 3 times a day praying and giving thanks before his God just as he always had even though his circumstances didn't favor (seemingly) an attitude of thanksgiving. Even the prejudiced, rebellious and disobedient Jonah ended his prayer in the belly of the great fish by saying, "*But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.*" Thanksgiving in the life of the believer isn't a matter of option, it's a matter of obedience and it's a mark of being filled with the Spirit.

Then finally, and the vs that will springboard us into this mornings text Vs 21, (read) mutual submission, submitting to one another out of necessary reverence for God is a mark of being filled with the Spirit. Jesus said, *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

The idea being that of mutual submission one to another with the Lord Himself being the primary example in the service of others over Himself, we're to submit to one another out of respect for the Lord.

We're not to submit to others in being respecters of persons, but rather out of my respect for the Lord, I'll submit my life to you and you likewise to others. Now Paul gets specific with this idea of mutual submission, vs 21 being the context setting issue that makes the transition from the general into the specific in bringing the family into view.

Generally speaking we're to submit to one another in the fear of God, but in light of that the Holy Spirit through Paul the apostle wants deal with the family relationship, and how it is that this concept of mutual submission is lived out practically in our everyday lives. and He brings it right down into the most practical aspect of our everyday lives, the home and our work place, and how it is that we are to interact with one another through mutual submission as an outcropping of being filled with the Spirit. Because it's the natural tendency of man to promote themselves (remember, those who are great among the gentiles lord it over them) but by the filling of the Spirit, the divine direction leads us to do what is pleasing to God, thereby working submission into our lives in the fear of God. That's where this principal of being subject to one another finds its roots in its effectiveness.

You remember last week when we were talking about being in line with the will of God and I said that when we're not in God's will, God can't do much with us because He doesn't have much of us. Well, this idea of proper biblical family order carries with it the same emphasis, "the family can only be what God has designed it to be when the members of the family are what God has designed them to be." (MacArthur) and Willfully function with in that design under the power His Spirit, James said, *"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?"*

In other words conflicts in the church, or in the home and in marriage will always be the result of hearts that are directed by self rather than the Spirit of God. When self demands it's own way, be it in rights, or opinions or goals or whatever, then peace and harmony are excluded.

John MacArthur made this comment, “The self-centered life is always in a battle for the top, and pushes others down as it climbs up in pride. The Spirit-centered life, on the other hand, is directed toward lowliness, toward subservience, and it lifts others up as it descends in humility.” You see, the Spirit filled individual will as Paul put it in Phil 2:4, “*look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*”

The point being that of mutual submission in general and even more specific in the home, now, when I say the word “submission” in the biblical sense of the word, what is it that will generally come to the average believers mind? “Wives” I mean, they’re almost synonymous words aren’t they? Many men when it comes to their knowledge and memorization of scripture, this is the only one that they every tuck away, “*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*” Now, go fix me a Pepsi and find me the remote control! Let me tell you something, that’s a major mistake of much of the church world and a radical miss understanding and miss-application of the scriptures.

1<sup>st</sup> of all we *know* that there is no spiritual or moral distinctions among Christians regardless of gender Gal 3:28, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” Every single believer in Jesus Christ has exactly the same salvation, the same standing before God, the same divine nature and resources, and the same promises and inheritance.

The only place where there is any distinction is in the matter of role, and function. Not greater and lesser, just different, even as one spiritual gift doesn’t make you a greater person, than another, we’re all sinners saved by grace, God has just chosen a different role for me than He has for you, and a different capacity for me to function in.

It works the same way in the home, kids don’t have the role of the parents, and husbands and wives aren’t to function in the role that has been divinely ordered for the other. and So the words “husband” and “wife” isn’t greater and lesser, it’s different roles on the plain of equality in Christ. and Let’s not forget the context being that of mutual submission (Vs21), and that’s what all of these illustrations throughout the remainder of ch 5 on into the beginning of ch 6 have in common, they are all examples of submitting to one another in the fear of God.

There is not a believer that has ever walked the face of this planet that has not been called to a life of submission. I’m going to give you 5 areas whereby every believer is called to live in submission, some of them will overlap with what we discussed regarding the will of God. But I’m seeking to diffuse this whole miss-guided concept of the wife being the sole individual who has been called to a life of submission, we’ve all been given that call.

#1 All believers must learn to live in submission to God James 4:7 says, “*Therefore submit to God.*” Now this is obviously the most important area of submission in our lives because when the Holy Spirit works *this* in our lives, then all the others fall in line. But this is for every believer; we’re all to submit to God, to serve and be subject to Him, we’re His servants He’s our master therefore we’re to submit to Him.

#2 We’re to be subject to and submit to governing authorities, both in the world and in the church, that’s one that we’ve already talked about, but I would refer you to Rom ch 13 and again 1 Pet 2:13-14 and Heb 13:17. #3 and One that many of us at times may find difficult, but that’s that all believer have to learn to submit to the boss, on the job. We’ll see that in ch 6 of Eph and then also in 1 Pet 2:18 “*Servants, (or employees) be submissive to your masters (employers) with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.*” Some bosses aren’t that good, but they’re still the boss, and we’re to be submissive to them. #4 All younger believers (which at various times will be all of us, there some believers that are younger than you and others that are older) and when you’re the younger, you must submit to the elder believers. Be kind and respectful to them 1 Peter 5:5, “*you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders.*” and Finally that which we’ve been discussing right here in Eph 5:21 we must all submit to *one another* in the fear of God.

So this issue of submission is not for wives only but rather it’s for all of us. Paul just lays out the 1<sup>st</sup> application of it to the wives, but we need to keep reading, it applies to husbands, children and employee/employer relations as well. But as for the wives, how is it that submission is to be exemplified in their homes and in their lives?

Vs22-24 (repeat vs22)

Now, this does not mean (as some chauvinists have sought to interpret it) that wives are to treat their husbands as the Lord Himself. But rather that the wife’s submission to her husband is her duty and service *to* the Lord and an aspect of her reverence and worship of the Lord. It would be better understood and some of your bibles may have this interpreted, as “unto the Lord” so as to say that this is your service as unto the Lord. and Even as we’ve talked about the necessary willful surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, a wife’s submission to her husband is to be a voluntary response to God’s will in giving up one’s own rights in general (in keeping with vs 21) and in specifics to vs 22 to her own husband.

This word “submission” doesn’t mean that wives are to obey their husbands as children are to obey their parents or employees are to obey their employers, it’s not the same word that’s used, therefore it doesn’t carry that idea. The husband doesn’t possess the wife anymore than the wife possesses the husband. They are to share both a mutual possessiveness as well as a mutual submissiveness, as we said earlier they belong to one another in absolute equality.

The role of the wife is to be a helpmeet to her husband, to come along side and support him, understanding the difficulty, responsibility and accountability before God that comes along with being the ordained leader of the home. The problem comes in when we walk in the flesh rather than the Spirit and there becomes a striving for the headship of the home. (Don't worry women we'll talk about plenty of problems concerning men and their violation of their ordained role as well.)

So often there is a disruption in the home when the order of the home is broken. When Eve failed concerning the temptation of the serpent and disobeyed the command of God not to partake of the fruit, you recall that part of the curse that was brought upon the woman was, "*Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.*" The desire or longing that's spoken of here isn't really that of a sexual or psychological desire, surely both of those were in place in their proper context before the fall, after all she was created to be a helper comparable to him.

In the next ch of the book of Genesis (ch 4) we read where the Lord said to Cain, "*sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.*" The same identical Hebrew word is used in that context regarding sin's desire to rule over Cain as it is in Gen ch 3 regarding the woman's desire for the man. Meaning that the battle of the sexes and women's lib all began with the fall, the woman desiring to usurp an authority over the man that God never ordained. So the curse brought upon the woman a desire to go beyond the boundaries of the role that God had ordained for her in the marriage relationship in desiring to usurp authority over the man, but man would resist that desire and rule over her.

Now, having said that I want to make it very clear that though women may at times have a desire to over step their biblical boundaries, but believe me when I tell you that men overstep the biblical boundaries of what it means to be the head of the wife just as much if not more. You see with the fall and its curse came the distortion of both the woman's proper submissiveness and of the man's proper authority. and Again to quote MacArthur "it takes a manifestation of grace in Christ by the filling of the Holy Spirit to restore the created order and harmony of proper submission in a relationship that has become corrupted and disordered by sin." Apart from the wife being filled with the Spirit it's impossible that she should properly submit to her own husband. Notice that, it's to her own husband, it's not a gender thing in general, it's a role and relational thing, it's not all women to all men, it's wives to your own husband.

There are only 2 capacities whereby women are biblically prohibited from taking on the role of dominant leadership. and Those are the church (meaning a Pastor or Elder or deacon) it's hard to be the husband of one wife and be a woman if you desire to be an elder in the church. and The other being the home, every other arena is wide open, you say but Jeff what about all of these other denominations that ordain women as Pastor's? You know I'm not sure how they diffuse the scriptures but I for one have no desire to look for loop holes in the word of God, God says what He means and means what He says and doesn't have to justify Himself or explain His reasoning to me. But He created the man and the woman each to fulfill a role that would compliment and minister to the other and when you seek to upset that order, you're just asking for trouble and believe me when I tell you, you won't enjoy the harvest of those seeds that you sow. How can the wife be an authority over her husband at church and then come home to a role reversal of submission? You see it just doesn't add up.

The Holy Spirit through Peter reaffirmed the role of the wife in the marriage relationship, let's look together at 1 Pet 3: 1-6. So even as Ab is the figurative father of faithful, his wife Sarah was the figurative mother of the submissive. and Since Sarah had no fear in obeying God, she had no fear of what her husband, or any other person or circumstance might do to her, the point is, is that we're called to be obedient to God and let God worry about the consequences of the other persons actions.

Your husband may not be the best leader, but if he's seeking to lead with in the confines of scripture then you're to be obedient to God in submitting to his authority. You see because the husband stands to be in the position of the ultimate accountability when it comes to the family, the final authority rests with him. Should he make decisions having listened to the counsel of his wife? Absolutely, decisions should be reasoned through thoroughly with both the husband and the wife, but because the greater judgment resides or rests upon him if there is a disagreement and both parties have scripture to support their view, then he has the final say and he'll stand to give an account for that say.

Essential to the idea of submission is *trust* – that is trust in God even when we aren't so certain concerning the authority (because submission to proper authority is always submission to God), they go hand in hand, when you and I submit to proper authority, then we are submitting to God because that's His will for our lives. But you see it's when we're not so certain or when it isn't so easy to submit that our ability to submit and be obedient to God is challenged, when we're in total agreement it's easy to submit, but when we don't agree that's when the true test is presented. Because we think we display a lack of trust in the authority by our unsubmitiveness; what we really display is a lack of trust in God, who has (really) commanded our submission. Well, why is the wife to submit to her husband, we've already touched on that slightly but we read in vs 23.

Vs23

Husbands (and future husbands) underline that last little section in this vs, “He is the Savior of the body.” What is a Savior, a loving rescuer, not a self-serving, demanding, insistent dictator. The #1 destroyer of marriages and families is without a doubt an uncrucified self-life. Selfishness, it devastates homes, but what we’re called to in the Kingdom is just the opposite, not a self-serving life or selfishly insistent lives for our own selfish pleasure. But rather we’re called to lead God pleasing/others serving lives; you see guys Christ is a Savior, a Servant King (which will be a little more of what we get into next week). Not a heavy handed dictator, but one who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life away for others, in this context for your wife.

But even as Christ is the head of the body, or the authority of the body, leading, guiding, providing for and protecting His body, His bride, the church. So the husband is to be the authority over the wife leading the wife guiding her, providing for her, protecting her, nourishing her and taking care of her, meeting her needs. You see when my head gives my body a direction, my body responds, a physical body that doesn’t respond to the direction of its head is either spastic, crippled, or paralyzed, it’s dysfunctional concerning what it’s intended to be. and In the same manner, the wife who doesn’t properly respond to the direction of the head of the home manifests a major spiritual dysfunction.

Now again having said that, I’ll remind the guys that the #1 destroyer of the marriage relationship is uncrucified self-life, making unscriptural demands upon your wife by seeking justification in this passage will do you a world of hurt. I’m speaking to the ladies here, not you, this is God’s mail to the wives and future wives, marriages get into trouble when the husband and wife begin to read the others mail.

What I mean by that is when the husband uses these scriptures as a battering ram, he’s out of line, he doesn’t need to be worrying about his wife’s call to submission, he needs to be worrying about his own. and Likewise wives you shouldn’t be focusing on your husbands call to submission to you, but rather what has God called you to do. and If each of you concentrate on what God has called you to do as individuals in the marriage, then your relationship will excel, but when you focus on what the other person should be doing, it’ll breed problems. So wives (and future wives) this study is primarily for you, but if you’re husbands don’t come back next week, then you can absolve, or forget everything that I’ve said. But even as Christ is the head of the church or the leader of the church so the husband is the head of the wife.

Vs24

What is the relationship of submission that takes place between the church and Jesus Christ? The church is to submit to Christ in *everything*. There isn't one single exception to that rule, now wives I must admit, that's heavy, I mean my wife is exhorted by the scriptures to be submissive to me in everything (*to me!!*) In the same manner as the church follow the comprehensive headship of Christ (in every matter be it public, private, gathered or scattered) wives are to fully follow the leadership of their husbands. Oh, my poor wife! I mean she has to be submissive to the likes of me, which I'm certain is not an easy order to fill.

Now, at this point many women have an unspoken question that they are just aching to ask, is there *any* exceptions? Well, fortunately for you I believe there is one exception and the only reason that I forward it to you as an exception is because God has proclaimed it in His word. Now there are a lot of ladies that have exceptions of there own, exceptions like, "I know that this is the way it's supposed to be, but you don't know my husband!" Listen, that's not an exception. That would be a human circumstantial exception, and our exceptions have no bearing on God's absolutes, but when God gives an absolute, if *He* adds anything in His word that builds in an exception, then it's acceptable and proper for us to blend the two.

The bible indicates 1major exception and we talked about it last week and it applies here to because it's relevant to those in authority and those in submission to that authority wherever the role of leader and follower lies. Be it employer-employee, governor and governed or husband and wife, whenever anyone in authority asks us to do anything contrary to the revealed will of God we are not bound to that. Now if it's contrary to our preference; that's irrelevant, but if it goes against the word of God then you are not bound to submit to that. Because it's essential that if placed in a position whereby you are in jeopardy of compromise that you obey God and not man. and If your husband is the authority that is pressing upon you compromise, then you aren't bound to submit to Him in that but rather you need to be obedient to the word of God. (Lord willing next week I'll develop this a little bit farther for you and then we'll look into the aspect of the husbands submission).