

“Submit,” “Head,” “Love”: Fightin’ Words?

New Vision, 11/7/2010, John Fickett

Eph. 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

I. Reminders from “Watch Your Language”

- A. Associations
- B. Emotions
- C. Experiences
- D. Zeitgeist (Spirit of the age) ≠ God’s thinking, cf. submission
- E. Read the passage

II. Outline:

Main idea/heading/transition (by the way, not just a marriage issue): Eph. 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

In particular/for example:

- A. Eph. 5:22-33 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For...
- B. Eph. 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
- C. Eph. 6:5-9 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear...

III. Submit to one another

- A. To place or position under
- B. Active voice: (subject something to something else) “Place under”
- C. Middle voice: (Submit) “stand under”
- D. A heart attitude
- E. Compare the “right-side-up kingdom”
- F. “Submit,” vs. “obey”— overlapping, but not identical
- G. Christians live in a network of submissive relationships
- H. Peter’s advice (1 Pet 2:13; Acts 4:19)

IV. Wives Submit

- A. The greek really says...
- B. “as to,” “as the church...to Christ...wives to husbands.”
- C. What does this reveal about relative worth? ability? relative intelligence? relative decision-making capability?
- D. Why does God put down women? Why should men make all the decisions?
- E. What about “Equal[ity]”
- F. Trust (vs. fear vs. reserve. vs. control)

V. For the husband is head...

- A. Compare Eph 1:22
- B. A metaphor.
- C. Whatever it means, it’s the main reason for the wife to submit. It parallels in some way the relationship of Christ to the church.
- D. Always seems to relate to authority.
- E.
- F. The JF definition: The buck-stops-here responsibility and authority that enables a self-sacrificial, limitless commitment to the good of those over whom one is head.
- G. Stay tuned...
- H. Doesn’t mean:
 - 1. Makes all decisions
 - 2. Doesn’t receive input from his wife
 - 3. Doesn’t value his wife’s gifts and (sometimes superior) abilities
- I. The Jesus-style head:
 - 1. Lives a life of submission to authority.
 - 2. Doesn’t get a kick out of bossing others around.
 - 3. Doesn’t “Lord it over” others (domineer). Doesn’t demand submission.
 - 4. Serves, provides for, cherishes, builds up, those he leads.
 - 5. But does lead! Makes sure there is initiative, bases covered, ready to answer for well-being of wife and family. Willing to make final decisions as necessary. Takes responsibility for family outcome.
 - 6. Never, ever quits. Doesn’t have any if’s.

VI. The Wildly popular teaching:

Wives and husbands have identical responsibilities

- A. Wives and husbands job descriptions completely the same here? Are the responsibilities interchangeable, “equal”?
- B. Implication of “one another [ἀλλήλων]”?
- C. Head means “source”?
- D. Wasn’t this temporary because wives were uneducated and had a narrow experience in those days?
- E. Wasn’t this head thing a product of the fall anyway?
- F. What about “inequity of empowerment”?
- G. What about abuse?

Discussion-starting questions for small groups

- 1. What does “as the church” imply?
- 2. What is the difference between “submit” and “obey”?
- 3. What does “as Christ is”
- 4. What does a marriage look like in this passage (in your own words)?