

WIVES, SUBMIT TO YOUR OWN HUSBANDS, AS UNTO THE LORD!

The above verse on the duty of Christian wives is from Ephesians 5:22, one of the most well known verses in the Bible. This verse teaches the role of the Christian wife as determined by God. All Christian wives must take note of this command. It is a command and not an option. It is not from the church. It is not from the pastor. It is not from the husband. It is not from any culture or society. It comes from God. Not to obey your husband is to disobey God. It is therefore a grievous sin. What is the meaning of the above verse?

a. Christian Wives Only – If you are not a Christian wife, this command is not for you. It is not because God does not want her to obey her husband; it is because she cannot even if she wants to. The unbelieving wife does not have the ability to do so. Obedience to her husband is not a natural desire for –a wife upon marriage. The Christian wife, however, has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to help her obey this command. God requires her to obey her husband because He has enabled her to do so. If she disobeys this command, she has to ask herself whether she is truly born again. If she is, then she cannot say that she cannot obey the command but that she will not or rather does not want to. Such disobedience is rebellion and a wilful sin, which means that her prayers and her service are rendered useless. The LORD will neither hear her prayers nor accept her worship because of her unclean hands and impure heart. If she refuses to obey, she ought to check her salvation because all children of God will have an unending desire in their hearts to obey every jot and tittle of God's Word. A truly born again Christian wife will want to obey all that her heavenly Father wants for her life and to glorify His Name on earth.

If a wife was not a Christian when she married her husband, it does not matter. She may not have been married in a church and did not say the Christian vows; now that she has become a Christian, the teachings from God's Word on Christian marriage and the duties of the Christian wife apply to her. If she finds it hard to obey, then she must pray and ask God to help her. God will give her the grace and she will slowly but surely change and will love her husband with Agape love which is unconditional and sacrificial.

b. Obedience is a Command – To submit to one's husband is a non-negotiable command. Have you ever wondered why the LORD mentions this attribute of a Christian wife only here, as opposed to other attributes which can be found throughout the Bible? The reason for this special mention is found in Genesis 3:16 which is the curse of God upon Eve who sinned against God in the Garden of Eden. The curse is twofold. The first, which is more well-known, is an increase in birth pain for the woman. The second is that wives will want to usurp their husbands' authority but the husbands will rule over them. The tension in the home between husband and wife is part of the curse. Nevertheless, for the Christian wife, God says that she can submit, i.e. obey, her own husband. It is as if God is saying that the curse on the Christian wife has been lifted. She has the transformed life as a child of God and the Holy Spirit in her to help

her submit to her own husband. The scope of this submission is in everything as taught in Ephesians 5:24. The Christian wife must submit to her own husband in everything as long as what is asked of her is not immoral, criminal or a sin against God and the Bible. In short, a wife who is truly born again will have the ability to submit to her own husband.

This is a life-long submission which must be done continuously, willingly and happily. This submission is from the heart. It is not an external show which is the sin of hypocrisy. There can be no justification for not submitting, unless criminal, immoral and unbiblical deeds are asked of her. The Christian wife must submit which is a demonstration of genuine salvation.

What if the husband is not a Christian? This is a legitimate question. The command does not say to submit to your own Christian husband but simply to your own husband. The transforming power of God's salvation is in the Christian wife. If she is born again, this command stands. She must submit to her husband even if he is not a believer.

What if he is wrong? If the husband is wrong and the issue is not immoral, criminal and not against Holy Scriptures, she must still submit to him. If this is not the true understanding of the command, then it would mean that the wife is to submit to her husband who is perfect and cannot make mistakes. This is obviously impossible because no man on earth, outside of Christ, is perfect. That is why even when the wife is very sure that the husband is wrong, she must still submit to him because he is the head of the home/house. It is his and her house and not hers alone! To refuse to obey/submit is to sin against God's command.

What if he is unreasonable? If the husband is unreasonable, she must still submit to him as long as his unreasonable behaviour toward her is not immoral, criminal or unscriptural. Even when the husband is angry and makes decisions out of anger, she must still submit to him. This is what the word "everything" implies!

What if he has sinned and has committed a crime and went to jail? Even if that happens, her submission to her own husband stands. This is no justification for not submitting. He may be the greatest crook but he is still her husband. She must respect him by a genuine obedience to him.

What if he has been or is a derelict father and husband? She must still obey him as long as what is asked of her is not criminal, immoral or unbiblical.

What if he is a repeated sinner? There is no such thing as a perfect husband or a perfect wife. Both are sinners. The wife must still submit to her own husband regardless of his repeated sins.

There is no “statute of limitation” on obedience to one’s own husband. The main condition for all the above is that he is the HUSBAND!

c. To Her Own Husband Only – God is sovereign. He was the One who chose the husband for the wife whether they were aware of it or not when they got married. God was sovereign when the couple married as unbelievers. Then they had children who are gifts from God. Their children in turn will have their own children. Through their union, two generations are born. Nothing is by “accident”, especially when salvation comes to the wife.

Every relationship on this earth will have its problems. The husband and wife must learn to say “sorry” to one another. Then there will be reconciliation. Both must forgive. The Christian wife must forgive whenever her husband sins. This means that she must not bring to remembrance his sin. What if he commits the same sin again and again and again!? Then the wife must forgive again and again and again! This is also true when the situation is reversed. It is the way of God. When the Christian wife commits the same sin again and again and each time she confesses before God, the LORD forgives. The Lord will not recall her sin; likewise she must not recall her husband’s sin ever again. If she does, then she has not forgiven her husband and in her the fault lies. She cannot say that his repentance was not sincere whenever he sins the same sin again because she cannot read hearts. This may indicate that he is weak; but then who is not weak? The ability to forgive demonstrates genuine saving faith. Christ made this abundantly clear in **Matthew 6:14-15** (KJV), *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."*

The Christian wife must realize that God makes no mistakes. He chose her husband for her to make her the way she is and blesses her with her family. She must love her husband with God's unconditional and sacrificial love no matter what he has done. God uses her Christian husband and blesses them with their children to shape and mould them both to be more and more Christ like. This means love and forgiveness will always be the cement that will bind her to him even as it binds her to Christ. She can love and forgive because she has experienced the same in her life from God.

There is no relationship on earth more important than that of the husband and the wife. It is the only relationship which is given the injunction from God that only till death can they ever part. God is the One in control of death. Since God is the One who brought them together, then God is the only One who can separate them by death! Any other form or person or thing that separates the husband and wife relationship is an affront and a sin against God! Forgiveness is often the healing balm for any soul, especially of the Christian wife whose heart has been touched by the love of Christ and the forgiveness she has received from God through the blood of Christ.

d. Unto the LORD – The reason a Christian wife can obey her own husband willingly and from the heart all the time is because she does it unto the Lord. When she does it as unto the Lord, it means she is doing it for the sake of Christ. To do for the sake of Christ means that it is for the sake of the testimony of the work of God's grace in her life. This includes her testimony and the salvation of those whom God has sent into her life so that they might see Christ in her. This is a powerful testimony. If she does not submit to her own husband and is wilfully rebellious, she must first check her own salvation. If she is truly saved, then she must ask herself why she hates the people in her life so much that she would deliberately prevent God's grace to shine through her life. Would others see Christ in her by her cheerful submission and obedience to her husband? Why would she deliberately sin and be a stumbling block and destroy the witness of Christ in her life by her stubborn rebellious behaviour in not submitting to her own husband whom God has chosen for her? Can she truly say that she loves the people in her life when she wilfully does not submit to her own husband? If she is truly born again and has genuinely accepted Christ as her Lord and Saviour, then self must die and Christ must reign. She must obey her Lord Jesus Christ and love and obey her own husband.

The LORD Jesus Christ used the closeness of the husband and wife relationship as an example of His unending and intimate relationship with His church. This is why the husband and wife relationship is so sacred. God has warned that no one is allowed to tear this relationship apart. Not submitting to her own husband as unto the LORD is disobedience and a direct violation to God's command. She has become a tool of Satan whether she likes to admit it or not. By her obedience to Christ she is able to obey her own husband regardless of what the husband has done (except for the sin of adultery which he refuses to repent of) and as long as he is alive. It is a sin to even think of divorce. It is also a sin if she thinks of taking her own life!

Conclusion -- When a wife has a difficult husband, it means that she needs a lot of shaping and moulding. God always knows best. God makes no mistakes. If the wife wants a godly husband, then she has to be godly. Patience and longsuffering are learned only through the crucible of suffering and pain. The faster she learns the lessons of love and forgiveness and obedience to her own husband, the faster the godliness will shine forth in her life and the change in him. The marriage covenant is a most unusual covenant whereby two persons are joined and become ONE flesh! This is God's description of a marriage covenant that He wants all His children who are married to bear in mind and take to heart.

The duties of both the Christian husband and wife are described emphatically for them to obey and fulfil so that together they might be the light and salt in this world of sin and darkness, especially to their loved ones whom God has blessed them with. A less well-known but very appropriate passage that describes the duties of the Christian wife at home so that her life will shine for Christ all the days of her life is **1 Peter 3:1-6** (KJV), *"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;*

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. **3** Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; **4** But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. **5** For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: **6** Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." Amen.