

Marriage Series: God, Marriage and Relationships

The role of the wife to her husband

When God made male and female in his image, he put authority and submission in that relationship. The head of the woman probably better translated “wife,” is man. The marriage relationship is a reflection of the Trinitarian relationship. This unity and authority in the marriage is a reflection of how mankind is made in the image of God.

First Corinthians 11:3 says: “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

Ephesians 5:28,33 declares; “Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. . . . Let each one of you . . . so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband”

Ephesians 5:22

“Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

When a wife submits, she is being a helper to her husband in the broad, biblical sense of that word.

When society hears “wives submit to your husband,” they raise up their hands with the belief that submission to a man is demeaning. We are going to look at the true biblical meaning of submission and change that perception.

There is a lot of confusion among Christians today regarding what makes for a godly marriage. Much of this controversy centers around how a husband and wife interact with each other.

The six things that the wife need to show to her husband

1. **Companionship**

A Christian wife should be her husband's best friend. After God placed the first man, Adam, in the garden of Eden, he declared, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" ([Gen. 2:18](#)). While she doesn't need to join in on all of her husband's activities, a Christian wife should enjoy spending as much time as possible with her spouse.

2. **Love**

A Christian wife should love her husband unconditionally. Because Paul tells husbands to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands in [Ephesians 5:33](#), some Christians think this means that a Christian wife doesn't have to love her husband—but this is not the case at all.

All Christians are commanded to love their brothers and sisters in Christ, and this is especially true in marriage. When a man and woman get married, they make a vow before God to stay together until death parts them. To be in a relationship where love is one-sided—or there is no love on either side—is a great tragedy.

When Christians remember how God loves them so much that he sent his Son to suffer and die on a cross for them, this gives them courage and the will to love even in the most difficult of circumstances. When a Christian wife loves her husband with the love of Christ, this love can do much to soften the hardest of hearts ([1 Pet. 3:1](#)).

3. **Respect**

A Christian wife should always respect her husband. The Greek word the apostle Paul uses in [Ephesians 5:33](#) for the respect wives should have for their husbands is *phobētai*, which means to have a profound measure of reverence/respect for someone ([BDAG](#), 1061).

Some Christian women wrongly believe that the word "submit" in [Ephesians 5:21–24](#) means they must tolerate any kind of treatment from their husband. The Greek word Paul uses in these verses for "submit" is *hypotassó*, which refers to a wife's "recognition of an ordered structure" in

which her husband is the person to whom she should show appropriate respect “as to the Lord” ([BDAG](#), 1042; [Eph. 5:22](#); see also [Col. 3:18](#) and [1 Pet. 3:1–6](#)). If a husband directs his wife to do anything that goes against her conscience, she always “must obey God rather than men” ([Acts 5:29](#); [1 Cor. 8:12–13](#)).

4. **Help**

A Christian wife can help her husband in a multitude of ways. This will look different in each family. While some Christians think certain work and household responsibilities belong to a specific sex, believers should not be bound where Scripture gives them liberty.

One important way a Christian wife can support her husband is in the area of counsel. In the Bible, we find instances where women gave their husbands good counsel or were discerning (Sarah in [Gen. 21:12](#); Abigail in [1 Sam. 25:3](#); Pontius Pilate’s wife in [Matt. 27:19](#)) as well as instances where women gave poor counsel (Eve in [Gen. 3:6](#); Sarah in [Gen. 16:2](#); Jezebel in [1 Kings 19:1–2](#)). A Christian wife should seek to grow in knowledge and wisdom in God’s Word as well as in all her callings in life, so she can give her husband the best possible counsel in all circumstances ([Prov. 31:10–31](#)).

A husband bears great responsibility, and he needs his wife’s straightforward input. A Christian wife should be honest with her husband about any concerns she has regarding a particular matter to protect him from potential harmful consequences.

5. **Devotion**

A Christian wife should be completely devoted to her husband. This includes being faithful to her marriage vows, caring for her husband physically and emotionally, praying for him, and seeking his good in all things. A Christian wife should joyfully help her husband in his callings to the glory of God. She should be loyal, trustworthy, and look after the interests of her husband ([Phil. 2:4](#)). When a Christian wife honors God in her comportment in daily life, she also brings honor to her husband.

6. Honorable

A Christian wife honors her husband as she expects him to respect her in all circumstances. There is no excuse ever for a husband to harm his wife physically or emotionally. Paul is clear on this matter:

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. ([Eph. 5:28–29](#))

When a Christian wife is in an abusive marriage, she needs to seek help from extended family, friends, civil authorities, and the leadership of a faithful church. This is why it is so important for Christians to be members of a church community that upholds God's Word carefully and provides proper oversight over its members. There is no situation where a woman should be abused period. A Christian wife honors her husband when she holds steadfastly to standards that help him to be a godly man.

Because of our sinful natures, Christian husbands and Christian wives will not fulfill their duties to their spouses perfectly in this life. Thankfully, our hope lies not in our own works but rather in the perfect work of Christ done on our behalf.

Christian marriage constantly involves sacrifice, commitment, and forgiveness. Our failures should keep us humble and direct us to daily seek God's help in loving our spouses to His glory in all.

What Submission Is NOT - in Marriage?

Submission in marriage is **not** reticence, servanthood, inferior, docile, degrading and **not** a sign of weakness. In fact, submission in marriage is a sign of strength, not of weakness. It requires a great degree of personal strength of character. Submission in marriage is a spirit of respect a wife has toward her husband. It is an attitude intended to help her and her husband to live a more contently, peaceful life together. Problems and disagreements between a husband and wife in marriage are inevitable. But when a woman has an attitude of submission in marriage, a heart of respect for her man, it is much more likely the inevitable problems will be resolved harmoniously, without unpleasant quarreling and without bitterness and resentment. And that is not to say it will be so because the

man dominates and gets his way all the time. Some people look down on submission as if it were something demeaning, degrading or humiliating. In a biblical sense, that is not what submission in marriage is about.

For a wife practicing submission to her husband does not mean she should be a silent “yes” person or a doormat. It does NOT mean she should have no opinions of her own. Rather, a wife who chooses to take an attitude of submission towards her husband is a wife who has a heart of being supportive to her husband. She does so because she chooses to. In choosing to support her husband she is empowering him to have the self-respect he needs. He will develop into the kind of man who accepts his role and responsibilities in the home. He will seek to carry out his God-ordained position of protecting, providing for and leading his family.

God said in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him”.

When a wife submits to her husband it is not because she is afraid of his reproof, domination, rejection or chastisement. Instead, it is because she chooses to bless him. In so doing, she is demonstrating a spirit of respect for man.

Biblical submission in marriage is a wife making a choice not to overtly resist her husband’s will. That is not to say she cannot disagree with him or that she cannot express her opinion. Indeed, a wife who practices submission is by definition a woman with strength of character. She will therefore usually have her own opinions and ideas about issues. These may often be different to the opinions of her husband. But she can express her opinions and ideas respectfully without belittling and without disrespectful confrontation. In fact, it might sometimes be wrong for her not to express her opinion. She is ordained by God to be her husband’s helper, not his doormat. By expressing her opinions, giving advice and offering suggestions she will be an invaluable partner to her husband.

For a husband, when his wife demonstrates a heart of submission in marriage, she is a pleasure to be around. The husband finds as appreciation and admiration for her because she is one whom he can trust. As a result, he can feel at peace and contented. He can trust her with his deepest desires and fears because he is not afraid of her scorning him, competing with him or rejecting him. He can relax with her because he

knows that even when he makes mistakes, she will be working with him to help him put them right. The husband can feel secure in himself that she will be working to minimize the consequences of his mistake rather than trying to prove a point or reject him in some way.

A man whose wife truly understands, and practices biblical submission acquires a greater sense of self-respect. He knows she respects him as a husband who accepts his responsibility as a leader in the home. He has confidence that she respects him, and she is not in any way trying to belittle him.