



LOVE AND SUBMISSION

One of the most controversial elements of any teaching on marriage is the subject of submission. In spite of this, I love to teach submission because there is extraordinary freedom when it is properly understood.

Traditionally, submission has been defined as obedience, meaning, "You do what I ask you to do, when I ask you to do it." This concept of submission demotes every wife to the status of slave and demeans this precious gift of God. After all, the Scripture says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing," and I just know that it does NOT mean, "He that findeth a wife findeth a good *slave*."¹

When we examine the word submission, we begin with the prefix "sub" which means under. Adding the word "mission" to our prefix, we can now define submission as "to come under the mission of another." There are other words in our vocabulary which clarify this definition, words such as sublease or submarine. If you sublease your apartment, the new tenant operates under your lease and of course, a submarine is designed to navigate under water.

As a wife, I voluntarily submit to my husband. The Word of God in Genesis 2:20 explains that I am

his "help meet." According to Strong's Greek and Hebrew dictionary, the word "help meet" means to aid or to help.² Although this may sound ridiculous, it means I am NOT a hindrance. Instead, I am a blessing, a support to every plan and endeavor. However, this does not mean I blindly follow him. In the Old Testament, Sarah spoke boldly to Abraham telling him to "cast out" Hagar and

"WHEN WE WALK WITH THE LORD /
IN THE LIGHT OF HIS WORD / WHAT
A GLORY HE SHEDS ON OUR WAY! /
WHILE WE DO HIS GOOD WILL, / HE
ABIDES WITH US STILL, / AND WITH
ALL WHO WILL TRUST AND OBEY."⁵

Ishmael. Abraham was deeply grieved by her suggestion, but God said, "All that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice."³ Sarah was right and God backed her up.

As Wayne's help meet, there is no greater satisfaction than helping him make a decision, finish a project, or remember "where he put something." One day, I found a document Wayne needed and, afterward, I was flooded by the power of God. When I tell this story in any of our teaching

sessions, there is always someone who has had the same experience. However, there is no mystery here. I believe as we obey God's Word and stand in our position as a help meet, God surrounds us with His presence. There is no greater reward!

Now, lest we forget, we again remind ourselves that wives are not slaves bowing to every order of their husband. They are women submitted to the mission of their husband, a mission given to him by God, our Father. This mission includes his relationship to God, his career, his home and his family.

In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul details the husband's primary mission in the home and his marital responsibility to his wife. He says, "Love your wives as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."⁴ Jesus Christ sacrificed himself for the church and in like manner, every husband sacrifices himself and his desires in order to benefit his wife.

When we read this Scripture, I am sure our hearts agree with it. Yet, when the big golf game needs to be cancelled because our wife is ill or overwhelmed by the children, cancellation seems "out of the question." But, the impact of God's command cannot be denied. A husband's life always revolves around his wife's need, even when sacrifice is necessary.

In Ephesians 5:28-29, the apostle Paul further explains the husband's responsibility to his wife when he writes that the husband must love his wife as he loves himself. He then notes that the husband will nourish and cherish his flesh. The New Living Translation explains this Word from the Lord saying a man will lovingly care for his body. The Contemporary English Version teaches us that he will provide for his body and the Message Bible declares that he will pamper it. There is no doubt this means he will benefit his wife in the same way.

As a wife, I love the word "pamper," and I would never deny that I am greatly pampered. Yet, some wives find themselves second to their husband's desire. He is first and it is obvious. But, at other times, the husband is challenged by a take-charge wife. Both scenarios contradict the Scripture. Each of us must follow God's command

even if our spouse does not walk with God.

I love the advice given in the very familiar hymn, "Trust and Obey," which also applies to marriage. The words of this song are, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."⁵ That's the key, isn't it? We must trust God. When we trust Him and obey His Word, He will work mightily in our lives. He will work in our marriage. Our magnificent Father will help us. Oh, thank you Father again and again.

¹Pr 18:22 ²H5828, H5048 Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionary, e-sword.net ³Ge 21:12 ⁴Eph 5:25 ⁵"Trust and Obey" by J.H. Sammis

SUZANNE WRITES

Joseph was presented with a quandary. Take Mary to be his wife and believe the fantastic tale she'd told him or make a public spectacle of her and have her stoned.

That's right. Stoned.

As her espoused husband, it was his legal right. Yet the Bible tells us, he didn't want to do that. So he opted for mercy. (Mt 1:18-21) Deliberately and on purpose, he looked past the wrong it seemed was done to him.

Imagine how Joseph felt that day. This woman he's engaged to comes to him saying, "I'm expecting. Oh, and it's God's child."

Right. Sure, you are. Looney.

Yet still, he opted for mercy, giving her plight some serious thought. He wasn't hasty, didn't make a rash decision, but considered her reputation as much as he did his own.

In the end, he listened to his heart and allowed God to direct his path. Though it did take the words of an angel to confirm it in his thinking, he chose to protect her. That's what his decision amounted to. Shelter. Security. He offered Mary the safety of being his wife.

What wife wouldn't honor a man who'd take her care so much to heart, who'd believed her when it seemed no one else should, and received as his own child, a baby he could not otherwise explain?