

A Submissive Wife

What It Means & How To Be One

Hi ladies,

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your journey in learning to become a submissive wife. Many years ago, I was just like you, wanting to be a good wife and to have a Christ-centered marriage, but I had no clue what that looked like or how to do it. I sought God's Word for the answers to this and He has been gracious and faithful to mold and shape me into the wife I am today.

In this guide, you will learn why God is the expert on marriage, His perfect design for the marriage relationship, what your role as a submissive wife looks like, and why we tend to fight it.

The guide is broken down into 5 lessons with application questions at the end of each one. The questions are provided to help you apply God's truth for true change in yourself and your marriage. I recommend completing one section per day, giving yourself time to reflect and pray on what you have learned.

Remember, we can only get out of something what we put into it. So the more time and prayer you put into reading, answering the questions, and applying the Word, the more you will reap its benefits.

I pray this blesses you,

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Lesson 1 ~ The Expert On Marriage

Because the institution of marriage has been around for so long, there is an endless number of books, seminars, and so-called experts, all with varying ideas and theories on how to have a successful marriage. All claiming to know what you should and shouldn't do, how finances should be handled, what your individual roles are, etc.

With so much information out there, how do we know what really works and what doesn't? How do we know what the truth is?

Because we are bombarded with the world's view on marriage, we sometimes forget who created it in the first place. Who the true expert on the subject really is.

God created man, woman, and marriage; therefore He is the One who knows how it is all to work. He has a perfect design for marriage. He created you and your husband to live in perfect unity within the bond of marriage.

We tend to look in all these other places for guidance in what our role is, what our husbands are responsible for doing, or what marriage is really supposed to be like. We forget that God is the One who created everything, including marriage. If we want to have the loving, caring, blessed marriage that God designed for us to have, then we must follow His teachings on how He created it to be.

So let's take a quick look at God's creation of man, woman, and marriage.

In Genesis 2:18 we read;

"Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him."

Genesis 2:18 NKJV

We are commanded to be our husband's helpmate. It is why we were created. As his wife, you are the one person in your husband's life designed and chosen to know him intimately and come alongside him. Not above or below him, but alongside to encourage and help him.

Further in Genesis, we find;

"So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept. Then He took one of his ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. Then Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she will be called Woman, for she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

Genesis 2:21-24 NKJV

God made us to be a companion to our husbands, to become one flesh with them. The day we said "I do"; all other relationships changed as our husband became the most important person in our lives.

Do we still honor our parents and spend time with our family? Absolutely! However, there will be times when your husband and family will disagree and a choice must be made.

As the scripture told us, we are to leave our father and mother to be joined with our spouse. Therefore, your husband takes precedence over your parents and family. His requests and decisions come first.

Did you notice the first thing God did after He created the woman?

It says, "He brought her to the man". Almost as if He presented her to the man as a gift. In God's design for marriage, we were uniquely created to be one with our husbands.

An important thing to note about the creation of man and woman is that we were created equally in the image of God.

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Genesis 1:27 NKJV

Both men and women were created in God's image and as believers, both are equal heirs of Christ. We are not to look at ourselves as lowly or inferior in any way. As wives, we are created in the image of God to be a blessing and a helpmate to our husbands.

Application Questions

Who do you go to for marriage advice? (Marriage book, counselor, scripture, or godly mentor)

Is the advice based on scripture, personal experience, or the views of today's society?

Do you need to change your source of information on marriage to the one true expert?

Why did God create women?

In what ways, can you be a blessing and a helpmate to your husband?

Lesson 2 ~ God's Design For Marriage

Ephesians 5:22-33 gives us a picture of what the marriage relationship is to be.

"Wives, be submissive to your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head and Savior of the church, which is His body. But as the church submits to Christ, so also let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and that He might present to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. In this way men ought to 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 the Lord cares for the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I am speaking about Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Ephesians 5:22-33 NKJV

There are several teachings in this passage. Below is a brief overview of each one.

1. A wife is to be submissive to her husband as unto the Lord. Meaning that, in the same way, that we would follow the instructions and desires of God in putting Him first, we should do the same for our husbands.
2. Be submissive in everything. Everything means just that, everything. Not in some things or in only the things you agree with, but in every request and desire from your husband, providing that he does not ask you to sin.
3. The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. There must be some kind of order in the family otherwise we will have enmity and chaos. God has given the responsibility of leading the family to the husband. With that responsibility also comes a greater accountability to the Lord.
4. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Christ died for the church. Men are to be valiant and the protector of their wives.
5. The two are to become one flesh. A husband and wife, are to come together to create their own family unit. There should be no outside influences from parents, family, or others that cause division between a husband and his wife.
6. Husbands are to love, nourish, and cherish their wives as Christ does the church. Christ, sacrificially loves and cares for His children, putting their needs before His own. Your husband's love and care for you and the family should emulate Christ's love.

7. Wives are to respect their husbands. In the same way that scripture doesn't command a husband to love his wife, only if she is lovable, it also doesn't command a wife to respect her husband, only if he deserves or has earned it. A wife is to respect her husband at all times in the same way that a husband is to love his wife, at all times.

This is how God designed marriage to be and even in our fallen world, we as believers can have this kind of marriage. I know this to be true because my marriage and other Christian marriages are living proof of it.

If you're thinking to yourself, "Oh, I wish my husband loved me this way".

Is it possible that we are a part of the reason that they are not showing us love the way that God designed it?

In the same way that we would find it difficult to be submissive and respectful to a husband who doesn't love and cherish us, our husbands will find it difficult to love and cherish us, when we are fighting them on everything or being disrespectful towards them.

When we do not follow our role as a submissive respectful wife, we make it that much harder for our husbands to live out their role.

Some would say; if he would do his part, I would do mine. However, this creates a merry-go-round effect where you keep spinning in the same circle, getting nowhere. The wife doesn't respect the husband because the husband doesn't show love towards the wife. In turn, the husband doesn't love the wife because the wife doesn't respect her husband.

One of you has to get off the merry-go-round or nothing will ever change. Why not let it be you?

Application Questions

Is there any part of God's design for marriage, described above, that you were unfamiliar with or is lacking in your marriage? If so, which one?

Is there an area where you find it difficult to be submissive to your husband? If so, why?

Do you feel that you show respect to your husband at all times? Why or why not?

If your relationship is such that you are on a merry-go-round of "if he will, I will". Are you willing to get off for true change in your marriage?

Lesson 3 ~ The Wife's Role

Our role as godly wives consists of two parts; to be both submissive and respectful to our husbands. Let's take a look at each of these individually.

Submissive

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

Ephesians 5:22-24 NKJV

This is probably one of the most misunderstood commandments in scripture. The world, and more so the enemy, wants to make this look as demeaning as possible. He does this to cause strife and division in the family. He knows that if he can cause problems between you and your husband, it will have a lasting effect on the entire family for years to come.

So, let's examine God's perspective on the marriage relationship and how He designed it to function.

First, in God's creation men and women are equal in the sight of God. 1 Peter 3:7 shows us this.

"Likewise, you husbands, live considerately with your wives, **giving honor to the woman** as the weaker vessel, since **they too are also heirs of the grace of life**, so that your prayers will not be hindered."

1 Peter 3:7 NKJV ~ *emphasis added*

We see here that we are both heirs of the grace of life. Equal heirs to the inheritance that we have in Christ and that God shows no partiality towards one or the other.

With the scripture in Ephesians and this one in 1 Peter, we can see that there is a humbleness that a husband and wife are to have towards one another: the wife is submissive to her husband and the husband honors his wife. Both of these require a certain amount of humility towards the other.

Second, we are instructed to be submissive to our husbands in the same way that we are submissive to the Lord or as the church submits to Christ.

As believers, we submit ourselves to God's will, commandments, and direction for our lives. As wives, we are also to submit to our husbands in the same way. We are not alone in this. Jesus Himself submitted to the Father's will. He did not do his own will, but did the will the Father called Him to, even to the point of death on the cross. Shouldn't we be willing to follow His example as submissive wives?

Third, we are equal in Christ, however we were created a bit differently because we have different roles. We each have our own purpose and responsibilities in God's grand scheme of life.

The husband's role is to be the leader, protector, and provider of the family. The wife's role is to nurture and care for the family. We each have our God-given roles and responsibilities and will be held accountable for how well we carry them out. It is all a part of God's order for the family. Without order, we have fighting and chaos.

Respect

In Ephesians 5:33 we find that the second part of our role as wives is to respect our husbands.

"Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Ephesians 5:33 NKJV

Notice that it doesn't say to respect your husband if you think he deserves it. A husband is commanded to love his wife, just as a wife is commanded to respect her husband, regardless.

Many wives are unsure of what respect looks like. So let's take a quick look at both respect and disrespect to get a clear understanding.

Respect ~ Admiration, affection, esteem, reverence, favor, praise, love, and honor.

Disrespect ~ Discourteous, rude, inconsiderate, ungracious, argumentative, demeaning, and belittling.

We don't often view it this way, but when we complain, respond with a rude comment, or don't consider our husband's request to see that it is done, we are being disrespectful. We should have a similar love, esteem, and favor towards our husband that we have for God.

Application Questions

Before today, how would you have described the wife's role in marriage?

In what way would you describe it differently now?

Do you see yourself as being submissive to your husband in the same way that you submit to God? Why or why not? What needs to change?

In light of the synonyms of respect and disrespect, which ones best describe your attitude or demeanor towards your husband?

In what way will you begin to change your attitude to show more respect to your husband?

Lesson 4 ~ Why We Fight It

Many women struggle with the concept of being a submissive wife. Often this is out of pride, not wanting anyone telling us what we can or can't do, or from a lack of trust that our best interest will be considered. So let's address the reasons we fight the thought of becoming a submissive wife.

It All Started With The Fall of Man

When Adam and Eve both sinned, there were consequences for their sin.

For Man ~ The ground was cursed and by hard labor, he would eat of it all the days of his life. Man would now have to work for food and to provide for his family.

For Women ~ We have pain in childbirth and a desire to rule over our husbands.

"To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, and in pain you will bring forth children; your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

Genesis 3:16 NKJV

Matthew Henry's commentary explains this well.

"If man had not sinned, he would always have ruled with wisdom and love; if the woman had not sinned, she would always have obeyed with humility and meekness."

Because of the fall, we do not have a natural desire to obey with humility and meekness but rather:

- We may think we are more capable and could do it better.
- Our husband isn't stepping up to be the family leader, so we must.
- Society tells us that we are all equal and shouldn't let anyone rule over us.

However, this line of thinking does not coincide with God's design for marriage or the role of a husband and wife.

Pride

The second reason why we fight this is because of pride. We all deal with a certain amount of sinful pride in our lives. To help us understand this better and to see pride for what it really is, let's look at some synonyms for pride.

Synonyms of Pride

- Ego
- Self-esteem
- Self-regard
- Self-respect

Pride is all about self. It's all about me. Which we know is not from God. Scripture tells us that we are to put others before ourselves. And if we are to do so with the body of Christ, how much more so should we do this with our husbands and be submissive to them?

Trust

The last one is a lack of trust, which causes us to fear. You may not trust in your husband for one reason or another. It may be from foolish decisions he has made in the past, from previous actions that were hurtful to you, or from breaking the bond of marriage.

We may not be able to put our full faith and trust in our husbands, but we can always trust and put our faith in the Lord and in His sovereignty over everything, even our husbands.

When we trust in the Lord, in His Word, and we follow His ways in being a submissive wife, He protects us. I wouldn't want you to take my word for this. So here are two promises given to you by your Heavenly Father.

"Every word of God is pure; **He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.**"
Proverbs 30:5 NKJV ~ *emphasis added*

"In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. **What can man do to me?**"
Psalms 56:11 NKJV ~ *emphasis added*

We can trust in God's will for our lives and in His sovereignty over our future. Not that everything will be roses and sunshine because God uses the adversities in our life to teach us and train us to be more like Him. But we can trust that everything that happens is for our good and His glory.

Application Questions

In what ways do you fight the thought of becoming a submissive wife?

What truth from scripture will you replace those thoughts with? (Write the verse.)

Do you see how pride and your thoughts of self, can hinder you in becoming the godly wife you want to be? Explain.

Do you have fear caused by a lack of trust in your husband?

What promise from God will you choose to believe to calm your fears?

Lesson 5 ~ What a Submissive Respectful Wife Looks Like

Learning what scripture says about being a submissive respectful wife is one thing, however, living it out can be a bit more difficult. So our last lesson is filled with practical application for what a godly wife looks like in her marriage.

God Comes First

If what your husband has asked you to do clearly goes against God's Word, you are to say no. By clearly, I mean it can be backed by scripture.

Peter makes this very clear for us in Acts 5:29

"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29 NKJV

This includes our husbands. Let me give you an example of what this looks like.

Say your husband is not a believer and doesn't want you to attend church. The commandment to have fellowship with other believers is in Hebrews 10:25, where it states; "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together".

You would then respectfully and gently, go to your husband and explain that based on this scripture, your belief in God commands you to attend church. You will choose a time that least disrupts the family and will forgo it in special circumstances or occasions, but will be attending church regularly.

God comes before your husband, therefore following God's commands comes before your husband's desires.

Be a Helpmate By Sharing Your Wisdom

Some have the impression that being a submissive wife means that you have no say in making decisions or are not to share your opinion on anything. This is absolutely not true!

God has uniquely gifted you with wisdom, talents, and experiences that your husband does not have. Give him the benefit of your knowledge and abilities. Not in showing him how it's done, but in coming along side him, offering insight, and helping where you can for the common good of the family.

Remember, we are equal in God's eyes. We just have different roles, strengths, and weaknesses. We are to use these to complement one another in marriage.

Be Submissive in Everything

Scripture does not instruct us to be submissive in some things or only the things we agree to but in everything.

"Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." Ephesians 5:24 NKJV

As stated, this does not include sin, but honoring his request in everything else. For example:

- Put your husband and his desires before your own. If we are to do this for other believers, how much more so for our husband? (Philippians 2:3)
- Obey his request. What he does ask of you, do it, and do it well. Those things that he has asked you not to do, be sure not to do them. Make him the priority of your time and efforts. Ask God to develop a him first mentality and a willingness to please him.
- Ask his opinion to be sure you are on the same page before making any major changes or purchases. It is always better to move forward together.
- If your husband says, "You can do it but I think it's a bad idea", then you're not on the same page. If you're not in agreement, pray. God will not tell you one thing and your husband something else. Ask God to change your hearts and bring you into agreement with one another. Keep in mind that as the head of the household, your husband does have the final word.

Showing Respect

We can be disrespectful by arguing, complaining, belittling our husband in front of others, or telling how he did something wrong and instructing him on how to do it right.

As godly wives, we are to be respectful in our speech by being encouraging, helpful, and uplifting with our words. To respect his headship by being submissive and not fighting against him. To respect his way of doing things even when it's not how you would do it. To be an example of respect to your children, by respecting your husband in front of them, friends, and others.

Application Questions

Is there an area where you need to respectfully say no to your husband, to put God first?

Are you giving your husband the benefit of your knowledge and abilities in coming along side him for the good of the family? If not, how can you begin to do so?

In what ways do you need to be more submissive to your husband, as you are submissive to Christ?

How can you show respect to your husband either, by not being argumentative, complaining, and giving instruction, or by being respectful in your speech, recognizing his headship, or respecting him at all times, especially in front of others?