

Helvig: In this last session, we will consider what the Bible says about marriage relationships.

Royer: Let's start with the word that has caused confusion in many homes: "submission".

Ephesians 5:21-22 says

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. Ephesians 5:21-22

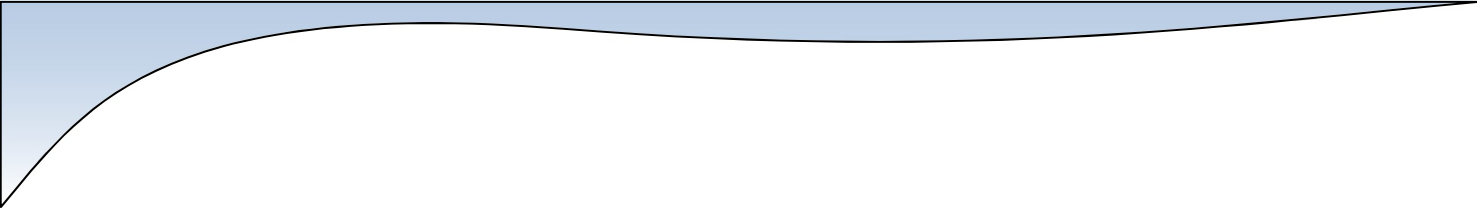
How do we apply submission in marriage?

Payne The context is submitting one to another, out of reverence for Christ. Wives to your husbands, as to the Lord. The earliest Greek manuscripts do not have the verb submit, that was added later. And virtually every critical Greek text, every one I've ever found, does not have the word submit in verse 22. It depends on submitting to one another.

Stackhouse One of the possible scandals in the New Testament is its condoning of slavery. And understandably people pick on that, especially enemies of the gospel. They say, slavery is condoned in the Bible and the subjugation of women is condoned in the Bible and the New Testament in particular, and that's true, it is condoned. Now why would God do that? We might think that he condones the subjugation of women because that's a good thing. Because, as our patriarchal friends say, women should always be subordinate to men. But none of us think that slaves should always be subordinate to their masters. And so why does God put up with it?

Because, the early church is fundamentally supposed to be about what Jesus said in the Great Commission. We're supposed to be about preaching the gospel, making disciples. If the early church had decided to make the abolition of slavery or the abolition of patriarchy front and center, they would never have gotten to their gospel message. They would have been ruthlessly oppressed as social anarchists.

What we see in the ministry of Jesus and of Paul, it seems to me, are spiritual leaders who are putting pretty heavy pressure on patriarchy. They're not explicitly calling for its abolition. But they're putting a lot of pressure on it.



Jesus keeps offending people by the way he treats women with the respect that they currently don't enjoy. "If he knew what kind of woman she is..." "What's she up to..." "Why do you talk to her?" This kind of thing is around Jesus all the time.

And Paul has these women friends in all these different cities, that he calls apostles or deacons or friends of the church, and partners in ministry. He puts pretty heavy pressure on the abolition of patriarchy.

So, Jesus and Paul are both going about as far as you could expect a Jewish man to go at that time. Short of what? Short of actually pressing the church into a posture that would have gotten them crushed by the powers of the day. That would have been something that Romans and Jews, everyone would have agreed on. And you don't get rid of slavery, our whole economy is built on it. And you don't get rid of the subjugation of women, our whole domestic life is built on it. That would have been way too much too soon.

Swanson So, in the last ten years I've been involved in working with women in the far western region of Nepal. I go in, and I talk about equality, and the women light up. They light up because they are coming from a place where they have been considered the lowest of the low.

My friend there said when her first child was born, and it was a girl, her father-in-law was very angry and nobody celebrated but her, that this baby had been born. So, when you take Christ, when you take the teachings of Jesus, into a culture like that and say that Jesus believes that you are equal in every way to your husband, that men and women are equal here in the home, in the church and in society and you show them that worldview of what that looks like, it just opens up to them.

But what I am finding already, is these groups are coming in, holding conferences for the male pastors, teaching that women should be submissive in the home and submissive in the family and in the culture. So, it's this patriarchal teaching that is coming back in to these brand-new Christians who have been given an opportunity for a new worldview, a new way of living, and it's taking them right back to where they were as Hindu women, in terms of the way they live their life every day. And I think that is a terrible shame and I think how sad Jesus must be about that.

Helvig: We have heard that Paul was trying to instruct husbands and wives how to mutually submit in a culture where wives were legally obligated to obey their husbands.

Royer: Now let's hear how 1 Corinthians 7 instructs husbands and wives to exercise mutuality.

What does the Bible say about mutuality in marriage?

Payne Oh, this is huge. When you talk about “What is the Pauline teaching on marriage?”, we ought to go to the passage when Paul talks in the most detail about marriage. And there is no doubt about it, 1 Corinthians 7 is that passage. It says far more about marriage than any other passage in the Bible. And in it he identifies twelve issues and he treats with perfect symmetry, the man and the woman. So, for instance, he says that the woman does not have authority over her own body, but her husband does. And you can just sort of hear all the Greeks saying “Preach it brother!” And, the husband does not, likewise, in the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but his wife does. Wow. Now this was a shock to the culture. He’s treating the husband and the wife equally.

In terms of spiritual authority, he speaks of the influence the wife has on the husband and the husband on the wife and they both have on the children. Well, that’s spiritual authority. He doesn’t say “The husband is the spiritual head of the family.” They’re both the source of salvation for the kids, and for each other, potentially. But in every one of twelve instances, whether spiritual or physical, he treats the husband and wife with complete reciprocity. Never does he give an edge to one over the other. They are treated as one. There’s a mutual authority and that means that’s the way God has explained to us how a marriage should work. So, let’s do it. It works!

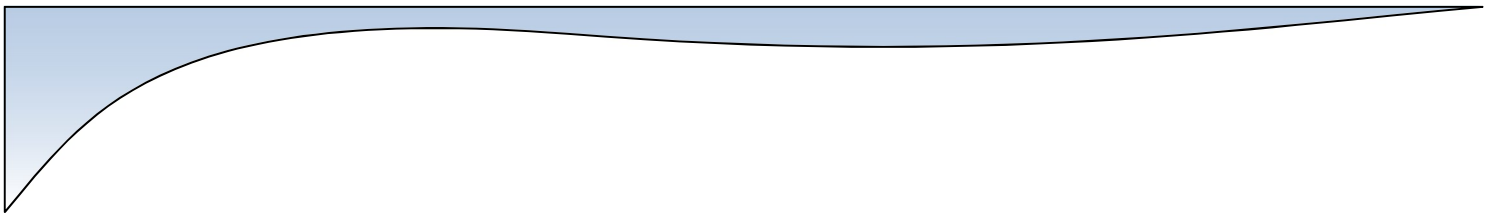
Royer: The Bible supports mutuality in the home. But practically, how does that work? Who makes the decisions?

Helvig: And does mutuality threaten a husband’s manhood?

How should decisions be made in marriage?

Yeh A happy healthy marriage is, part of the formula for that, is when the husband and the wife can really know how to negotiate compromise. And so, it’s not so much that who wins or who gets their way, but how can we come to a mutually upon agreed decision which works for both of us.

Malloy First of all, we know that third person is there, the Holy Spirit. So, my understanding of conflict is it’s actually never between two people in a marriage. There is that third person, the person of Christ. But I think that’s how my parents solved conflict. They would pull out a yellow pad of paper. They’d sit down at the table and they’d say OK, let’s write this down and let’s talk about it. But before they even started that, they would look each other in the face and they would say “I’m with you.” And the other person would say “I’m with you.” So they recognized that conflict was first of all not oppositional. They faced it together and they actually wouldn’t move forward until they both felt good about it. So the question of “What happens if you aren’t together?” My assumption is you keep praying and you keep talking about it. Because there’s always a third option with Christ. He has a way of leading our hearts and minds so that unity truly is the goal.



T. Evans Throughout 39 years of marriage, counseling thousands of couples, being paid staff marriage pastors, and counselors on staff at local churches, it's like we have had more people cross our office and our path than we can even remember. Without a doubt, the couples that are open to side by side, to co-leading together, there's just a protection, a supernatural favor of the Lord. We see them doing life as equals, as co-leaders together, side by side.

We wouldn't in our wildest dreams encourage someone to give the man some perceived authority, some gender trump card, even if it's only used once in a while. Our complementarian friends say "I include my wife on everything. I would never make a decision if I don't ask her." But if I press them and say "If there's a decision that needs to be made and your wife's not on board..." "I'll make it and she is supposed to joyfully submit."

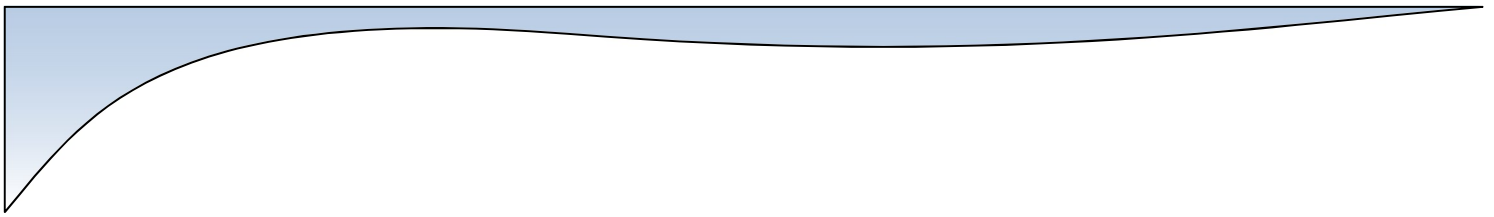
A. Evans I remember one particular couple, this woman in her second marriage. She just wept in the office and said "There has never been a man in my life that has ever asked me what I thought or asked me to pray for something or to affirm them." So, walking in God's design, walking side by side, is literally life changing. It's like you give people keys and then you open the door to a glimpse of heaven. Sometimes I think we can get a glimpse of heaven this side of eternity if we would just listen to the Lord and let him lead.

Is mutuality threatening manhood?

Fong The idea of it being unmanly to have this goal of being mutually submitted to one another, I think the opposite is true. I think to realize that there is no higher manly thing than to protect your wife. And I'm not just talking about putting a roof over her head, keeping bad guys from coming in the house. I'm talking about protecting her gifts, protecting her dreams, protecting her soul.

And if, you know, there's other teaching out there, using the Bible that's saying, "Oh, no, because he got born a man and you got born a woman, he basically gets to do whatever he wants and that you just have to go along for the ride. And your hopes, your dreams, your needs, that's not even on his radar and that doesn't have to be. You basically just have to serve his needs." I can't think of anything more unmanly than to just get your way all the time.

J. Roese My husband Steve was the executive pastor of our church. He suggested to the male leaders that when they start having this intellectual conversation of researching all the texts etc. etc. that perhaps they should hear from women first. And the elders thought that was a little crazy because most of the women in our church could do a lot of things. He said "Let's hear from the women. If we're going to make a decision about women, let's hear from the women."



S. Roese Hearing stories caused people to be willing to take the risk. Just the risk to listen, to study, to put the time and effort into it. And they did. A very good and well-crafted statement came out. We just made a very simple statement: men and women are made in the image of God and equally gifted by him and should use those gifts and should be free to use those gifts. It seems really straight forward and simple. But it wasn't, it was powerful, it was exciting.

A man came up to me and asked "What's it like to be married to an alpha woman?" The inclination was that I was, whatever the opposite of an alpha male is. I had to be if she was who she was.

How am I lessened by my wife being more? How am I affected? How does it affect my reputation? My self-value etc.? And to be honest with you, I'm not the best person to even ask those questions. I just don't get it. I don't get it. I feel like from the day I met my wife, what made me fall in love with her was the way she's made and wired. And then as she grew in Christ, to see what God had for her and to do through her, I can't help but think of anything but maximizing that. To be honest with you, the more she is, the more I am.

My experience is, in our marriage, boldly working together, for both of us to be maximized for the kingdom, is the most romantic thing we could possibly do together.

Royer: We have presented the biblical basis for shared leadership of men and women. Many churches and homes demonstrate the joy and fruitfulness of serving side by side.

Helvig: We encourage you to continue searching the Scriptures and praying for God's guidance. There are also many recommend resources listed on our web site.

Royer: It is our hope, as Jesus prayed in John 17, that we would be one in our Lord. Let us encourage the entire body of Christ, to exercise all the gifts, for the whole world. The needs are great, and God knows...everyone is needed!