

A Biblical View of Authority and Submission¹

INTRO - A knew a woman who wore a head covering as a “sign of her submission to her husband” . . . but her husband did not want her to wear it.

Ten False Theses on Authority and Submission

1. A false god is an authority.
2. An any actual “god” (or angelic being) is to be worshiped as God.
3. A king or civil magistrate must be obeyed regardless of whether a person is under that king/ magistrates authority.
4. A slave is the property of any master. (Presuming the institution of slavery, which thankfully does not officially exist.)
5. A believer is under the authority of any elder of any congregation.
6. An unmarried men should submit to married men.
7. All/any woman should submit to all/any man.
8. All girls are the property of men in general.
9. A child should be obedient to adults that are not their own parents.
10. Any sinner has an ontological place of authority over any other sinner.

Authority and Submission in Marriage is Grounded Theologically

- 1. Authority and Submission are Grounded in the Trinity**
 1. The Triune God’s unity and diversity in love (1Jn 4:16).
 2. There is subordination of the Persons of the Godhead in redemptive history: The Son is subordinate to the Father and the Spirit is subordinate to the Son and Father (Jn 6:38; Mt 26:42; Jn 15:26).
- 2. Authority and Submission are Grounded in the Order of Creation**
 1. Adam was created first (1Co 11:8).
 2. Eve was created for the sake of Adam (1Co 11:9).
 3. Adam and Eve were married (Gen 2).
- 3. Authority and Submission in Marriage is the Expression of the Trinity and Creation**
 1. Husband is head (kephale) of the wife and thus has responsibility to love (Eph 5:22ff).
 2. Wives are to submit to their own husbands (Col 3:18).
 3. Explanation: Marriage is (supposed) to reflect the Triune God’s love and the subordination of the Persons of the Godhead in redemptive history: The Son is subordinate to the Father and the Spirit is subordinate to the Son and Father. A husband and wife and a child reflect the unity and diversity of the Trinity. A wedding is a liturgical expression of the love bond of God, now shared and expressed in humanity. The image of God is reflected in both “in his image. . . male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). To demonstrate the complimentary relationship in marriage, after finding no suitable helper in the animal kingdom, Adam truly needs Eve. Eve is a special creation from the side (rib), not from the foot of Adam and henceforth every man will be birthed through woman. This is a picture of Trinitarian interdependency in the created world.

¹ Presented and discussed by request at the All Saints Women’s Study by Gregg Strawbridge, Pastor.

Notes and Practical Questions:

Colossians 3:18 - Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Ephesians 5:22–24 - Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

Examples of the term “submit/be subject” (*hupotasso*) are found in the following: Lk 2:51, 10:17; Rm 8:7, 13:1; Eph 1:22; Titus 2:9; 1Pt 2:18).

How do I love my husband and submit to him and still be who God has made me to be?

There is an equality of personhood, so there is no conflict between being a woman and being a wife. The conflict may arise when a woman denies her role as a wife or a husband abuses his role as a husband.

How do I disagree with my husband in a Godly way?

Disagreement is not the same as insubordination. Disagreement should be expressed in a way that acknowledges the husband's role and calls him to lead in an informed and responsible manner.

Does submission mean that he always has the last “say” on every topic?

Submission means that a wife yields to her husband after the proper process, discussion, and appeals. A husband who never defers to his wife on any topic is an idiot.

Is there a place for the woman to take the lead?

Wives lead in the sense of taking initiative, being assertive, making decisions, acting, etc. all the time and properly so. If “take the lead” means wives are to rule their husbands, then no. But if it means leading under the authority of their husbands, yes. In some cases a wife must act to do something for the good of the family in the absence of the husband's leadership, e.g., taking out the trash if the husband will not; reading Scripture and praying with children if the husband will not.

What part do I as a woman play in the life of our church - how do I use my talents and gifts?

You should participate in every ministry of edification and service of which you feel you should, as well as stretch yourself into areas of service beyond your “comfort zone.” Using your talent and gifts is in no way limited to the public services or ministries of our local congregation. You can be a doctor, lawyer, indian chief, butcher, baker, candlestick maker, mother, teacher, homemaker, and serve well the people of God without ever teaching Sunday school or being on a church committee. Remember the Commission at the end of the service to go forth to love and serve the Lord after you leave the congregational worship service.

How do you see Biblical submission playing out and being a light to the world? In what ways can we as women misunderstand submission and send the wrong message to the world which we are hoping to enlighten.

The wrong message is the darkness of denying biblical truth about men, women, marriage, children, etc. The best kind of light is that which shows the beauty of God's people (ordinarily) in happy marriages, faithful children, loving mothers, and engaged fathers. While there are people called to celibacy, the ordinary accomplishment of God's will (dominion and evangelism) requires marriage and children. Reaching the world does not mean that we must accept that women are the same as men, that husbands and wives have the same roles, or that mothers and homemakers are inferior to unmarried professional women. It is a high and necessary calling for women lives as wives and mothers as the pursuit of their lives. While this can be twisted as propaganda against Christianity, as though this degrades women, we all had mothers. It is a great hypocrisy that the progressivist/egalitarians/feminists who grew up with loving mothers to try to destroy motherhood.