

## *Looking to Jesus in Submission*

*“looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Hebrews 12:2

We look to Jesus because He completed the plan the Father had for The Faith. On the personal level, He also gives us the perfect example of what our faith should be. Our walk in this life must be patterned after the way Jesus lived. That was the point of Him coming in the flesh. Jesus is God (Colossians 2:9). God does not just tell us what to do. He shows us. “Be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:45) is not just an authoritarian command. It is a loving parent who says, “Here, do it this way,” and then demonstrates what He means. Jesus became flesh to communicate to us in terms we can understand (Hebrews 1:2; John 1:18). God loves all mankind and we are to as well. We know what love is by seeing what Jesus did in love (1 John 3:16). We also follow His example in submission in order to live up to our full potential as beings made in the image of God (1 Peter 2:21).

Jesus lowered Himself to serve us. The all-powerful God showed humility. He is equal to the other individuals of deity, but He did not hold onto its privileges (Philippians 2:5-8; Mark 10:45), He gave them up. He had every right to demand worship and respect, but Jesus said He did not come to do His own will, but that of the Father (John 6:38; 12:49; Matthew 26:39). When ungodly men mistreated Him He did not resist, and He tells us to be the same way (Matthew 5:38-42). He did not deserve to be treated unfairly, but He deliberately served others instead of Himself, and told His followers to do the same (John 13:13-16). Remember the number of times Jesus told His apostles to put themselves last, not first (Matthew 19:30; 20:16; Mark 9:35; Luke 13:30)? These examples are easy enough to understand, but somehow when we attach the word “submit” to them many of us are just rubbed the wrong way. Sometimes we go to great lengths to serve others, but don’t like to be reminded of the need to be submissive. If it is my idea I am eager to do it. Just don’t tell me what to do. That is not Christ-like.

Ephesians 5 and 6 explain in extended detail how the mind of Christ is demonstrated in submission. We imitate God when we do not place our interests or “rights” first (5:1,2). We redeem our past mistakes when we are careful how we walk today (5:15-17). All Christians are to submit to each other (5:21). Wives are to submit to their husbands in the same way the Church submits to Christ (5:22-24, 33). Husbands are to lovingly put the needs of their wives before their own in the same way Christ gave Himself for the Church (5:25-33). Children submit in obedience to their parents (6:1-3). Fathers consider the needs of their children (6:4). Slaves submit to their masters (6:5-8). Masters do the same toward their servants (6:9). God’s people are an interdependent group of individuals who must place the interests and needs of others before their own. Submission is not just an issue in male/female relationships. It is the baseline for how every Christian needs to act.

Issues of status and hierarchy in the body of Christ are often paradoxes. Jesus, who deserves service, served us with His life and death. The elders of the church, who should be willingly submitted to (Hebrews 13:17), actually serve the members they guide. Even the word Deacon means servant. Over and over, Jesus demonstrates that God is a selfless being who does for the ones He loves what they need done, and what they cannot do for themselves. That is our example to follow if we wish to be molded into the image of Christ. There is no position that can refuse to yield to another based on perceived value or rank. This is the essence of having Christ living in you. Don’t let the Feminist movement tell you that you are too valuable to serve others. They are not looking at our example of Christ.

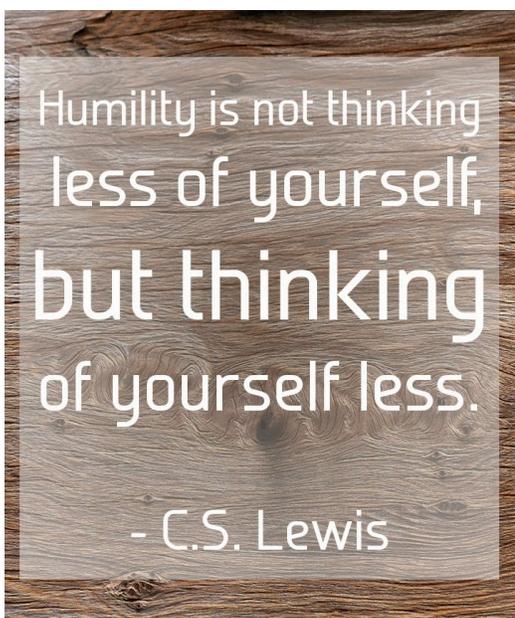
A loving mother does not sacrifice her time and energy for the needs of her children because they outrank her, as if she was forced to do it. She does it because they are her responsibility and she loves them. They do not know what is best, and she fills their needs, not merely their wants. When their wants conflict with their needs she decides which are more important. God does the same for us. To follow His direction in areas we do not understand or naturally agree is an act of submission. To resist the direction of God is to rebel. Just as the child who may cry or throw a tantrum when they do not get what they want, we must be just as pathetic when we refuse to submit to God and trust Him to do things His way. We need to grow up and accept what is truly good (Hebrews 5:12-14).

The need for submission applies to every Christian, but there are specific directions given to women. God tells a woman to submit to her husband, but not because she is not as important as him. He does not even say women are not as capable. He merely says that is their role. We are all equal before God in terms of salvation (Galatians 5:26-28), but that does not mean we are all identical. Wives are simply told to submit in everything (Ephesians 5:24). 1 Timothy 2:11-14, on the other hand, addresses all women, not just the married ones. The reasons given for her need for submissiveness in teaching situations are the order of creation, and Eve's lead in sin. These are two historical facts that will not change. Man was made first and that gives him the place of leadership (1 Corinthians 11:8,9). God is completely fair and just in deciding to arrange things this way, because God is completely fair and just. This is His world and He makes the rules. Regardless of whether or not Eve was more susceptible to the deception of Satan the fact is she sinned and led Adam into sin. He was responsible for his actions (maybe more so since he was not deceived), but she still initiated that act. Creation and the Fall are part of our history and will never change. That means this structure will apply to all women in any time, location or context. So when 1 Corinthians 14:34-38 says that women are to remain silent in the assemblies of the Church it applies to every woman. The restriction is based on the fact that she is a woman and God gave the role of leadership to men.

As women we are on the support staff of our team. That does not mean we have no input on decisions being made or have no hand in implementing them. This is not a dictatorial arrangement that oppresses or takes advantage of the rest of the group. Each local congregation is a loving organism concerned with the welfare of the whole body. The leadership is working to protect and further the interests of the whole. Some of those choices are made for them in Scripture, and as such are non-negotiable. Some decisions are easy to make when they bring happiness and harmony to the group. Many are agonizingly complicated, trying to balance the factors of spiritual health and timing

for a varied number of individuals. One thing that we can all do to help our leaders is to comply (Hebrews 13:17). This is a directive given to men and women to submit to the leaders of the congregation. It is not grudgingly going along. It is willing submission. It is gladly following so as to bring them joy, rather than grief.

We must be open to the ideas of others and the direction of those in authority. God picks the leaders of His people. He chose Moses to lead Israel, not Aaron and Miriam (Numbers 12). Just because Miriam was a prophetess did not place her on equal footing with Moses for leadership of the nation. Aaron was not elevated by his position any higher than God had placed him. Wanting more and pushing themselves forward when God had not, reflected badly on them both. Miriam was healed from her punishment of leprosy after this rebellion, but she did not



rise to prominence after this. God chose Aaron as the High Priest, not Korah and his friends (Numbers 16). They died for their presumptuousness. Hebrews 5:4 & 5 reminds us that Aaron did not take the honor of the role of high priest upon himself, but God placed him there. Not even Jesus glorified Himself to become our High Priest, but waited for the Father to place Him there. If Jesus, who is God, is content to fill the role given to Him, then surely His daughters can do the same.

Again, this is not a plea to be passive. Know what is right and stand up for it, but if you do so with an attitude of calm and grace you will find others of both sexes more willing to be persuaded by you. Even the right stand can be ruined by the wrong attitude. God shows us how both of these things, working together, can move mountains (Matthew 21:21-22). Have faith in the power of God and His ways. The world tries to tell us that you must put yourself forward or people will walk all over you. How sad to be so cynical. Jesus said to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17-21). Calmly doing good for others persuades them. It softens their hearts, while it is the hard heart that acts aggressively. We see the power of God when He uses the weak to accomplish what is strong (2 Corinthians 12:9,10). Even the humble woman who quietly does good can convert the unbeliever who is watching (1 Peter 3:1,2). She carries such influence, not because she cowers weakly, but because her conviction in God's ways is so strong it dignifies her actions and brings the skeptics to grudging respect. When we act upon what we know to be true we don't have to shout down the opposition. This is the strength of submission.

To whom do we submit? First and foremost: to God. We must recognize Him as our Creator and the one who knows best what we need. He can make us complete when we do things His way, and His way is spelled out in the Bible. Rejecting His direction is rebellion against our Creator. Submission to His way will save us from many heartaches now and demonstrate over time the depth of His wisdom. What I see as "logical" or "fair" is not always going to be accurate, because I am not perfect. God is perfect, and His way works every time. He wrote the owner's manual and my attempts to figure things out on my own without reading it will leave me unfulfilled and broken in the end.

Secondly, we submit to each other. I cannot submit to another when it would lead me into rebellion against God, but let's not let that infrequent exception distract us from the firm principle of placing others first. When I am seeking the best interest of others and they are seeking mine we have a symbiotic relationship in which both of us excel. Wives are told to submit to their husbands and husbands are told to honor their wives (1 Peter 3:1,7). When I seek the best for others and they do not reciprocate there is an opportunity to win them over to the way of Christ. Even if they consider themselves to be my enemy I can still have influence (you might say power) over them (Matthew 5:43-48). My submission can silence the ignorance of the foolish who do not understand the power of the Gospel (1 Peter 2:13-15).



So what does submission look like? It starts with an attitude- meaning it is not just about what you do, but how you do it. It is not challenging. It does not require a “worthy” recipient. We were sinners when Christ died for us (Romans 5:6). He told His audience to submit to the Pharisees, because of their position, even though He recognized them as hypocrites (Matthew 23:3). We submit to enemies (Matthew 5:38-42), unbelievers (1 Peter 3:1), unreasonable masters (1 Peter 2:18), and governments (Romans 13:1-2). Even Hagar was told to return to her harsh master, Sarai, and submit to her authority (Genesis 16:5-9). It takes a strong person to do these things, because usually submission is not easy- but neither are forgiveness or confession, and we recognize they are essential in our character if we want God to forgive us (Matthew 6:15). Another mark of a submissive heart is that it listens to others. That is probably a root factor in the silence women are told to have in assemblies of the church and teaching situations (1 Corinthians 14:34,35; 1 Timothy 2:11,12). Submissiveness does not second-guess everything or refuse to take advice. It is open and eager to learn. It is willing to accept blame, not defensive. It is not vain or proud.

Submission is the natural result of a humble heart. I must be predisposed to yield to others because my life is not all about me. Seeing that will make me open to see my own faults and ready to work on them. I will listen to the direction given by those God has placed in leadership positions and learn to be part of their solutions, not part of their problems. I will be selfless in pursuing the best for others. I will not forget my primary responsibilities to family who need my attention, but I will stand always ready to, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:15, “spend and be spent” in the service of others who need my help. As Wesley from The Princess Bride teaches us, saying, “As you wish,” is really a way of saying, “I love you.” I will do these things because that is the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:3-11). I will empty myself even if it kills me (to the point of death), and I know that God will exalt me in the end if I have done all to His glory (1 Peter 5:6).

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