

Living a Life of Submission

A Look at Christ's Example

"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king." 1 Peter 2:17

Submission is a theme carried throughout Scripture and a concept which conflicts deeply with human nature and the western ideals of today. It is a delicate subject which can be misunderstood or misapplied in our relationships. Submission does not designate a lower value to the individual asked to submit. Rather, submission is an avenue which brings:

- Growth
- Peace
- Freedom

As a believer, our goal and desire is to become more like Christ through the renewing of our mind. This renewal should affect all aspects of conversation and behaviors and challenge us to be patterned after Him. Indeed, there is no concept in the New Testament which Christ did not perfectly model during His time on earth. As we strive to better understand this topic, let's explore the ways Christ modeled submission within the different relationships in His life.

Children to Parents

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Eph. 6:1

At an early age, Christ demonstrated a spirit of submission to His earthly parents. After being found in the temple by Mary and Joseph at the age of 12, *Luke 2:51* states that *"he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. . ."* Even though Jesus was going about His Heavenly Father's business in the temple, He still saw fit to return with His earthly parents, subordinating Himself under their authority and thereby growing. This principle of honoring father and mother is carried throughout the Scripture, stating that this is *"well pleasing unto the Lord."* (*Col. 3:20*)

Reflection: What are practical ways we can show honor to our earthly parents as well as our Heavenly Father? For parents, does your behavior make submission challenging? (*Eph. 6:4, 1 Thes. 2:11-12*)

Believers to Other Believers

". . . Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility:" 1 Pet. 5:5

Only through humility is it truly possible to submit one to another. Jesus demonstrated this in a special way by completing one of the lowliest tasks of His day; He washed the feet of the disciples. As He completed this task in *John 13:14-16*, Jesus stated *". . . The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him."* Regardless of church position, financial status or intelligence, Jesus commissioned us to show love not only in word, but in deed. If we esteem our brother higher than ourselves, it becomes easier to serve that individual, not focusing on any perceived inadequacies or weaknesses but focusing instead on our desire to live more like Christ. This will lead to great peace as we grow in our submission and likeness to Christ.

Reflection: Is there a brother or sister in your church you need to humbly serve? Pray God would convict you as necessary to better follow His example in *John 13*.

Living a Life of Submission

Wives and Husbands

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;” Eph. 5:22-25

While He never married, Christ perfectly demonstrated the intimacy He desires to see within a marriage through His relationship to the Church. He paid the ultimate sacrifice of laying down His life. The verses in *Ephesians* clearly call wives to submit to their husbands, yet also clarify the husband’s commission as well. They are to love their wives, indicating to us submission is born out of love, not authority.

Reflection: Read and meditate on *Ephesians 5:22-33*. If you are married, are there ways you could better reflect this passage in your marriage?

To Those in Authority

“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.” Tit. 3:1-2

Whether it is an employer, church leadership, person of older age or governing official, we all can identify people to whom we are accountable. As believers, do we follow *Hebrews 13:17*, making the responsibilities of those who oversee us easy, or do we make it difficult?

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

At various times in His ministry, Jesus addressed our need to abide by the laws of the land. In a confrontation with the Pharisees, Jesus wisely addressed their question regarding paying tribute to Caesar. After examining the penny, Jesus shared men should “. . . Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (*Matt. 22:21*). In a conversation with Peter, Christ discussed the need to follow a tax law in Capernaum to set an example and avoid offense (*Matt. 17:27*).

In response to Pilot’s belief that he had power to crucify or release our Savior, Jesus reminded him “. . . Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.” (*John 19:11*). When we feel conflicted by politics locally or nationally, do we remember God ultimately controls the leaders He sets above us?

Reflection: Do you do your best to respect and submit to the authorities placed over you? Does your conversation reflect this to others? Read and meditate on *1 Peter 2-3*.

To God

“He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” Matt. 26:42

The pinnacle of history was Christ’s death on the cross. In this act, Christ demonstrated that at times submission requires us to lay down our lives without knowing the final outcome. It requires humbling ourselves to the point of obedience, where

Living a Life of Submission

nothing else matters but our relationship with Him (*Heb. 5:8-9*). There is great freedom when we submit our decisions and our desires to our God and His authority. When we humbly reach this point, God promises to provide.

“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. . .” Jas. 4:6-7

Reflection: Am I willing to lay down my rights, my desires and my all, to humbly say to the Lord, “Thy will be done”?

Christ beautifully modeled submission and by doing so, He redeemed the term. Christ’s example throws off the stereotypes that submission implies inferiority, control and insignificance. He restores our understanding that submission has great use and brings about growth, peace, and freedom. By His practice of submission, He not only teaches us its value, but models for us it can be done.