

SUBMIT.

As defined in the Dictionary :

1. To allow oneself to be subjected to some kind of treatment.
 - 1.a. To yield oneself to a particular kind of behaviour of another person or persons.
2. To agree with.
3. To surrender.

Also an old Military term meaning to Line up under or to bring oneself into line with some particular thing.

2. Submission NOT Subservience - the condition of being less important than something/one else and serving its needs.

In Ephesians 5:21 – 33.

Ephesians 5:21 (NIV) “Submit to one another out of Reverence for Christ.”

Ephesians 5:22 (NIV) “Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord.”

Firstly, all Christians, men and women, are TOLD to SUBMIT TO (Yield to, Surrender to, Agree with, Line up with) ONE ANOTHER in VERSE 21. This holds true for men to men, women to women, men to women and women to men. No one is excluded. This sets the scene for the following verses (22 – 33) and should never be separated from them. This Christian MUTUAL SUBMISSION is universal for all Christians. NOT OPTIONAL! NO EXCEPTIONS! Christian submission calls for complete trust exercised in an environment of love. The Command is given with the prior understanding that all Christians are in a life giving relationship with Christ (The corporate relationship of Christ and the Church as well as their personal relationship) and will not betray the act of submission by harming the other. It is reciprocal, men submit to women as do women to men, voluntary, and personal. It is opposed to all things selfish. It brings about the harmony that God desires. One thing it most certainly does not do is establish any basis for Authoritarianism. If we go to the dictionary definitions, we

1. Allow ourselves to be subjected to love. We yield to love.
2. Surrender to love.
3. Be agreeable in love.
4. Bring ourselves into line with God’s love and desire for us.

To expand on v22: Wives you allow yourself to be subjected to the love of your Lord. You yield yourself to the love of your Lord. You surrender yourself to the love of your Lord. You are agreeable within the love of your Lord. You are loyal to and return love to your Lord. You bring yourselves into line with your Lord’s love and desires for you. Do the same in your relationship with your Husband. (some suggest that this verse could well be translated : Wives do not be contentious with your husbands)

In v21, Paul sets MUTUAL SUBMISSION as the normal standard for all Christian relationships. Men and women mutually submit to one another. Obviously Marriage cannot be separated and excluded from this. i.e. just because a man happens to be married to a woman does not end his obligation to

submit to her as is firmly established by this verse. It is clear from the written context that this is “a given” in St. Paul’s mind.

Following on from setting this principle, Paul specifically addresses Christian Husbands and Christian Wives with instructions on how to lovingly relate to one another. Obviously they have already been included in the admonition to mutual Christian submission of v21, but Paul wishes to emphasise the special closeness of the marriage relationship.

He tells Wives to Submit to their Husbands as to the Lord because the Husband is head of the Wife as (IN THE SAME WAY) Christ is the Head of the Church. But what sort of “headship” is involved? Paul spells that out very carefully as he addresses Husbands in a great deal of detail in the following verses. (Note way more detail than to Wives, which indicates Paul’s major concern is a Husband’s behaviour to his Wife.) While authority and responsibility belong to the head, Jesus makes it plain that this is to be exercised in a particular way. Paul, in complete agreement with Jesus Himself, though not using the word “Submit”, makes very clear that the Headship in question is a SUBMISSIVE, Servant Headship. Paul places great responsibility on Husbands to “be Jesus” to their Wives. Paul dictates that a Husband’s Love for his Wife has as its standard norm, Christ’s LOVE for the Church. Nothing less is acceptable. Jesus “Gave Himself up for Her”. This is another way of expressing “Submission”. It can even be said that Jesus allowed himself to be killed by His Bride. Jesus “yielded himself to a particular kind of behaviour on the part of others” in order to win the love of His bride and save and safeguard her from all harm. Simply put, Jesus, in the ultimate definition of the word “Submit”, submitted himself to his Bride, the Church because she would benefit by His doing so. (If you have any question on this, think about it this way. Who crucified Christ? We all did! Your sins, my sins, put Jesus on the cross. As Christians we make up Christ’s Bride, the Church. As individuals and as the corporate Church we, the Bride, benefit from Jesus submissive sacrifice.) A Husband is being told not only to SUBMIT to his Wife, (mutual submission already established in v21 and now by Jesus’ example) but that this submission means he is to DIE to himself for her, defend her from all harm, and actively bring benefit to her. Jesus is being held up to Husbands as the true example of the kind of submission God expects of Husbands to their Wives. The measure of Christ’s Love for His Church is the standard set for a Husband’s love for his Wife. It is to be supreme, fully submissive, self forgetting and self sacrificing.

The Church (the Bride) submits to Jesus because Jesus first loved the Church (her) and established Himself as its (her) worthy Head. This, “to go and do likewise” (establish himself as his wife’s worthy head) is Paul’s message to Husbands.

There is no way that a CORRECT reading of Ephesians 5:21 - 33 will allow the thought that Wives and Husbands are exempt from the principle of Mutual Submission established in v21. There is no room for thinking that Wives have to submit, but Husbands do not. It most certainly does NOT give a Husband some God given superiority over his Wife, or much less, God’s approval to be an authoritarian to, or lord it over, or enslave his Wife, as some people read it. The complete opposite is true. By using Jesus’ example, Paul places great responsibility on Husbands to SUBMIT to their Wives. The topic of Mutual Christian Submission and particularly, Mutual Submission between Husbands and Wives is so important to Paul that he uses the common Biblical technique of repetition, restating the topic in question, in different ways. He brings great emphasis to his message by presenting it in great detail, securing it firmly in Christ. The Headship of Christ over the Church is a living union where Jesus and His Bride become one. This is Paul’s great example in instructing Husbands.

So then, Paul in Ephesians 5:21 – 33, is ONLY writing about human LOVE Relationships, modelling them on the great love Jesus has for His “Bride”, dealing generally for all Christian relationships in v21, then specifically relating to Christian Marriage love in the following verses. This, and ONLY this, is what Ephesians 5:21 – 33 is all about. To WREST this passage of Scripture away from its intended

context and meaning, and use it for anything else is just WRONG. It is not only wrong, in fact it is just plain sad that whoever does so has missed out to his own loss on what God through St. Paul is saying. Separating v22 -33 from v21 other than to simply point out that Paul is dealing with the general in v21 and the moving on to the specific in v22 – 33 is also quite wrong. To try and make v22 – 33 mean something entirely different from v21 just destroys what Paul is saying.

In particular, Ephesians 5:22 – 33 has absolutely nothing to do with defining women's roles in Church. It quite simply is CLEARLY not meant for that. To use it in this manner is indefensible because to do so is such a great betrayal of Christ's "Bride love" of Paul's illustration.

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