



In His Dust - 9. The Breathtaking Beauty of True Submission

Loving Each Other

February 23, 2023, revised November 16, 2023

This writing was extracted from a previous writing called *In His Dust - 6. The Role of Women in the First-Century Church*. I added more detail and emphasis on the definitions of the words *head* and *submit* because they are so beautiful.

Let's start by reading the Apostle Paul's words in Ephesians 5:21-27 as it is written in most translations.¹ The words of discussion are in bold type:

...and **subject** yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, **subject** yourselves to your own husbands as to the Lord. 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. But as the church is **subject** to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

A responsible study of the Bible includes understanding the original author and audience, the author's intention, and the surrounding context. Although Paul was born in a Greek region and gained Roman citizenship, He was thoroughly Jewish. He was raised in a Jewish home in Jerusalem and studied the Jewish writings rigorously from a young age.² Therefore, we must understand the underlying Jewish meaning of the words he used as we seek to apply them. If you are single, you will also gain from this understanding.

The following meanings of *head* and *submit* unfold like a fragrant rose in the following seven clarifications:

1. Man is the *head* of woman only within the context of marriage.³
2. *Head* does not mean *chief, boss, ruler, superior authority, rank, or position*.
The original Greek words for *submit* or *subject* translate into ten different Hebrew words and none refer to authority.
3. *Head* means *source* like the source of a river. Yeshua is our Head, our Source. The key characteristic of a *source* is *responsibility*.
4. A husband is the wife's *source*. She is his responsibility. He is responsible to care for her, to encourage, give life, guide, guard, and most of all, to love her as Christ loves the church.
5. Christ was a servant, not a ruler. He laid down His life. A husband's response is utter self-sacrifice.
6. Submission is:
 - a voluntary renouncing of yourself,
 - a humble adapting to the other person, and
 - a giving preference to the other.
7. Then, the wife will respect her husband.

Thoughts

Over the course of 40+ years of knowing the Lord, I have encountered a lot of bad teaching. As a new believer at 23 years old, I was taught that man was an authority over the woman and if she didn't obey her husband (or father or pastor if she was single), she would open the door to the enemy... even if her husband was abusive. So much damage has been done by mis-translators of Scripture. *Submitting* is not the same as *obeying*. You are not bound to an abusive marriage or pastor. (On the other hand, we highly honor our elders and those who are deserving of our respect as we are of their respect.)

Paul's goal was to give instruction to help us live in unity in marriage and all our relationships – to sacrifice for one another while at the same time to live fully in our own unique calling as a complete person. As I wrote in my *Spiritual Gifts Learning Tool*⁴:

Jesus (Yeshua the Messiah) is the Head, and we are His body held together by each part supplying the other parts. With the proper working of each part, the body grows in love, until we all attain to the unity of faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity in the fullness of Him. (Ephesians 4:16)

In the image of the red and blue circles, they overlap or intersect forming a new color – purple. This image represents the new colors of beauty that are created when we **humbly adapt** to one another in self-sacrifice. His ways always lead to unexpected joy and new discoveries as a result of the synergy that takes place when we defer to one another. This doesn't mean that we don't have an opinion, but it does mean that when there is a strong disagreement, we listen and consider the other view.

When I learned the Hebrew meanings of *head* and *submission*, it brought freedom into my attitude toward my marriage. When I asked my husband what he considered to be his main calling (he has many), he said, "To provide a safe environment for you to flourish in your gifts and calling," I felt somehow guilty, like this was not his responsibility. But it is. I have had the freedom to let him care for me. I also more easily let him make final decisions about important things knowing that he is responsible before God. At the same time, I have strong convictions from which I am not willing to waiver, but all is done in love.

So now I'm going to take Ephesians 5:21-27 (from the beginning of this message) and insert the clear Hebrew, first-century meanings of **submit** or **subject** (humbly adapt) and **head** (source) in bold:

...and **humbly adapt** yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, **humbly adapt** yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the **source** of the wife, as Christ also is the **source** of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church **humbly adapts** to Messiah (i.e., gives preference to Him over their own desires), so also the wives ought to **humbly adapt** to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor..." (Romans 12:10)

This is the wonderful way of the Lord!

¹ I used the NASB (New American Standard Bible) version.

² For a more comprehensive study of Paul's life, please see *A Portrait of Paul* at ShaleFragments.com
Also at ShaleFragments.com, please see *In His Dust - 6. The Role of Women in the First-Century Church* and *Missing Perspectives* by using the Search tool.

³ A pastor is not the head of a single woman. Pastor is a function in the community of believers, not a hierarchical position. For more on this subject, please see the last page of *Missing Perspectives* at ShaleFragments.com.

⁴ *Spiritual Gifts* is found at FlowerGirlGreetings.com