



SUBMITTING TO YOUR SPOUSE

subMISSION POSSIBLE

By Lenya Heitzig



Few words evoke a more negative response from women than submission. Maybe we harbor images of submissive women that offend our sensibilities and threaten our self-image. Remember Edith Bunker, the “stifled” wife of the bigoted, dictatorial Archie Bunker from the 70’s TV series *All in the Family*? Despite Archie’s selfish demands, insensitivity, and misspeak (“We better not kill our chickens before they cross the road”), Edith frantically ran to the fridge to fetch his beer, calmed his angry outbursts, defended his indefensible behavior, and lived under his thumb. Not exactly the kind of marriage most people want. If that isn’t what submission looks like (and it’s not!), how does God view submission?

What it is not: Submission within marriage is not oppression, blind agreement, ignorance, or domination. It is one of many biblical truths held in tension (such as faith and works, see James 2:17). Biblically, love and submission go hand in hand. When a husband loves his wife sacrificially, as Christ loves the church, his wife will gladly submit, reflecting the obedience of the church to Christ (see Ephesians 5:25-33).

What it is: God’s first act of creation was to bring order out of chaos. Submission reflects God’s order of things. Submission comes from a Greek word that describes how military troops are arranged under the command



of a leader. As a human, a private is of no less value than a general. To maintain order, the private submits to his general's rank and position. Many relationships reflect this respectful obedience: wives to husbands, children to parents, employees to employers, youth to elders, citizens to rulers, church members to pastors and elders.

What it does: Theologian Richard J. Foster said, "In submission we are free to value other people. Their dreams and plans become important to us. We have entered into a new, wonderful, glorious freedom, the freedom to give up our own rights for the good of others. We can rejoice with their successes. We feel genuine sorrow at their failures. It is of little consequence that our plans are frustrated if their plans succeed. We discover that it is far better to serve our neighbor than to have our own way."

What is the truth: God views women as equal to men: "There is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Yet for practical purposes, God tells humans to submit to government, servants to submit to masters, and wives to husbands (see 1 Peter 2 & 3). The result is peace and structure in our country, our workplace, and our homes.

Is subMission Possible in twenty-first century marriages? Yes—by the Spirit of God in a life submitted to Christ. Keep in mind that our marriages are divine preparation for our future with Christ. Now is our opportunity to humbly arrange our marriage as God has designed it. It would be a shame if we, like Archie Bunker, had to say, "It's too late, Edith. My bus has sailed."