

Understanding Marriage - What Submission Is

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon explores the biblical concept of submission, emphasizing its importance in God's order and its implications for relationships in a culture that often rejects authority.

Duration: 50:19

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:1, 1 Corinthians 5:5, Ephesians 5:21-22, Ephesians 6:1, Ephesians 6:5

Topics: "Christian Marriage", "Spiritual Submission"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor David Guzik discusses the concept of submission as it relates to the Christian life. He emphasizes the idea that believers should regard themselves as being underranked in the attitude of the military and apply it to their everyday interactions with one another. Paul's teaching on submission in Ephesians 5:21 serves as a link to a larger discussion on submission in various spheres of life. This includes marriage, parenting, and work relationships. The sermon highlights the practicality of living a Spirit-filled life and submitting to others in the fear of God.

Transcript

This is the third message in the series, Understanding Marriage, from Ephesians chapter 5. The title of this teaching is, What Submission Is? Let's join our teacher, Pastor David Guzik, speaking at Calvary Chapel of Simi Valley. Ephesians chapter 5, this morning we're going to take a look at verse 21 in particular, but I think it would be good for us to get sort of a running start, so let's start at verse 15 and get a feel for the context of what Paul is speaking about. This is the third in a series that we have of Understanding Marriage from Ephesians chapter 5. And this morning, if I could give a title to the message, I'll title it, What Submission Is? We won't even really be dealing properly or specifically with submission in marriage.

That'll come next week as we start into verse 22. But I think since this whole theme through this section of Ephesians, a major aspect of it, is submission, we should understand what it is, what we mean by it. So let's start at verse 15 and get an idea of our context here.

Paul writes, and he says, See then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Our subject for today is submitting to one another in the fear of God. It's a subject that our culture and our modern way of thinking isn't very friendly to. Matter of fact, when you really think about it, our culture is outright hostile to the idea of submitting in the fear of God or in the fear of anybody else, for that matter.

You see, for more than a generation now, our culture has rejected the idea that we really should submit to anybody or anything except to ourselves. You could date it from the 1960s. I don't know if there's any exact date, but since that time there's been a massive change in the way that we see, in the way that we accept and regard authority in our culture.

Many citizens do not want to submit to the government's authority. Many students do not want to submit to their teacher's authority. Many women do not want to submit to their husband's authority.

Many children do not want to submit to their parents' authority. Many employees do not want to submit to their employers' authority. Many people do not want to submit to the police's authority.

Some policemen do not want to submit to the law's authority. And some Christians don't want to submit to the church's authority. I believe it's important for us to ask a very pointed question when we think about how our culture's changed in the last 30 or 40 years in this regard, and simply to ask, have these changes been good? Do we feel safer? Are we more confident in our culture? Have television and movies and other sources of entertainment, have they become better and more beneficial for culture and society? You know, the way to answer all those questions is no.

In fact, our society's presently in and rushing towards a place of anarchy, a place where no authority is accepted. And the only thing that matters is what I want to do. It doesn't matter what the government says, what matters is what I want to do.

It doesn't matter what a moral code says, what matters is what I want to do. It's fair to describe our present moral state as a state of anarchy. There's really no moral authority in our culture.

When it comes to morality, the only thing that matters is, again, what a person wants to do. We can even say that in the sense of many communities, many neighborhoods in our society, in our nation, they're given over to anarchy. If you go into some inner city neighborhoods where gang and drug warfare is rampant, do you think that our government's authority is really accepted in those gang-infested or drug-infested portions of the city? No, the only thing that matters there is what a person wants to do.

Now, I'd say that we see this broader attack on authority as a direct satanic strategy to destroy our society and to destroy millions of individual lives. I think Satan wants to destroy these institutions and the respect for authority mainly in two ways. First of all, Satan desires to corrupt people or positions of authority.

I mean, after all, how can you respect the politician who's corrupt? How can you respect the pastor whose life is filled with scandal? How can you respect this person who cheats or that person? People who are in a position of authority, when they are corrupted, it makes you not want to submit to them. You feel like you're free from that responsibility. But then even beyond that, we see an even broader scale of just the plain, flat-out rejection of authority because it's not only dishonest politicians that are disregarded, right? It's not only the corrupt people who aren't respected in authority.

No, sometimes many fine, upstanding people, their authority isn't respected either. Now, this whole idea, this whole issue of order and authority and submission to the order of authority, they're very important to God. They're very near to His heart.

Matter of fact, I would say that they're part of His very being. I'll say that again. These issues of authority and submission are so important to God that they are a part of His very being.

Let me give you an elementary lesson in theology here. The first person of the Holy Trinity is called God the Father. The second person of the Holy Trinity we call God the Son.

Inherent in those relationships, inherent in those titles, Father and Son is an order of authority. The Father exercises authority over the Son, and the Son submits to the Father's authority. And this is in the very nature and being of God.

Friends, He didn't have to organize it that way, but He did. Because order of authority and submission to authority are part of God's very being. When Jesus walked this earth, He said, I don't do anything except that which I receive from my Father.

He was in complete submission to the Father's order of authority. And our failure to exercise biblical authority, and our failure to submit to biblical authority, it isn't just wrong, it isn't just sad, it sins against the very nature of God. Remember 1 Samuel, chapter 15, verse 23.

In that passage of scripture, there's a statement that's so dramatic that we read it, and it almost seems extreme. It's one of those passages that you read, you almost wonder if God isn't going overboard on this one. But God says in 1 Samuel 15, 23, for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

You read that and you say, you almost want to say, lighten up, Lord, a little bit. You're taking this a little bit too seriously, aren't you? But of course, God never takes anything too seriously. Of course, He knows the right measure of sobriety and the right measure of emphasis to put on each individual thing.

And when God says that rebellion is as a sin of witchcraft, He's indicating that rebellion and a refusal to respect God's order of authority strikes out at the very nature, the very being of who God is Himself. Some feel that this recognition and submission to God's order of authority, some people believe it's an unbearable burden. They believe that if you submit to God's order of authority, you're confessing your own inferiority.

If I submit myself to you and God's put you in a place of authority over me, I submit myself to you. It's as if I'm saying, I'm not as smart as you are. I'm not as gifted as you are.

I'm not as capable as you are. I'm not as spiritual or as godly as you are. Friends, we have to get that idea clean out of our mind.

When you submit to God's order of authority, you're not saying that you're inferior and they are superior. Not at all. Inferiority or superiority has nothing to do with it.

And again, I'd call you back to remember the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. They are completely equal in their being. Completely.

God the Father isn't any more God than God the Son. God the Son isn't any less God or more God than God the Son. They're each completely and equally God in their being.

Yet one in an order of authority takes the place of the Father and one in the order of authority takes the place of Son. Completely equal in their being, but different places in the order of authority. So what does this mean then? Submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Well, the first thing we should realize is that Paul just didn't write this one isolated verse. You know, sometimes we think that the Bible was written almost like Ben Franklin wrote Poor Richard's Almanac. Where he wrote the little sayings.

You know, it's just one pithy little saying after another. Now, of course, there's some passages of Scripture like that, right? Proverbs is like that. Just individual sayings put in there piece by piece.

But by and large, the Bible is written with a flow, with a context. And you can only understand one statement by understanding what comes before it and what comes after it. And this statement, submitting to one another in the fear of God, it's a link.

It explains what Paul has been talking about before as being one of the results of being filled with the Spirit. Look at it there in verse 18 of Ephesians chapter 5. There Paul says, And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation. Dissipation means wastefulness.

My, it is a wasteful thing to engage in drunkenness. But Paul's point here is do not be drunk with wine. But look at the end of verse 18.

But be filled with the Spirit. Okay, fine, Paul. I want to be filled with the Spirit.

So what's next? What's it going to look like in my life if I'm filled with the Spirit? Paul says, I'll tell you. Look at verse 19. Speaking to one another in songs and hymns and spiritual songs.

Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. If you are filled with the Spirit, your life is going to be filled with a desire to praise and adore God. You will want to praise Him.

Isn't it wonderful? God has given us music, beautiful music, to help us praise and adore Him. You know, even if God wouldn't have given us music to help us praise and adore Him, we'd still be charged with the responsibility to do it. We'd still have the desire to do it.

It's just we wouldn't be able to do it so well, so beautifully. God loves music and He's given us this beautiful gift. So He says, if you're filled with the Spirit, you'll want to praise and adore God.

But that's not all. Look at verse 20. If you're filled with the Spirit, you'll have a sense of gratitude to God.

It says, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, if you're filled with the Spirit, you're going to have a thankful heart towards God. And then finally, if you're filled with the Spirit, you'll be, verse 21, you'll be submitting to one another in the fear of God.

So praise and adoration are a result of being filled with the Spirit. Gratitude is a result of being filled with the Spirit. And submitting to one another in the fear of God is a result of being filled with the Spirit.

But, I said this statement is a link. Paul doesn't end his discussion here. You see, this whole idea of submitting to one another in the fear of God has made Paul want to examine this issue of submission in a larger or a closer detail.

If you notice here, it's an introduction to a fuller treatment of the principle of submission as it relates to different spheres of life. All of it flows out of an understanding of the Spirit-filled life. Okay, Paul, I'm filled with the Spirit.

I'm praising God. I'm adoring God. I'm giving thanks to God.

And I'm submitting to others in the fear of God. And Paul says, great, let me tell you how that works out now. It's going to work out in your marriage.

And that's why he begins the discussion following. And then in chapter 6, he says, it's going to work out between parents and children. And then in chapter 6, verse 5, he says, it's going to work out on your job with your employer and the employees.

You see how practical this is, how very simple. It all flows out of life in the Spirit. It's as if Paul is saying, you who are filled with the Spirit, you must sing together and you must submit yourselves to one another.

And you must behave as follows in these crucial relationships of life. This is what it means to be filled with the Spirit. So we understand where Paul's coming at with this.

What does it mean? What does it mean when he says, verse 21, submitting to one another in the fear of God? Now, I wish that somehow up here I had a magic wand and I could instantly erase in your mind every previous understanding you had of that word submit. Now, some of you may have an understanding of that word that that's Biblical or close to the Biblical understanding of it. Some of you probably have a very un-Biblical understanding or very un-Biblical association with that word submit.

I'm going to switch as if we were teaching you a brand new language and our word for today was submit. And you say, well, my, what does that word mean? And I could explain it to you brand new and afresh. Now, obviously, I can't do that.

But we can try. We can say, OK, let's let the Bible tell us what this word means in a Biblical sense. Well, the word submit or submitting here means something.

And the word is a military word. It comes from the word of the army, of the Navy, the words of the military. And the word for submission here literally means to be under in rank.

It speaks of the way that an army is organized among levels of rank. You have generals and colonels and majors and captains and sergeants and privates. There's levels of rank.

And you are obligated to respect those in higher rank. Now, we know that a person as a person, I should say, a private can be smarter, can be more talented, can be a better person than a general. I mean, you take two people.

Here's a private and here's a general. The private is a smarter man. The private is more honest man.

The private is a more spiritual man. The private is a more talented man. But at the end of the day, he's still under rank to the general.

He is not submitted to the general so much as a person, as he is submitted to the general as a general. In between services, a man told me a story of his military experiences. And I should say, I've never been in the military, but I feel like I'm an authority to speak on it because I've seen a lot of war movies.

And so I feel like I know a lot about the military. Well, no, but this man was relating how when he was in the military and a jeep would come by, jeeps that carried officers, officers jeeps were designated with a blue stripe. And he said, it didn't matter who was in that jeep.

It could be a general. It could be the lowest officer. It could be an officer's wife.

It didn't matter. And he said, the way they refer to it is that you salute the car. Because it doesn't matter who's in it.

You salute the car because of the rank. You see, the person is detached from it. You're not submitting to them because of who they are, but because of the order of authority that they have.

The idea of submission, therefore, doesn't have anything to do with someone being smarter or better or more talented. It has to do with a God appointed order. And when we understand this, sort of in the military context that this word comes from, we understand how important it is to be under rank.

You know, in some branches of the military, they have a word for it when you no longer want to be under rank. They call it mutiny. And it's regarded as a very serious issue, isn't it? I mean, you have to do what the people in rank over you tell you to do.

And just as an army would be in utter confusion if there were no levels of authority, so society, so the church, so our homes would be in chaos without submission. And that is one of the key reasons for the chaos we see in the world around us today. You know, in our own armed forces today, there's a person who's in charge over all of our armed forces in our nation.

He's known as the Commander in Chief. And that's the President of the United States. Now, someone who is an officer in the army or in some branch of the military may look at the Commander in Chief, and he may not like the Commander in Chief.

He may not respect the Commander in Chief as a person. He may think he's dishonest. He may think he's immoral.

He may have a whole set of personal opinions about the Commander in Chief. But nonetheless, when that order is given, he's going to fulfill it. He may say to himself, I would never have this man in my living room over for dinner because I don't respect him much as a person.

But, he is the Commander in Chief, and I am under-ranked to him. I will submit to him. That's the idea of this word, submission.

To be under-ranked. So, when we read there in verse 21, submitting, we know what that means. But then Paul kind of complicates it for us.

He complicates it for me, because I'm supposed to be teaching you this morning. It says in verse 21, submitting to one another. Now, you see, he's just kind of put a little curve on the ball that he's thrown to us.

Let me say, first of all, what it does not mean to say submitting to one another. It does not mean that there is no order of authority in the body of Christ. Now, if this was the only verse on authority in the body of Christ, you might believe that, right? You see, Paul's saying there is no order of authority.

You submit to me. I submit to you. Everybody submits to it.

There is no order of authority among the people of God. None whatsoever. You see, you would just say, well, it says we should be submitting to one another.

So, I submit to you. You submit to me. Nobody has any more obligation to submit than anybody else does.

If this was the only passage of Scripture we have, we might believe that. We believe very strongly that the Scriptures do not contradict themselves. And if Paul meant that by this passage, then he would be clearly contradicting other things that he wrote.

For example, in 1 Corinthians 5, verse 1, why don't we turn there together? Keep your finger here in Ephesians 5. Turn in your Bible back to 1 Corinthians 5. You're going to turn left, not too many pages. 1 Corinthians 5, beginning at verse 1. The church in Corinth was a church that had a lot of problems. And sometimes Paul, to use a phrase from our current way of speaking, Paul had to get in their face a little bit.

And here at 1 Corinthians 5, verse 1, we see Paul getting in the face of the Corinthian Christians. He says, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Now, it would be interesting for us to go through and very carefully examine what exactly Paul means by this, but I think we get the general impression, don't we? Paul's bringing down the hammer on these folks, isn't he? He's saying, you haven't been acting right.

Let me tell you what you must do. You've been far too lenient to this man who's been involved in sexual immorality. You've been patting yourself on the back for how loving you think you are towards him.

You're not being loving at all. You need to put down a standard and call this man to accountability. This is what you must do.

Now, could you imagine the Corinthian Christians answering back to Paul something like this? Well, Paul, after all, you wrote that we should be submitting to one another, so we think you should submit to us on this one. It wouldn't go very far, would it? Paul would say, listen, please, I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ. I'm a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I'm a shepherd in the body of Jesus Christ. This is something that's clearly scriptural. You need to submit to what I'm telling you to do here.

Paul was recognizing that there was a legitimate order of authority there. So when Paul writes in Ephesians chapter five, verse 21, he's not saying that there are no orders of authority in the body of Christ. Another example is Hebrews chapter 13, verse 17.

And you don't need to turn there. I'll just read it for you. Hebrews chapter 13, verse 17.

Part of that verse says, obey those who rule over you and be submissive. Now, again, that's clearly saying that there are orders of authority. There's levels of authority that God has put among his people.

So whatever Paul means by submitting to one another in the fear of God, he does not mean that we erase any kind of order of authority among God's people, whether it be in the church or in the home or anywhere else. Now, I admit that this idea of the military word used for submission, it's more easily applied when one rank is above another. If you're speaking to a group of privates, it's pretty easy to say submit to the general.

But if you're just addressing privates and say submit to one another, then they have to say, well, what does that mean? What does it mean that we would submit to one another? You see, Paul is not

emphasizing in verse 21 the idea of rank because he addresses all Christians. But there's something very important here. Paul's emphasizing the idea that we should all regard ourselves as being under rank in the attitude of the military and apply it to our everyday dealing with one another.

In other words, when a man joins the military, what's the first thing that they do to him? They strip away his individuality, right? They take him to the barber and they give him a haircut. It's not a little haircut. It's a severe haircut.

And as they walk into the barber, they all look different, don't they? Boy, here's the man with short hair and here's the man with long hair and here's the man with curly hair and here's the man with straight hair. That's how they walk into the barber. How do they walk out of the barber in the military? They walk out looking all the same, don't they? They don't do that just because there's a shortage of combs among the military.

They do that because they're trying to send a message. They're trying to send a message that says you're no longer individuals here. You work together as a unit.

You're going to be placed in a company, in a battalion, in a squad. You're going to be placed on a team. And you need to put the needs and the desires of that team above your own individual needs.

You are an individual, but there's something greater than your individualness, to coin a word here. There's something greater than that here at work. There's your place on this team.

And so when a man joins the army, he's no longer an individual. You essentially sign away your right to decide what you want to do with your life and what you want to do with your time when you join the army. Isn't that marvelous? You don't have to set your alarm clock in the army.

They wake you up. You don't have to decide, what time do I want to get up today? They decide it for you. You don't have to decide, what am I going to wear today? They help you out with that.

What am I going to eat? Where am I going to eat? They have a place for you to do everything. Your whole day is planned out for you. That's how it is in the military, right? Well, an army is filled with individuals, but they can never be individualistic.

And do you sense the difference in that? That's how it is in the body of Christ. We're all individuals. And glory to God, He's made us different.

That's part of the dynamic that God puts in the body of Christ, that each member is different, but at the same time, we're all on the same team. We're not individuals. We're part of a team.

We can have our individuality, but we must never be individualistic. That is, putting our own individual needs, our own individual desires first. No, we're part of a team.

And you see, when somebody does not submit, they aren't thinking of themselves as part of a team. They're thinking of themselves purely as an individual. Here's the man in the army, and he doesn't want to do what the rest of the battalion is doing.

And so the rest of the battalion is going to go off and do their thing, and he says, no, there's just one thing making him do that, it's self. He says, I don't want to do what the rest of them are doing. He's thinking of himself more as an individual and less as a member of the group.

In the Bible, it's filled with so many marvelous illustrations of this principle over and over again. One of the great illustrations of this principle in the Bible is that of a body. Every cell in your body is different, yet every cell in your body is part of a team, isn't it? And every cell works together.

Every cell in your body has a DNA code that it shares with other cells. And even though it's different, even though it has its own job to do, yet it's part of a team. Well, no, not all the time.

Did you know that sometimes in a human body, cells become individualistic? They say, I'm going to live my own way. I'm going to do my own thing. I don't really care much about the needs of the body as a whole.

I'm just going to live my own way, do my own thing. Do you know what we call that? We call it cancer. It should never be that way in the body of Christ.

So what does all this mean in practical action? Well, first of all, it means some things that we should not do. What should we not do? Well, the Christian must not be thoughtless, but they must think of others. Right? You need to think and consider others.

You're part of a team. You know, in the army, and this is one of the great things you love about army movies and army books, there's such a big culture of looking out for your buddy, right? Looking out for the other guy in the company. There's that whole ethic there.

Friends, that's how it should be in the body of Christ, right? We're not thoughtless towards one another, but we think about each other. Secondly, we could say that the Christian must not be individualistic. They must not be self-assertive.

I didn't say that a Christian must not be assertive. Passiveness is not a spiritual gift. Passiveness is not necessarily submission or godliness.

Not at all. But it's a difference between being assertive and self-assertive. Self-assertive means, yeah, you're assertive, but for selfish purposes.

You're assertive to advance your own cause, your own comfort, your own ways, your own promotion. That has no place in the body of Christ. That's not playing as a team player.

No, self-assertion is the very opposite of what Paul is saying here. Look at it again, verse 21, submitting to one another in the fear of God. Could anybody say here that what Paul really meant to say was, assert yourself in the fear of God.

No, he didn't mean to say that at all. Next, we must say that the Christian must never be opinionated. Now, I didn't say that we shouldn't have opinions.

Of course we should. We all have opinions, don't we? And it's wonderful. It's wonderful to have opinions.

It's wonderful to share our opinions. But there's a vast difference between having opinions and being opinionated, isn't there? You know, we use this illustration in the first service. And why not try it out again? There you are.

You're discussing with somebody. And it's your opinion that the best kind of donut is a maple bar. That's your opinion.

Now, you're discussing with somebody. Maybe Chuck Carlson. And Chuck's an expert in these matters.

And he's relating on this. And he's saying, well, you know, my favorite is a jelly donut. That's it.

Well, you know, you have your opinion. Well, you know, you could just say, well, fine. You know, you think it's maple.

I think it's jelly. Whatever. Then all of a sudden, you don't want to let it go, right? No, it's jelly.

I'm telling you, it's jelly. And then you start to bring out the charts. Look at sales of jelly donuts are higher statistically every year than the sales of maple bars.

And you go on and on. Let's survey ten people and see what they. That's the difference between having an opinion and being opinionated, isn't it? Our opinions are fine.

Opinions help promote the variety in the body of Christ. But opinionated, that's divisive. To be self-conscious and proud of your opinions.

Such opinionated people, they always cause strife. They always cause division in the body of Christ. Yes, the bottom line in what this means we should not do is that we should not be self-seeking.

Jesus had a recipe for how we should deal with the self, because this is the root of it all, isn't it? When you get down to the root of all conflict, of all contention, of all difficulty among believers, of all difficulty in your marriage, of all difficulty on the job, where you get all this conflict and bitterness and anger and fighting, you can all bring it down to one four-letter word itself. That's what it is. Now, if I'm focused on self and you're walking in the spirit, we might butt heads, right? But it's not going to be that bad.

It'll be a little bit of a conflict, a little bit of ruffling of the feathers, because I'm out to lunch, but you're walking in the spirit. What happens when I'm focused on self and you're focused on self? Then it gets ugly, doesn't it? See, friends, we can make it all better just by taking care of ourselves and doing what Jesus said that we should do with our self. What did he say? If any man comes after me, let him deny himself.

Take up his cross and follow me. Deny yourself. In my flesh, that's the last thing I want to do.

In my flesh, I want to promote myself. I want to stroke the needs of myself. I want to further myself.

But no, no, in the spirit, it's different. In the spirit, I should be submitting to one another in the fear of God. I should say self isn't most important here.

What's important is what's good for the body. That's what's important. So you deny yourself.

And then what do you do? Jesus had to go on. He had to explain in vivid detail exactly what this means. He says you take up your cross and follow him.

It would almost be easier if we could just put a religious spin on this and say, listen, I know what it means to take up your cross and follow Jesus. What it means, actually, is that you should. Well, I tell you what, let's have a service here and we'll make some wooden crosses and then we'll just march around two times, everybody with a cross around the room.

And then we could say, I took up my cross and I'm following Jesus. And we'll do it once a year and we'll call it the cross bearing service. And we'll fulfill that command of Jesus.

But that doesn't fulfill it at all, does it? You could carry a cross all the way around the world and not take up your cross and follow him in the sense that Jesus meant. Do you know why someone would take up a cross in the ancient world in the days of Jesus? It was never for exercise. You took up a cross because you were a condemned criminal on your way to execution.

That was the only reason. And isn't that almost a cruel twist to put on a condemned criminal? We're going to torture you to death in one of the most cruel ways thinkable and you need to carry your own instrument of torture to the place of execution. As that cross weighed on your shoulder, actually, if I could be very specific, more so the custom in the ancient world was they would not carry the vertical beam.

They would only carry the horizontal beam. The vertical beams stayed at the place of crucifixion. They just stayed there.

And when a person was coming to be crucified, they would just carry the horizontal beam. And that's what they would be nailed to as they were put on the cross. There you are, you're carrying that beam.

And you know that in a few short hours, you're going to hang on that thing and suffer the most excruciating torture there on the cross. You knew something about that piece of wood. You knew that it didn't make deals with you.

You couldn't negotiate with it. You could say, hey, let me off easy, all right? No. The cross was ruthless.

And one thing that the cross did better than anything was it killed the self. Jesus said, if any man comes after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. Well, denying self and taking up your cross on a practical level in human relations, it means verse 21, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

So what does this mean? We should do. We saw what we should not do. But what should we do? Well, I think a good way to put this is to simply say that Christians should have a team attitude.

Right. I mean, we're in the service together. We're on the same team.

And the team attitude means that we don't put our own personal needs or desires or anything like that. First, what we put first is the team. How's the team doing? I don't know if you've had any experience with playing team sports over the year, but it's a good experience.

It teaches you a few things, especially teaches you how to cooperate and to put the good of the team first. Here's the player. And boy, if it was up to him, he'd be out on the field.

He'd be playing. But the coach says, no, it's not best for you to be out on the field. It's best for you to be out in the field.

So you come sit down on the bench. And you know, the player who's off the field, he doesn't like it. He wishes he could play.

But at the same time, he says, hey, I'll do what's best for the team. You know, one of the worst things you can say about a professional athlete who's on an athletic team is to look at them and say he's not a team player. That means he's just out for himself.

They call them cancers in the clubhouse. They don't like them. They like people who would say, listen, I'll do whatever you want me to do, coach.

You want me to lay down a bun? I'll do it. You want me to steal a base? You want me to stay on the base? Opening season is just a day or two away. It's heavy on my mind here.

But you get the idea, don't you? You've got to have a team attitude. I've had my time on playing on athletic teams. I could say I'm, well, really, I'm cursed when it comes to athletics.

God gave me much more desire to compete athletically than he ever gave me talent. And so I enjoy it immensely, but I've never enjoyed very much success at it. But particularly in junior high and high school, I was on athletic teams, but I never played much.

Now, there I was on the football team and, you know, I mostly just sat the bench. I wasn't ever very good, but I still felt like I was part of the team. I really did.

You know, when the team was there, I was there. When they put on the uniforms, I was there. At the games, I was there.

I mean, I was part of the team. And certainly, I wish I could have been there. I wish I could have achieved more.

You know, you always wish you could, but still, I was part of the team, and whatever service I could do on the team, I did. You know, I performed a valuable service. I was the guys that they beat up on and tackled in practices.

Somebody has to do that, and it helps the other players. It's helpful for them. So when that linebacker's out there and he makes the bone-crunching tackle on a player on the other team, and it's the play of the game, and it's a beautiful thing, you can stand back and say, you know, he did that to me at first in practice.

That's some sense of satisfaction. You're part of the team. And when the team succeeds, you succeed.

That's why it also means that we should be happy when somebody else succeeds, when somebody else does well. Right? Isn't that in the body of Christ? You're not jealous of somebody else's success. You're excited.

You're on the same team. I mean, there you are. You're on the football team, and you're one of the receivers.

And the other receiver goes out. He makes a spectacular catch, an unbelievable run, and he scores a touchdown. Well, what do you do? Do you go back to sideline and slam your helmet and say, well, I wish he would have thrown me the ball? Well, you might do that if you're not a team player.

But if you're a team player, you're more excited than anybody. You're excited for two reasons. First of all, you're happy that your teammate made a great play.

But secondly, man, that points on the board for your team. So you're excited about that. Friends, we have a team attitude.

We're happy when somebody else succeeds or does well. But it also means that we're to bear our own discomforts, our own trials, and to bear them with courage. Why? Because we're part of a team.

That's another thing you learn by being on an athletic team, isn't it? Remember when I was playing football and a player would get injured and get knocked down? Maybe their leg or their arm would get hit hard and it would start to bruise up. The coach would come over and the coach would look and see that it was nothing serious, but it still stung a great deal. What the coach would do is he'd grab a handful of grass and he'd rub it on it and say, now it's better.

Go out there and play. Well, obviously the grass did nothing, right? It was more so just a ritual. It's a way of saying you're part of the team.

You're going to be OK. Now get back out there and play. Don't sit around and whine about your trial, about your discomfort.

Come on, let's go. You're part of a team. We're working on this together.

Let's go. When we're part of a team, we bear our own discomforts. We bear our own trials with courage.

Do you see what it means? We submit to one another. Now look at the last phrase of verse 21. In the fear of God.

Now, you should know, first of all, that there's disagreement in some of the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament. Some of them say in the fear of God. Some of them say in the fear of Christ.

Really doesn't make any difference, does it? One way or the other, we're to do it in the fear of God, the Father, in the fear of Jesus Christ. But what does it mean to do it? Now, this is an important point, because wouldn't you agree that when Paul says submit to one another, he's asking a lot of us. I believe he is.

He's looking at you and he's pleading with you. He's saying, I want you to put away self. I want you to put away your own individualism and be part of a team.

Put it all away. Here we are. We're all part of a team together.

Now, you and I have every reason in the world to look back at Paul and say, why? Why, Paul? You give me a reason. You're asking a lot of me. Why? God loves us enough to give us the reason why.

And it says right there, submitting to one another in the fear of God. Now, this is such an important point. Look how often it's repeated.

Look at verse 22. Wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. Right.

The command to submit is followed by a connection with the Lord. Look at chapter six, verse one. Children obey your parents in the Lord.

Right. The command to submit, the command to obey. Then the connection with the Lord.

Look at verse five. Servants be obedient to those who are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling and sincerity of heart as to Christ. You see, every time he gives the command to submit, he makes the connection.

Do it unto the Lord. Do it unto Christ. Do it in the Lord.

So what does he mean? What's the whole purpose of it? The words in Ephesians 5:21, submitting to one another in the fear of God, the words in the fear of God describe what should be our motive for submitting to one another. This is why we do it. We no longer see ourselves in an individualistic way, but as a unit, as a company or as a battalion and out of respect for God, the Father, and out of respect for Jesus Christ, we are going to submit to one to another.

Now, the motive for submission is not social kindness. Now, I'm all for social kindness. We certainly could use more of it, not less, but that's not the motive that Paul gives here.

You know what social kindness is, right? It's just everyday politeness. It's sort of putting on a uniform, putting on manners. You know, yes, please, thank you, all that, in the sense of putting on manners.

And that's wonderful. That's good. That certainly has its place.

But that's not what Paul's talking about here. And you know why? Because that even that can lead to pride. Let me explain to you how.

And, you know, here you are. It's after our time between services where we open up for refreshments and such. But let's say next week you're out there at the doughnut table and you just decide, man, I'm having, you know what? I'm hungry.

I didn't eat breakfast. I'm giving me about five doughnuts and I want them now. And so you're pushing and shoving.

And right there, that's self, isn't it? You're being too individualistic. You're putting your own needs above the needs of everybody else. Nothing wrong with you having a doughnut.

God bless you. You have one, but you're doing it the wrong way, aren't you? And so there you are. Now, here you are.

And somebody else looks at you and they say, oh, my, they should really have better manners. And then they start thinking about in a self-superior way about how much better they are than that. Now, these institutions of social kindness can lead to that.

They don't necessarily lead to that, but they can. That's why Paul doesn't give that for the motive. Because we have a higher motive than mere social kindness.

Again, there's nothing wrong with social kindness, but it's not high enough as a motive. But the motive for submission is not the law of God. He didn't say submitting to one another because I command you to do it.

Oh, you see, the Christian understands love. We respect it. But now we're governed by a higher authority than the law.

The higher authority is respect, honor and relationship with Jesus Christ. Friends, the motive for submission is look at their verse 21. Respect for Jesus Christ.

You do it in the fear of God. So let me just point blank ask you, do you respect Jesus? If you respect Jesus, then you'll submit to one another. Say, wait, I don't catch the connection.

You know, if I respect person X, why does that mean that I'll that I'll submit to person Y? Well, very simple, because person X told you to submit to person Y. Right. If you respect someone, won't you do what they say you must do? And Jesus said that we must submit ourselves one to another. Look at what he said in Matthew chapter 20, verse 25.

Jesus called them to himself and said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you. But whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave. Just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. That's submitting to one another in the fear of God, isn't it? What Jesus told you to do.

If you respect him, if you fear the Lord, if you respect Jesus Christ, you'll do what he told you to do. Let me ask you another one. Do you respect Jesus? Then why not submit to one another out of gratitude to Jesus in light of all that he's done for you? You know, when you really respect someone and they've done many good things for you, you want to please them out of simple gratitude, don't you? You want to please them.

Do you respect Jesus? Then please, Jesus, out of simple gratitude. Let me ask you another way. Do you respect Jesus? Then submit to one another because you want to glorify Jesus.

When you really respect someone, you want to see them lifted up. You want to see other people respect him also. And we do that when we submit one to another.

Friends, if you really love and respect Jesus, then submit one to another out of love for him. Isn't this beautiful? Because what this does is lifts it up to a whole different level, right? I don't submit to you. I don't look at myself as part of a team with all of you and think in this non-selfish, non-individualistic way.

I don't do it because I feel like it. I don't do it because somebody else told me to do it. I don't do it because it's just good manners.

I don't do it because of all these other things. No, I do it because I love Jesus Christ. And I respect him.

And he told me to do it. Shouldn't that weigh heavily with us? He told us to do this. He told us to deny ourselves and live in this way where we serve one another and love one another.

That's it right before us here. When you really respect someone, you care about pleasing them and you're afraid to disappoint them. Now, next week, we take what submission is and we start applying it to the home.

That's in verse 22. So, come on back next week and we'll see where it begins here at verse 22 to talk about this. But I think it's been very important for us this morning to talk about what submission is.

God has an order of authority. And might I give you the most elementary lesson and conclude with this this morning. Most elementary lesson in God's order of authority.

Here it is. There's a God in heaven and you are not him. That's like starting at the basics there.

There's an order of authority there, right? So, the first submission that we do to God's order of authority is submit to God himself. And that's where it all begins. So, have you submitted to God? Or are you

harboring a place of resistance to him? Have you given your life to Jesus Christ in an attitude of surrender? You know, I love that old song.

Rule over my soul, Lord. Rule over my soul, sweet spirit. Rule over my soul.

My rest is complete as I sit at your feet. Sweet spirit, rule over my soul. Have you allowed the Lord to rule over your soul? That's where submission begins.

That's God's elementary lesson in a rule or an order of authority. Friends, let's let it begin there. Let the Lord search your heart this morning.

Maybe in a large way or in a small way. You're not submitting to him today. Let's bring our hearts before him and ask him to do that.

You can make a decision and say, Okay, Lord, I'll invite you to rule over my soul today. Let's pray about it right now. Father, we thank you.

We love you for your order of authority. Lord, even though we haven't always respected it, sometimes we've chafed against it. We've misunderstood it.

But Lord, we do thank you for it. And we thank you, Lord, that you call us to submit one to another. To put away self.

To see ourselves as a team. To see ourselves as a unit, as a squadron. Working and fighting together for your glory.

Lord, won't you move in us to really submit and to let that submission begin with you. Father, I pray that you'd move on hearts this morning to submit to you in every way that's necessary, in every way that's needful. And then to move out from there so that we can submit to one another in the fear of God.

We hope you've been blessed by this teaching from God's Word, the Bible. For more tapes and Bible study resources from Calvary Chapel of Simi Valley, call us at 805-527-0199. Or look us up on the internet at calvarychapel.com/simi/simivalley.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/6/SID6830.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/david-guzik/understanding-marriage-what-submission-is/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net