

Pursuing the Discipline of Submission

A Topical Message From God's Word

Scriptural Support - Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:18-19, 1 Peter 2:12-15, Hebrews 5:7, Luke 2:41-52, Ephesians 6:1-4, Matthew 17:24:27, Titus 3:1-2, Romans 13:1-8, 1 Peter 2:13-14, Acts 4:18-20, John 13:3-5, Mark 10:45, John 13:14-15, 1 Peter 3:1-2, 1 Peter 3:7, Philippians 2:3-5, 1 Peter 2:16-17, John 6:38, John 14:31, Luke 22:41-42, 1 Peter 2:21-25

Sermon Summary - This message deals with the spiritual discipline of Submission. This is a discipline that has either been ignored or misused throughout history. However, when properly understood it has amazing value to our lives. Eight different values are found by looking at the example of Christ in His life in His exercise of submission to His earthly parents, to His Heavenly Father, to governing authorities, and to others.

Full Sermon Notes

"There at the cross You paid the debt I owed

Broke my chains freed my soul for the first time I had hope"

The reason we can sing that song today is because of what Jesus did over 2000 years ago. He submitted Himself to the will of the Father and gave His life for us! So we could say that without the spiritual discipline of submission, you and I would have no hope of forgiveness, new life, or eternal life! So let's pray and ask God to teach us the importance of submission. Pray!!

So what is the dictionary definition of submission? Let's see...

Submission - the action or fact of accepting or yielding to a superior force or to the will or authority of another person

Why is submission a spiritual discipline? Let me answer the question with a question...

Is submission to God and others something that comes naturally to you?

Is it just really easy for you to yield your opinion to that of others and to lay down your rights? Do the words, "okay we'll do it your way", come easy to you? For most of us, those words don't come easy. And I want to say this right up front, there are times that submission is not a good thing at all. God would not want us to submit ourselves to abuse, or submit to someone in authority if they are attempting to get us to do something sinful or illegal! And we are blessed to live in a nation where we typically have choices with that, although I acknowledge the tragedy of human trafficking even in our nation and pray that more can be done to stop it. I know there are places in our world, where slavery is still a thing and I acknowledge our nation's sad history with slavery. Back in the Bible days, slavery was engraved deeply in most every nation, and while the Bible did not condone that practice, Biblical writers addressed the issue and gave practical advice to those who found themselves in a forced submission situation. There have been people in the past who tried to use the fact the Bible addresses these issues as an endorsement of slavery and that simply is not true! I believe God's Word was giving those enslaved people wisdom to be able to deal with their unjust situations and with their oppressors. We find an example of this in 1 Peter...

1 Pet 2:18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

1 Pet 2:19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.

And what was the goal of this advice?

1 Pet 2:12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

And then in verse 15...

1 Pet 2:15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.

I believe Peter was trying to help these people make the most of a terrible situation, perhaps with the hopes that their captors would become convicted of their egregious behavior, come to know Jesus, and then set their captives free. Richard Foster made this statement at the beginning of his chapter on submission.

“Of all the Spiritual Disciplines none has been more abused than the Discipline of submission. Somehow the human species has an extraordinary knack for taking the best teaching and turning it to the worst ends. Nothing can put people into bondage like religion, and nothing in religion has done more to manipulate and destroy people than a deficient teaching on submission.”

With that said, the spiritual discipline of submission is truly a very positive discipline which has received a very negative reception in today's world. The culture today seems to be saying, “do your own thing and don't submit to anyone, any principle of morality, or any authority!” The “do your own thing” of the 60's and 70's hippie movement have taken hold. And there's also the attitude that submission is not the formula for success or getting to the top and staying on top. So the truth is, If we don't pursue the discipline of submission, we will not willingly practice submission. The Bible has plenty to say about submission and it certainly takes a different view on submission than the world. Let's read our first Scripture for today...

Eph 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

We are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, and I pray that by the end of this message you will understand that submission honors Christ and strengthens the fellowship of the church! But beyond understanding, I pray you will pursue the discipline of submission and begin implementing this discipline in your daily life because it has great value! What value is found in submission? We will discover the answer to this question by looking at one of the greatest examples of submission ever found on planet earth!! Who is this great example? Hebrews 5:7 tells us...

Heb 5:7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

But wait a minute. Wasn't Jesus God in the flesh? Isn't Jesus The Lord? The King of Kings, the very Son of God? Yes, and this morning we're going to learn the value of submission from the master of reverent Submission!

#1 - Jesus submitted to His earthly parents!

Luke 2:41 Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.

Luke 2:42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.

Luke 2:43 After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.

Luke 2:44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.

Luke 2:45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.

Luke 2:46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Luke 2:47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2:48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

Luke 2:49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

Luke 2:50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Luke 2:51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Jesus submitted to His parents. Let's learn from His example!

Children, young people, please listen...

Submitting to your parents is so important it rated one of the 10 commandments...

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

Eph 6:2 "Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise--

Eph 6:3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

The Value of Protection

When you submit to your parents you are submitting to their protection! You are under the umbrella of their protection. When you decide to do your own thing, you are walking out from under their umbrella of protection! When I was a teenager, my Mom and Dad told me to be very

careful who I rode with in a car. They encouraged me to only ride with people I knew would be safe drivers. I made a decision to ride home with one of my friends one day who decided that going 120 miles an hour on a two lane road in the hills and gullies of Vicksburg, MS was a good idea. We topped a hill and there was a log truck broken down in the road in our lane. There was a line of cars in the other lane. There was an embankment on the left side of that row of cars and to the right of the log truck was a steep gully! Multiple choices but none were good and at 120 miles and hour you don't have time to choose! We left skid marks 25 yards long, hit the line of cars with the front of our car, and the back of our car hit the log truck. We then spun in circles the length of a football field before stopping. By God's amazing grace, none of us died. My injuries were mostly to my nose and now you know why I always have the sniffles! I'm just gonna tell you that it got to the point where it seemed everytime I disobeyed my parents, I got hurt. I used to pick on my Mom and tell her it was her fault when I got hurt because she had told me not to do something. She said "Son, don't you try to put that on me!" The truth is young people, when you submit to your parents and obey them, it does bring some protection into your life. And here's a very important thing for all of us to remember. When we submit to our Heavenly Father, we are under the umbrella of His protection, and as I told you last week, that doesn't mean you will never get hurt or suffer in this life, but if you're submitted in obedience to God, nothing gets through unless He allows it and if He allows it, then He's going to use whatever for a greater purpose! But submission not only brings protection, it also brings...

The Value of Guidance

Ok, kids, you may not always think your parents are right, and it's possible they could be wrong, but they are still the parents! This is where you obey and trust the Lord to work it out. If they are wrong they are responsible before the Lord and He will deal with them. If you disobey, whether they were wrong or right, you're still guilty of disobedience. Very rarely have I ever seen young people in big trouble because they obeyed their parents. Sometimes when parents discipline their children it is thought by the child as abusive when it's not. If they are slapping you in the face, and leaving bruises on you when they discipline, that's abusive, but a restrained and Godly discipline done in love, is so important for children. Now I know sometimes a child will raise objections to any form of discipline, like restrictions on freedoms, time outs, or taking away privileges. You may hear, "but that's not fair," or, "but why?" And sometimes you need to say, "Because I said so and I'm the parent!" Parents, setting boundaries is needed and it's your responsibility and God has given you that authority. But I need to tell you this: "Because I said so" does not need to be overused and it is really a good thing if you make it a habit to let your kids understand your reasoning behind your discipline and your rules. After all, you are giving them guidance and it will be much more effective if a child sees the logic in your guidance! But kids, remember, God placed your parents or grandparents, or guardian in your life for a reason. Respect that! And one way you could practice submission is by doing something you know your parents are going to ask you to do before they ask you. You might be surprised what that could do for your relationship with your parents, I mean once they get over the shock of it all! Now is there ever a time we shouldn't submit to parents? I've already alluded to this, but...

Yes, if they ask you to do something illegal or immoral.

The Bible says to obey our parents in the Lord. If they go against the Lord, remember, the Lord and His principles of guidance prevail!

Oh, by the way, Parents, the verse after "obey your parents" says...

Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

And do you know what the most exasperating thing in the world would be for a child? If you are saying one thing, but living another! That's a recipe for serious rebellion down the road! Parents aren't perfect, but they sure need to be genuine and not hypocritical if they are going to give good guidance to their children. And at the end of our message we're going to talk about how submitting to God allows God to guide us as children of God. But I've got to tackle a very unpopular subject next. Here we go...

#2 - Jesus submitted to governing authorities!

Mat 17:24 After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

Mat 17:25 "Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes--from their own sons or from others?"

Mat 17:26 "From others," Peter answered. "Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to him.

Mat 17:27 "But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

Just because we disagree doesn't mean we don't have to respect and even submit to authority. In fact the Bible tells us a thing or two about those in authority...

Titus 3:1 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,

Titus 3:2 to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

And then we find these detailed instructions in Paul's letter to the Romans...

Romans 13:1 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Romans 13:2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Romans 13:3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.

Romans 13:4 For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

Romans 13:5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

Is there ever a time when submission to governing authorities goes too far? Yes. If they ask you to disobey a direct command of God. Remember when Peter and John were told not to tell anyone else about Jesus?

Acts 4:18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:19 But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.

Acts 4:20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

I shared this at the beginning of the pandemic: If the government tells me I can't worship because they don't want me worshipping any more, then obviously, I'm not going to obey that. If I drive up to Kensington Blvd one Sunday and one of our police officers or firefighters, informs me they have had to block off the area due to a dangerous gas main leak, and we're not going to be able to worship in the building that day, I'm going to respect their authority and pray that everyone remains safe and they get things fixed. I've been praying for that with the pandemic and am thankful that in Louisiana there has been a lot of respect given by those in authority towards churches! And sometimes we may have to say...I'm not doing this just because the authority says so, but because it honors God!

The Value of living our lives for Christ in this world!

1 Timothy 2:1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—

1 Timothy 2:2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

Okay, nobody left the building! Thank you!! Respecting the position that those in authority hold, and praying for them even when we disagree with them will, I believe help us reach those people with the message of Jesus! We should and must speak out for what we believe, but we must do so respectfully and lawfully! But we also see that...

#3 - Jesus submitted to others!

John 13:3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;

John 13:4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

John 13:5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

The Value of Humility

Do you get this picture? Jesus, God in the flesh, is washing the disciples feet.

What an amazing act of humble submission. In fact Jesus once said...

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

And after He painted such a vivid picture of submission by washing their feet, He gave His disciples the following instructions...

The Value of Service

John 13:14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

John 13:15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Would it make a difference in marriages if we were willing to serve one another like Jesus served His disciples? I know what I'm about to read to you is not politically correct and our culture might like to totally cancel this, and I know it has been misinterpreted and misused by some people in the past in terrible ways. But understood correctly and implemented in the Spirit of Christ, this is a beautiful truth...God's Word says...

1 Pet 3:1 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,

1 Pet 3:2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Wives please don't think God's picking on you. I'll get to the husbands in just a minute. Their humble, servant leadership looks a little different. This is a two sided coin. Now I know you can't force your husband to accept Christ, or if he's a believer, you can't force him to take the spiritual leadership role in your family, however, you can love him, pray for him, and continue to reach out to him with the kindness of Christ. Remember the vows you took? To love, honor, cherish, and serve in sickness and in health, in prosperity and adversity? And unless he is trying to use submission to control or rule over you in an ungodly or abusive way, your humble submission to his leadership will bring about wonderful good in your relationship! A little love and respect could go a long way in motivating him to step up to the plate! If he's smart, he'll realize you're a better

wife and a better friend, because of your Godly beliefs. And now to the husbands. God's Word says...

1 Pet 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...

Husbands, if you love your wife as much as Jesus loved His church, you would be willing to lay down your life for her. And what wife wouldn't love a husband who loved her that much? Husbands, your very submission to the Lord depends on your obedience to His command that you love your wife as Jesus loved His church and gave His life for it! And your servant leadership cannot just be in words only! You can't just say "Sure I'd lay down my life for you," when you won't even help her with the dishes from time to time! I've known guys who were heroic talkers when it comes to protecting their wife and family, but their actions defy their words. The way they treat their wife and the disrespectful way they speak to their wife doesn't convince me they love them enough to lay down their life for them! Guys if you want your wife's respect, you've got to earn it.

The Value of Meeting the Needs of Others

And what about the submission to one another, like co-workers, neighbors and other members of the family of God? Surely I don't have to submit to them, do I? Let's see what the Book says...

Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Phil 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Phil 2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Chuck Colson says that, "fellowship describes a new community in which individuals willingly covenant to share in common, to be in submission to each other, to support one another and 'bear one another's burdens,' as Paul wrote to the Galatians, and to build each other up in relationship with the Lord."

The Value of Freedom.

1 Pet 2:16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.

1 Pet 2:17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

Did you know that submission brings freedom. It brings freedom from having to always be right. It brings freedom from selfishness. Richard Foster wrote:

“What freedom corresponds to submission? It is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way. The obsession to demand that things go the way we want them to go is one of the great evil bondages in human society today. People will spend weeks, months, even years in a perpetual stew because some little thing did not go as they wished. They will fuss and fume. They will get mad about it. They will act as if their very life hangs on the issue. They may even get an ulcer over it.”

And of course we all know that some go even further and pursue vengeance when they don't get their way. We keep seeing unfortunate examples of this! Wouldn't our world be a much nicer place in which to live if we went out of our way to not offend, and went out of our way to not be offended? Even when my responsibility for the problem may be way down here, and the bulk of the problem was with the other person, it's a great exercise in humility and submission, to admit my little bit and ask forgiveness. The other person may just think about that and say to himself or herself, later, “Wow!” what a brother! It was more me than him and yet he reached out to me!” Only when we practice the discipline of submission can we truly be free from the cares of this life. Free from selfishness, free from worry. How can submission set us free from worry? When we submit our lives to God's hands and His will, we find the ultimate freedom. And this is possible because of Jesus' reverent submission...

#4- Jesus submitted to the will of The Father!

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

John 14:31 but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

Luke 22:41 He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed,
Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

What cup was He talking about? It was the cup of suffering known as the passion of the Christ. The mockery, the beatings, the cross. Jesus' submission is the reason we are here today. Jesus' submission is the reason we have forgiveness, purpose, hope, and a future. Here's the question of the day...

Are you willing to honor Christ by submitting your life to Him?

The Value of Discovering God's Will

We have been called to submit to Christ as our Savior when we get saved, and then to submit to Christ as our Lord on a daily basis as we follow Him. God's Word puts it this way...

1 Pet 2:21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Pet 2:22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

1 Pet 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Pet 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

When you submit to the will of the Lord through the inspiration of The Holy Spirit, you will find victory over temptation, freedom from bitterness and anger, because you will have the ability to forgive those who have wronged you while still acknowledging the hurt and the pain they caused you. That can only be done in humble submission to the Spirit of God! When you submit to the will of the Lord through the inspiration of The Holy Spirit, you will allow God to help you discover that His will is better than your own plans! There have been plenty of times I wanted to speak out and defend myself and really put someone in their place. But I submitted my desire to justify myself to God and kept my mouth shut and realized later, I was totally wrong about something and had misunderstood and misread something and just thanked God I submitted my tongue to the Lord! Our mouths can get us into big trouble if our tongues are not submitted to the control of The Holy Spirit! Peter went on to say...

1 Pet 3:8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

1 Pet 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

1 Pet 3:10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

1 Pet 3:11 He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.

That will not happen without the discipline of submission!! But if we humbly submit to God and His will, an amazing thing happens. James tells us in the passage that is our theme for this series on Spiritual Discipline...

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.

Let's pray.

