

Question: Does a wife have to submit to her husband?

Answer via Got Questions: Submission is a very important issue in relation to marriage. Even before sin entered the world, there was still the principle of headship (1 Timothy 2:13). Adam was created first, and Eve was created to be a "helper" for Adam (Genesis 2:18-20). At the same time, since there was no sin, there was no authority for man to obey except God's authority. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin entered the world, and then authority was needed. Therefore, God established the authority needed to enforce the laws of the land and also to provide us with the protection we need. First, we need to submit to God, which is the only way we can truly obey Him (James 1:21; 4:7). In 1 Corinthians 11:2-3, we find that the husband is to submit to Christ as Christ did to God. Then the verse says that the wife should follow his example and submit to her husband.

Submission is a natural response to loving leadership. When a husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25-33), then submission is a natural response from a wife to her husband. The Greek word translated "submit," *hupotasso*, is the continuing form of the verb. This means that submitting to God, the government, or a husband is not a one-time act. It is a continual attitude, which becomes a pattern of behavior. The submission talked about in Ephesians 5 is not a one-sided subjection of a believer to a selfish, domineering person. Biblical submission is designed to be between two Spirit-filled believers who are mutually yielded to each other and to God. Submission is a two-way street. Submission is a position of honor and completeness. When a wife is loved as the church is loved by Christ, submission is not difficult. Ephesians 5:24 says, "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." This verse is saying that the wife is to submit to her husband in everything that is right and lawful. Therefore, the wife is under no obligation to disobey the law or God in the name of submission.

Matthew Henry wrote: "The woman was made out of Adam's side. She was not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved." Believers are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21). In context, everything in Ephesians 5:19-33 is a result of being filled with the Spirit. Spirit-filled believers are to be worshipful (5:19), thankful (5:20), and submissive (5:21). Paul then follows his line of thought on Spirit-filled living and applies it to husbands and wives in verses 22-33. A wife should submit to her husband, not because women are inferior, but because that is how God designed the marital relationship to function. Submission is not a wife's being a "doormat" for her husband. Rather, with the help of the Holy Spirit, a wife submits to her husband, and a husband sacrificially loves his wife.