

To Submit in Marriage: Word use in the Greek

I wrote [a long article](#) several years ago with an overview of Greek and Hebrew words meaning to submit or be subject to; this all to show how boldly the Bible teaches the wife's submission in marriage. However, because of the length of the article, I wanted to present one which was shorter, but still at least gave an overview of the Greek words the New Testament uses. This shorter piece grew out of a response I made on an online forum – one filled with liberals, apostates and nonbelievers – all of whom pretended that the meaning of submission becomes a headscratcher when it refers to a wife's attitude toward her husband.

The matter of man's biblical headship is not a very complex question biblically. It is simple. All you have to do is read the text and you will get a basic understanding of it. This is why Christians MUCH closer to the time of the New Testament also recognized man's headship and woman's submission. This is why it is the traditional understanding. It is EVEN why non-believers can pick up the Bible and then blaspheme God as a mean, sexist patriarchal pig because they TOO know how to read a text.

Some have actually had the gall to make the claim that biblical headship is simply modern people inserting their own ideas into the Bible, but this is absurd. It is the opposite that is true. To claim anything BUT man's headship is to grossly twist an easy-to-read scripture because you want to insert your personal worldview into it. If that is how we understand language then it has no meaning at all. Both traditional Jews at that time and Christians – many of whom were Jewish – recognized the man's headship. Traditional Jews, without the New Testament, recognized it through the Hebrew Scriptures, tradition and natural law. Christians recognized it through some of the same methods, but also had specific scriptures uniquely teaching about it. The culture at the time understood the words of Ephesians 5 and similar passages. It takes a post-modern and feminist view to come along later and insert different meaning into the text.

A more subtle, and for that reason more dangerous claim, is what you will hear at many Bible churches and evangelical ones: the minister will speak out of one side of his mouth, saying that yes, the man is the head of the home. Then he will speak out of the other side of his mouth and completely redefine headship, claiming it carries no real authority that others must obey. This absurd explanation you'll hear is rooted less in poor biblical interpretation than it is in a desire to

please everyone; both the Bible believers in their church and the feminists. They desire to please everyone first, and they come up with the interpretation later. Yet it is rooted in falsehood, since the head by definition has authority. To submit, by definition includes obedience. A man who is the head of the home, but not really the boss, is not the head of the home at all. They're just a simple Christian who's been lied to.

We can know plainly what the Bible says, not just because that is how people have always generally understood it, but because that is what the words mean in their local context. The word meaning "submit" for a wife toward her husband is the same word meaning submit for a citizen to the government, slave to master and man to God. Similar thing goes for the Hebrew words used in the Old Testament.

The word used for Sarah obeying Abraham is also the SAME word used for children obeying parents, weather obeying Jesus, man obeying God, etc.

Therefore, to claim that woman is actually NOT subject to her husband, would also logically mean that citizens are not subject to governments, we are not subject to our bosses, children need not obey their parents, weather never really obeyed Jesus and mankind need not obey God. That would be the logical conclusion.

However, if you read a text normally, and do not invent oddball rules to escape man's headship, then male headship is the clear and unambiguous teaching of the Holy Bible. It is the same obedience throughout.

Below, I have listed some, but not all of the uses of the Greek word for submit. Then I have included some, though not all, of two related words for obey. I encourage you to look up ALL of them in your free time, as well as the various Hebrew words in the Hebrew Scriptures meaning submit or subject to. It's interesting what you'll find. Tradition has been right for thousands of years, because this is what the Bible teaches:

Word for Submit or Be Subject to (HYPOTASSO) to those above you. Literally hypotasso means to put under or to appoint under:

Therefore HYPOSTASSO yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, (1 Peter 2:13)

Let every soul be HYPOTASSO to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. (Romans 13:1)

Remind them to be HYPOTASSO to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, (Titus 3:1)

--It is interesting this use of hypotasso for submit is used in parallel to obeying them. The word for obey is peitharcho. This is defined as "to obey (a ruler or superior)."

Therefore HYPOTASSO to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

And He made all *things* HYPOTASSO under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, (Ephesians 1:22)

Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not HYPOTASSO to the law of God, nor indeed can be. (Romans 8:7)

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are HYPOTASSO to us in Your name." (Luke 10:17)

Exhort bondservants to be HYPOTASSO to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all *things*, not answering back, (Titus 2:9)

Wives, likewise, be *HYPOTASSO* to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, (1 Peter 3:1)

For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being HYPOTASSO to their own husbands, (1 Peter 3:5)

Wives, HYPOTASSO to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:22)

Therefore, just as the church is HYPOTASSO to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:24)

Wives, HYPOTASSO to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (Colossians 3:18)

Words for Obey (HYPAKOUO/HYPAKOE) those above you:

Bondservants HYPAKOUO in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. (Colossians 3:22)

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to HYPAKOE, you are that one's slaves whom you HYPAKOUO, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? (Romans 6:16)

Children, HYPAKOUO your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (Ephesians 6:1)

And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who HYPAKOUO Him, (Hebrews 5:9)

By faith Abraham HYPAKOUO when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. (Hebrews 11:8)

So the men marveled, saying, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea HYPAKOUO Him?” (Matthew 8:27)

as Sarah HYPAKOUO Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. (1 Peter 3:6)

--The word “lord” that Sarah called Abraham is KYRIOS, which is a common Greek word not just for lord, but also for God.

I think you can see as well as I can brethren that the meaning of submit and obey is not a great ambiguity. I think you can also see along with me that if we read the Bible consistently throughout, then we see the same submission that applies throughout the Bible also applies to the wife in marriage. Likewise, we can see that when feminists deny submission in marriage, they have to come up with totally different rules of understanding, and arbitrarily change how we interpret the Bible JUST for the verses about marriage. We can all see how silly, if not intellectually dishonest that is.

Again, I have to remind you that some have claimed that because there are RARE uses of the word submit used in a general sense – such as we all submit to one another – that somehow marital submission is two ways. This is false. It is plainly false because the COMMON use of submit is in a vertical relationship, obeying one above you, and the literal meaning is to “put under.” This is obvious by the context also in Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3. Wives submit to husbands as to Christ. Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord (the same word for God). Therefore it’s clear we’re speaking of submitting to authority. Similar words are also used in the sense of vertical relationships in nearly every usage of the words, both in Greek and in Hebrew.

There ARE rare examples of the word being used to mean caring for the good of other people over your own, but context also makes clear that this is the usage. In fact, the appearance of a possible general usage of submit in Ephesians 5:21 is BEFORE it begins to speak of husband and wife, and is clearly still in the context of the overall congregation, as this is what the previous verses spoke about. Why insert it into husbands and wives, unless you have an agenda? Just go back and read the previous verses yourself. Ephesians 5:21 actually ends a section speaking about the congregation, and is ended with a period.

In fact, if we had no way of knowing if “submit” just means people submit equally to all others, then we would not know if government and citizens simply submit to one another, rather than the citizens obeying the law. We should have no idea if we need to submit to our bosses, but might rather go into his office and make his decisions for him on alternate days. We would have no idea if we need to submit to God, or whether it was God’s turn to submit to OUR commandments and OUR sovereign will. See, it would get silly. Submit means to follow the will of those above you, except in rare usages obvious by context.

I would love to go into a feminist church where they claim submit just means to submit to one another, and tell them this Sunday I am coming to their church and I am preaching patriarchy from the pulpit. If they try and stop me, I’ll remind them they have to SUBMIT to me, as Scripture teaches we must submit to each other. Then I’ll show up next Sunday and preach patriarchy from their pulpit. Let’s see how that works! Or let’s see if they change their interpretation real quick.

If you find yourself doing odd word games wherever the Bible speaks of a woman’s submission, consider that you – that’s right, you -- are trying to escape from the truth. One should not have to do odd word games to get one’s philosophy to fit into the Bible. One only needs to read language normally. When you attack the headship of the man, you attack the headship of Christ. This is because the husband is the representative of Christ in the home. The husband is, according to Scripture, the lord.

Therefore, Christian men: do not let feminists rob you of your authority in marriage. It is real. It is yours to use. It is a sacred role that is even compared to the Lord. They will call you all kinds of names for using your authority, but you have just as much right to use it as the government, as an employer and as a parent. Scripture uses almost identical language for all three. You are the boss. Now use that authority to lead your home in godly virtue, and use that authority to help restore the Church.

God be with you.

Shalom

