

**Ephesians God's New Community**  
**New Relationships in the Home and at Work!**  
**Ephesians 5:1-21 (21)**  
**6th February 2022**  
**Preacher: Pastor Roy Summers**

**Introduction**

I once heard a preacher speak these words: *"We say things to our loved ones (he was talking about home life) which we would never say to anyone else."* He meant that it is possible for Christians to say unpleasant or hurtful words to their nearest and dearest, which they would never say to neighbours or strangers or colleagues or to anyone else! I remember being taken aback in the moment by the preacher's statement, but on reflection I think he may be right. Is it not possible for Christian people to say the most unhelpful things in the place we call home? And one reason is that home is perhaps the most trying place to live out our new lives in Christ. We spend so much of our time among this small group of people, and so all our weaknesses and foibles make their presence known.

I wonder if that is why Paul has placed family relationships and work relationships all together in his final instructions on Christian behaviour, because the work place, where we also spend so many hours, and the home, are together the two most trying and demanding environments for us to live out the Christian life.

As we approach the end of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells us how the Gospel of Jesus Christ should transform marriage, 5:22-33, parenting, 6:1-4 and Christian employment, 6:5-9.

But we cannot help noticing that in these three paired relationships, husband and wife, parent and child, employee and employer, one of them is called to submit to the other:

- Wives are called to submit to their husbands, 5:22,
- Children are called to obey their parents, 6:1
- And employees are called to obey their employers, 6:5

This morning we're going to think through what Paul means by the word "submit." We're slowing the whole series of sermons down at this point, because we need to understand what Paul means he says that wives should "...submit to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church." On the surface of it, the word "submit" may sound harsh, and on the surface, the word "head" might sound like there is a hierarchy going on here, wife down there, husband up here. We need to understand exactly what Paul is teaching. And, brothers and sisters, we also want to help unbelieving friends understand what Paul means, because the world today thinks that all this talk of "headship" and "submission" is old-fashioned and even offensive and sexist. So in this morning's sermon we want to prepare ourselves for what the apostle Paul has to say about family life and work life, and especially what he means by words like "submission" and "headship."

- The idea of divine order
- The meaning of the word submission
- The example of Jesus Christ

**#1 The idea of divine "order"**

It's impossible to understand what Paul means by submission without starting first with the Bible's teaching about divine order. This is the key which unlocks these verses. God has designed the universe to work in an ordered way—the material world of atoms and planets, the world of human relationships are all ordered by God.

This order flows from God himself. In the Godhead we find Three Divine Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And although they are all equal in power and glory and divinity, there is an order between them:

- The Father is the first Person of the Godhead
- The Son is the second Person of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead

The Father sends the Son, but the Son does not send the Father, but says “Not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39) There is no hierarchy between them, but there is an order. The Son does not send the Father, the Father sends the Son—there is an order.

In John’s Gospel we read that the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit, (John 15:26) but the Holy Spirit does not send the Father or the Son, no, the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit.

There is an order in the divine Godhead. God is a God of order. In God's great plan of Redemption, another example of this order,

- The Father *planned salvation* and sent his only beloved Son
- The Son *accomplished salvation*, obeying the Father’s will, he came into the world to die for our sins
- The Holy Spirit *applies salvation*, he makes the work of Christ effective in our lives by making us born again

The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are all equal, there is no hierarchy there, but there is order. And flowing out of this order that lives in God himself, God created everything in an ordered way:

Have you noticed how ordered the world God created is?

**(1) The material universe is ordered.** When God created the light, there was light over there—day, and darkness over there, night time (Genesis 1) There is order. When God created land, he gathered the water in one place, the oceans, so we have land in one place and oceans in another. (Genesis 1) There is order. Think of how the planets in our own solar system orbit the sun, all revolving in their own orbits. There is order again.

**(2) The universe of living things is ordered.** Plants sit at the bottom of the food chain, with animals and human beings dependent upon them (Some of you may be watching David Attenborough’s *Green Planet* on TV, where this point has been made again and again.) There’s an order between plants and animals. And then when God created human beings in his image and likeness, he made another order, plants at the bottom, animals next and human beings at the top. God is a God of order.

**(3) The world of social relationships is ordered**

The same divine order is also found in God’s design for all human relationships in society. We are not talking about hierarchy, but order. All human beings are equal in humanity and dignity and value, but there is an order between them. There is an order between older people and younger people. Younger people should honour and respect older people. Did you know that? Leviticus 19:32 “Stand up in the presence of the elderly, and show respect for the aged. Fear your God. I am the LORD.” There is an order between husbands and wives, husbands are the head of the wife, no hierarchy but order. There is an order between children and parents, children are to obey parents. There is an order between employees and employers, employees are to obey employers. There is an order between Government officials in authority and ordinary citizens, we are to submit to their authority. There is order in the church—no hierarchy but order—elders are called to care for and lead the congregation. Men are called to preach and lead, rather than women: it’s got nothing to do with hierarchy it’s got to do with divine order. (Have you wondered why men lead our Sunday gatherings and men preach? Nothing to do with hierarchy or how much people know, it’s about divine order.)

So, God has created an ordered world, wherever we look, whether in nature or in human society, a reflection of his own divine being. And behind God’s ordered plan is peace and harmony. If the planets each decided to chose their own orbit, there would be chaos in the solar system! If citizens decide to do what they please, the nations will be plunged into turmoil. In the home, if children boss their parents or wives refused to submit to their husbands there will be strife.

And in the work place if employees rose up against their employers, their would be revolution. God's order is designed, in his infinite and loving wisdom to bring peace to his world!

(By the Way, Satan hates God's order because he loves war. That is why marriage and family life are under so much attack today; ultimately it's a Satanic offensive against God and his loving order for mankind).

And this idea of divine order is crucial to understanding Christian relationships in the home and work place.....

## #2 The meaning of "submission"

....only now can we understand what submission means:

- *"Wives submit to your husbands"*
- *"Children obey your parents"*
- *"Slaves obey your earthly masters"*

Submission means simply this: recognise God's divine order and act accordingly. That's it. "Wives recognise the God-given order between husbands and wives." "Children recognise the God-appointed order between parents and children." "Employees recognise the God-give order between employers and employees."

The English word submit does not have the harsh overtones of the Greek word. The Greek word behind our English submit is hupotasso which is made up of "tasso" - order or arrange and "hupo" under. So what Paul is saying is that Christians must recognise God's order and fall in line with that order, act in accordance with God's order.

I wish there was a better word than "submit" to translate hupotasso, but there isn't it, so we're stuck with it, all the more reason to understand what it actually means.

Submit means "recognise the order God has appointed for you—not a hierarchy but an order—and fall in line with it." Christian wives remember that your husband is your head and work out what it means for you to order yourself accordingly. Christian children and Christian employees you do the same. There is a divine order, recognise it and order your behaviour accordingly. (Of course there is a different kind of ordering in each of these three relationships: Paul says to Christian children to obey their parents, he doesn't use the word "obey" to Christian wives. There's a difference in the kind of order between these three relationships, but they are all ordered relationships.)

Some of you blokes or ladies who make things from wood or steel may have a wall of tools, all in their own specific and ordered place. The hammer over here, the screwdriver over there, the saw over there. Each in it's proper and designed place. When you finish with a tool you put it back in the right place. That's what order and submission is, it's recognising the place God has put me and acting accordingly, whether in the world, the home, the work place, or the church.

Before we move away from the word submission, we must notice the most remarkable verse which comes before the three ordered relationships, husbands wives, parents children, employees and employers, verse 21: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (verse 21) Paul says that every single Christian should be submissive towards every other Christian! What does Paul mean? Is he preparing husbands who might say "Look I never have to submit to my wife, she's always got to submit to me." Yes, he could be doing that. Is he preparing parents who might think "I never have to submit to my Christian kids, I don't have to listen to them, I don't have to admit I get it wrong sometimes, they have to obey me." Perhaps. Or Christian employers who may think they never have to submit to their employees?

Yes, he's saying all these things, but Paul is saying something much more. Paul is saying that the very nature of a Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit is submissiveness. Remember, verses 18-21 are all one sentence:

*“Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit (1) speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs singing and (2) making music in your hearts to the Lord, (3) always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

When we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, when we let God regulate our behaviour, govern our lives, then Christian husbands and wives become naturally submissive to one another, Christian children and parents become naturally submissive to each other, and Christian employees and employers become naturally submissive towards one another.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we are not difficult, obstinate, unyielding, resistant, awkward, I stubborn, intractable! We are submissive and easy to get on with! Whenever we find ourselves difficult and unyielding and obstinate and self-centred, we need to find a quiet place, seek God’s forgiveness and ask the Lord to fill us with the Holy Spirit.

### #3 The example of Jesus

And the great example of a submissive spirit is Jesus Christ, who we read in Luke 4:1 was filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus recognised God’s divine order and he submitted himself to it. When he was a 12 year old boy he — *“was obedient to Mary and Joseph”* (Luke 2:51)— same word hupotasso. All during his ministry Jesus was submissive to his Father’s will, *“I have not spoken on My own, but the Father who sent Me has commanded Me what to say and how to say it”* (John 12:49). He paid his taxes (Matthew 17) submitting to the local authorities. At the last supper, no other disciple wanted to submit to the servant work of washing dusty feet, so Jesus knelt down and washed his disciples’ feet (John 12). And then supremely, in the garden of Gethsemane, aware of the horror that lay ahead of him, his soul overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, nevertheless submitted to his Father’s will, *“My Father, if it is possible may this cup be taken from me. Yet not my will but as you will.”* (Matthew 26:39)

Aren’t we glad that Jesus was submissive? For through his submissive obedience we have been saved!

What brings peace and joy and happiness and witness into a Christian home and workplace and a church? First, an understanding of the place God has ordered for us, for me and for you. And then a Christ-like submissiveness to that place, made possible in the power of God’s Spirit. May the Lord fill us with his Holy Spirit each and every day so that we might become ever more submissive like the Lord Jesus Christ

#### **PRAYER AFTER FINAL HYMN**

Thank you for the precious gift of your Holy Spirit. Help us not to grieve him, help us to repent daily of our sins. May your Spirit empower us and control us so that our words will be gracious, our worship heartfelt, our thanksgiving continual and our wills submissive. We ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen