



The Bible on Authority & Submission in Marriage

Description



In this 4th article of our marriage series, weâ€™ll examine the Bibleâ€™s teaching on authority and submission in marriage. Weâ€™ll go through each and every New Testament passage on the topic and examine them closely. **Weâ€™ll also cover a few elements that almost no one covers** that lend context to the discussion and make the Bibleâ€™s teaching even clearer than it already is.

One of those elements is the gender of the Greek words in Ephesians 5:21, the other is the cultural conditions in 1st century Rome.

(Note: This is the 4th article in our series on marriage. If you want to read the rest, I suggest starting with my article: [How Crucial are Women to a Biblical Household? Very!](#) which provides a foundation for the series. Then I suggest reading [the 1st article of the marriage series](#) afterward.)

A Note About Historical Context and Roman Patriarchy

Many have said that in the 1st century Roman society of Paulâ€™s day, women were completely subservient to men. They say women had few â€“ if any â€“ rights and were basically regarded as the property of the man of the household.

That is patently and categorically wrong.

That was true of the early Roman Empire, and certainly before 300 BC. However, Roman women had a lot of freedom by the 1st century. They could do almost anything a man could do. They weren't slaves in their husbands' houses; they could own property, held great influence, and could even divorce their husbands if they didn't like them.

By the late Hellenistic Age, this had resulted in a metamorphosis in the position of women. **Equality for women extended beyond politics into economic life, and in some occupations such as plumbing they came to dominate.** The rate of divorce increased enormously, and the power of the paterfamilias was shaken to its foundations and eventually swept away altogether. **The meek and henpecked Roman husband was already a stock comedy figure in the great days of the Second Punic War.** This changing relationship led Cato the Censor to protest bitterly, **All other men rule over women; but we Romans, who rule all men, are ruled by our women.** Equality had progressed to the point that by the late Empire a woman who married retained her property, and, legally, the man had not even the right to enjoy the income from it.

Source: [Egalitarianism and Empire](#) by William F. Marina.

Let me repeat the quote in the middle so no one misses it.

All other men rule over women; but we Romans, who rule all men, are ruled by our women.

Hopefully, the bold quote above by a **Roman Historian** ([Cato the Elder/Censor, died 149 B.C.](#)) will dissuade you from believing that 1st-century Roman women were completely subservient to their husbands/fathers. If not, I recommend you do some more digging. You'll find that women were the equals of men in most respects and even had advantages over men in others.

In earlier centuries, Roman women were indeed regarded as the property of their husbands (*or fathers if they were unmarried*). This was certainly the case in Rome's history as quotes by Aristotle and others will indicate. But this had changed long before Paul began writing his letters.

The supposed patriarchal oppression of women in 1st-century Rome is one of those facts that everyone knows, and yet it's totally false.

(If anything, the opposite is true as the quote above testifies.)

There's more evidence too.

For example, in 42 BC a woman named [Hortensia](#) addressed the ruling [Roman Triumvirate](#) consisting of Caesar Augustus, Mark Antony, and Marcus Lepidus heavyweights in history and rulers of the empire. The three men were short of cash during a war and having exhausted many other options chose to levy a tax on the city's 1400 wealthiest women. Hortensia successfully argued against such a tax being instituted.

Please note:

- The tax was placed on women, meaning women could clearly own property and receive income from it (*it didn't go to their husbands*)—remember the earlier quote: “Equality had progressed to the point that by the late Empire a woman who married retained her property, and, legally, the man had not even the right to enjoy the income from it.”
- The speech took place in the Forum Romanum, which was the center of day-to-day life in Rome for centuries
- The leaders tried to have her removed but were not able to (presumably because of popular support, which is about the only thing that challenged the Roman emperors)
- **The three most powerful men in the world capitulated because of a speech made by a woman**

The three most powerful men in Rome couldn't remove a woman from a public forum. **Does that sound like women were oppressed and could never leave home?**

There's also [Fulvia](#).

She lived from 83 – 40 BC and (*in succession*) was the wife of three great Romans, the best known of which is Mark Antony. According to the Roman historian Cassius Dio, at one point Fulvia controlled the politics of Rome. Dio wrote:

“The following year Publius Servilius and Lucius Antonius nominally became consuls, but in reality it was Antonius and **Fulvia**. She, the mother-in-law of Octavian and wife of Antony (Antonius), had no respect for Lepidus because of his slothfulness, and **managed affairs herself, so that neither the senate nor the people transacted any business contrary to her pleasure.**”

Did you catch that: a woman was basically ruling Rome.

Women were the full legal and cultural equals of men in 1st-century Rome.

Therefore, the idea that the New Testament's opinion on marital submission was guided by culture is simply **ludicrous**. Those teachings didn't conform to the culture of the day. First-century Rome was **far** more egalitarian than most people know. Women were not required to obey – or even submit to – their husbands.

The idea of marital submission didn't conform to the Roman culture; it was radically counter-cultural.

While Rome was busy being *ruled by our women* – as Cato the Elder put it – the Bible promoted a far different arrangement.

Now we'll Turn our Attention to What the Bible says

To start with, we'll see what we can find regarding female leaders in the Bible.

Female Leaders in the Bible?

First, I want to clarify: by leader, I mean someone who was in a position of authority. I mean someone who "by their own authority and not by someone else's" was given the responsibility of commanding men.

I do **not** mean prophets.

Prophets have "delegated authority", meaning they have no authority of their own. Their authority comes from the fact that they relay God's words and His authority, not their own.

A prophet might simultaneously hold another office which does have earthly authority, but by itself the office/job of prophet holds no actual authority over other humans. This is also true of the various judges in the book of Judges. If a judge had more authority than explaining "thus saith the Lord", you would run into the complex problem of making them a defacto king which they were clearly not.

God was clear on his opinion of kings.

The Bible calls Samuel a judge!

1 Samuel 7:15

15 Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

Yet it's clear from his long life "much of which is recorded" that he had no authority besides "thus saith the Lord".

The word translated "judge" is the Hebrew word שָׁפֵט, (shaphat) which means "specifically decide controversy, discriminate between persons, in civil, political, domestic and religious questions". The people would come to the judge to inquire of the Lord, and then God would then decide the controversy through the mouth of the judge.

I make this distinction because there are several Old Testament prophets who were women.

They were used mightily by God to do wonderful things and I don't want to downplay their (significant) contributions. However, they're all **prophets** and **not** figures holding actual authority in the society.

Even Deborah the judge was only a prophet/judge, not an authority figure. The Bible never records her issuing a command that doesn't have "thus saith the Lord" attached. Her (prophetic) judgeship notwithstanding, she is never recorded as being given or exercising authority over a man.

Female Leaders in the Old Testament?

This will be a short section because there are **none**, unless you count the murderous queen Athaliah in 2 Kings 11, or possibly Jezebel depending on how you read it. Given that the Bible explicitly describes both women's behavior as "wicked", there's no reason to take their being in authority as laudable or an example of good behavior.

That's it.

That's the whole list.

There were several prophetesses (like *Miriam*, *Moses's sister*) and even the judge (*Deborah*). But there isn't recorded a single woman in a position of authority. (Remember, *Deborah got her authority from "thus saith the Lord"*, and didn't have any herself being "merely" a prophetess.)

Female Leaders in the New Testament

If you've read [my article on Church authority](#), you'll know I don't believe there's any actual authority in the Church as it's described in the NT. But even if I'm 100% wrong about that, there still aren't any women in authority.

Arguably, there aren't even any women in leadership roles.

Some say there are New Testament women who were in leadership roles. However, they are never shown exercising any authority and even a cursory examination will prove there's no Biblical support for them having authority. For those who want to read my analysis, click the button below to expand it.

[Click Here to expand my analysis](#)

Junia

Romans 16:7 (ESV)

7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. **They are well known to the apostles**, and they were in Christ before me.

This is the only passage in the Bible where Junia is mentioned. Some use this passage to say Junia was an apostle, and thus had authority. That's problematic for several reasons.

First, itâ€™s highly unlikely from the Greek. **There are two ways to read this passage in Greek:**

1. The first is to say that Junia (*and Andronicus*) were well known *to* the apostles. This would automatically exclude them from being apostles, and kill the argument instantly.
2. The second is to translate it well-known *among* the apostles. This might *seem* to make them apostles, but it certainly doesnâ€™t have to. Take the following sentence for example, *Mark Twain is well known among modern literature teachers.* Same construction, but itâ€™s obvious that Mark Twain isnâ€™t a modern literature teacher.

I would argue the Greek construction points to them being known *to* the apostles. I would translate it *well known by* the apostles, as thatâ€™s a more literally correct translation of the Greek conjunction *en* (en) used there. This is also the position of one of the most respected Greek scholars of our time. (*He literally wrote the book on advanced Greek grammar*) [You can read his analysis of the controversy here](#) (second heading).

Second, letâ€™s say that Junia was an apostle (*which is highly unlikely*). That still doesnâ€™t necessarily give her any authority in the Church. Letâ€™s look at the word translated *apostle* to see why. Itâ€™s the Greek word *apostolos* and it means:

652 *apostolos* (from **649** /*apostollos*, *to* commission, send forth) *properly, someone sent* (commissioned), **focusing back on the authority (commissioning) of the sender** (note the prefix, *apo*); *apostle*.

Apostle is a description of a role, function, or gift. **The word *apostle* is never not even once used to denote an office of authority in the church.** It appears on many lists of spiritual gifts, but never as a position of authority within the church. Properly, it refers to someone who is sent out, either on a mission or errand.

Apostles are never given authority nor are they given any special responsibility for caring for people (*beyond what all Christians are called to*). **A person might be an apostle in addition to having authority, but being an apostle does not confer authority by itself.** The only office of the Church that is ever given any authority is the *office* of *elder/overseer/pastor*. I prove these three are the same in [my article on church authority](#).

However, you can be an apostle and **not** be an elder, and we know this from Acts.

Acts 15:2-6

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to **the apostles and elders** concerning this issue.

3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and **the apostles and the elders**, and they reported all that God had done with them.

5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

6 **The apostles and the elders** came together to look into this matter.

So please follow:

- If Junia was an apostle (*highly unlikely from the Greek, but possible*) and
- If apostles have authority (*which is supported nowhere in the entire Bible*) then
- Junia ***might*** be considered a woman with authority.

But, that's a ***lot*** of big "ifs" to base a doctrine on.

Phoebe

Romans 16:1

NASB95: I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a **servant** of the church which is at Cenchrea;

NIV: I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a **deacon** of the church in Cenchreae.

Greek is at times extremely precise and at other times maddeningly imprecise. This time it's the latter.

The word translated "servant" is the Greek word *diakonos* ([diakonos](#)) and it simply means a servant. Of the 29 times it's used, 19 times it's translated "servant/servants", and 7 times it's translated "minister" (*as in ministering to someone as a servant, not in a pastoral/priestly sense*). The other three times it's translated "deacon". It's the latter translation that makes people think Phoebe had some kind of authority.

However, the translations which insist on "deacon" for Phoebe here don't consistently translate it that way elsewhere the word is used in the same way. Consider that in Colossians 1:7, Colossians 4:7, and Ephesians 6:21, the same Greek word is used in the same way (*as a greeting/commendation*) of men, yet they translate it "minister" or "servant" instead of "deacon". Thus translating it "deacon" for Phoebe in Romans 16:1 simply because she's a woman

savors strongly of ideological bias.

Priscilla

Acts 18:24-26

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.

25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;

26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. **But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.**

(Note: Aquila and Priscilla are also mentioned briefly in Romans 16 and 1 Corinthians 16, but nothing about authority)

Apparently, this verse proves that Priscilla had some kind of authority because she **and her husband** explained something to Apollos. Where's the authority? My 7-year-old niece has explained things to me, does that give her authority over me?

Even if we assume Aquila was almost silent and Priscilla did all the explaining, that there's still no reason to assume she had authority. *(And BTW, when my wife and I explain things to people, I tend to do most of the talking and she'll chime in occasionally with an insight. Even so, people will still say that we explain things to them.)*

We'll talk more about this passage in a future article in this series.

Female Pastors/Elders?

The Bible is 100% clear about the qualifications for the only two offices proscribed: elder and deacon.

1 Timothy 3:2

2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, **the husband of one wife**, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

Titus 1:5-6

5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and **appoint elders** in every city as I directed you,

6 namely, if any man is above reproach, **the husband of one wife**, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

Literally in the Greek, the phrase *husband of one wife* reads a *one-woman man*. The Greek word translated *husband* in that verse is *anōr* ([anōr](#)), and it means:

Strong's Concordance:

Definition: a man

Usage: **a male human being**; a man, **husband**.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon:

1. **with a reference to sex, and so to distinguish a man from a woman**; either a. as a **male** : Acts 8:12; Acts 17:12; 1 Timothy 2:12; or b. as a **husband**:
2. with a reference to age, and to distinguish an adult man from a boy:
3. universally, **any male person**, a man;

The Greek word used in the qualifications for elders/overseers means a man, as in an adult human male. Therefore, this specifically excludes females.

Therefore Biblically, elders/pastors/church leaders are supposed to be men. In a moment, we'll look at 1 Timothy 2:12, which specifically says women shouldn't have authority over men. Biblically, church leaders should be men. To do otherwise is to invalidate the word of God for the sake of your traditions.

Look at the verse again:

1 Timothy 3:2

2 An overseer, then, **must be** above reproach, **the husband of one wife**, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

Notice he **must be**. Not **can be**, not **it's** ideal if; the Bible says **must be**. That's about as clear as it gets.

Deacons are the same.

1 Timothy 3:12

12 Deacons must be **husbands of one wife**, and good managers of their children and their own households.

The same Greek word is used there as above. It means an adult male.

If you follow what the Bible says, then one of the requirements for church leadership is that they are male. I understand this may offend some people. However, I didn't write the book, God did. If you don't like what the scriptures say, please talk to the author.

Does "one flesh" mean equality?

Genesis 2:24

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Some people say this verse refers to the spiritual/mystical joining of two people's souls in marriage. They say this makes them essentially equal, which means no difference of authority. Unfortunately, they have the "mystical joining" part wrong.

Straight up, **this is a Hebrew euphemism for sex** and nothing more.

How do we know?

1 Corinthians 6 (*Note: in the NASB, New Testament phrases in ALL CAPS denote a quotation of the Old Testament.*)

16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a **prostitute** is one body with her? For He says, **"THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."**

So while I agree that marriage is special, that verse in Genesis is purely talking about sex. (*Unless you want to say that sleeping with a prostitute is the same as a man sleeping with his wife. If you think that, I suggest you read 1 Corinthians chapters 5-6, or my article: [Yes, The Bible CLEARLY Says Sex Outside of Marriage is Wrong.](#)*)

Mutual Submission vs. Wifely Submission

If you ask most feminists, the following verse overrides every other verse about submission in marriage. They say it means wives and husbands must submit to each other. Their opinion of marital submission is the idea that the wife and husband submit to each other. This argument is primarily “ though incorrectly “ supported using a passage in Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:21

21 and be subject to **one another** in the fear of Christ.

However, using this verse to say that husbands and wives must submit to each other is wrong for so, so many reasons. Let’s unpack them.

#1 Breaking the passage up incorrectly.

Many people want to attach verse 21 to verses 22-33 about marriage. But that’s not where it belongs. It’s the end of a multi-part, multi-verse sentence that begins in Verse 18. Paul links several participles (*verbal adjectives*) throughout these verses as things that believers should be doing on a continual basis.

The participles are highlighted in the quotation below, and we’re using a more literal translation than my usual NASB95 for this next quote. (Yes, it’s my own translation for those who don’t know. You can double check everything about it using what I teach in my article: [A Complete, 100% English Introduction to Koine Greek \(with Examples in English\)](#))

Ephesians 5:18-21 ([BOS Bible](#))

18. And don’t be drunk with wine, which is wasteful excess, but be filled by *the* Spirit:
19. **speaking** to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and **making music** to the Lord in your heart,
20. always **giving thanks** to our God and Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
21. **and men submitting** themselves to one another in reverent fear of the Anointed.

Notice the list of participles highlighted in red, indicating things that we should always be doing. Notice the flow, with the list of participles. This is a usual Pauline construction, and he does it elsewhere. **That means verse 21 should be attached to verses 18-20, not verses 22-33** because if you attach verse 21 to verses 22-33, you cut off the end of a sentence.

Now, I’m sure you noticed the word “men” in verse 21, which the NASB doesn’t have. That’s the next bit of context, and it’s probably the most important part about this verse for this discussion. The translation above more accurately conveys the genders used in Greek, which we’ll look at now.

#2 The Gender of the Greek words

Most Greek words have multiple forms. That is, the form of the word will change to provide a few specific bits of information about the word. (see my article: [A Complete, 100% English Introduction to Koine Greek \(with Examples in English\)](#) for more information) We need to look at nouns, adjectives, and participles, and here are three things the word form will convey:

1. The function of the word in the sentence
2. Whether the word is singular or plural
3. **The gender of the word**

(Yes, this is radically different from English. Again, you can check out [A Complete, 100% English Introduction to Koine Greek \(with Examples in English\)](#) for more information.)

Gender-wise, Greek words can be masculine, feminine, or neuter.

- Masculine words obviously refer to males/men (*and objects/actions*)
- Feminine words obviously refer to females/women (*and objects/actions*)
- Neuter words usually refer to something that is **neither** male nor female. (*Our English words "they" and "it" would be considered neuter words because they don't convey gender.*)

Now, here's a [link to Ephesians 5:21 in an interlinear Bible](#) so you can double-check what I'm about to say. Remember, I didn't write the Bible, and all complaints about its content should be addressed to the author (God).

Both the verb translated "be subject" and the pronoun translated "one another" are masculine words.

They aren't feminine words (*applying to women*) and they aren't neuter words (*applying to both/neither*). They are in the masculine form (*applying to men*). And please, double-check if you don't believe me.

Go ahead.

So again, we're looking at something that is addressed to men, as my translation conveys more accurately:

Ephesians 5:21 ([BOS Bible](#))

21. *and men* submitting themselves to one another in reverent fear of the Anointed.

The verse couldn't be clearer *in Greek*. Now, you could make an argument that the participle applies to both genders, but primarily men. However, **the fact that both the participle and the pronoun "one another" are masculine makes it abundantly clear that it's men submitting to other men.** Women aren't included in Ephesians 5:21, nor even mentioned.

They aren't.

Even if they were, the following verse makes it clear that women should submit to men, not the other way around.

#3 The following verse

As if to avoid misunderstanding, Paul adds the following (*with verse 21 included for context*):

Ephesians 5:21-22 ([BOS Bible](#))

21. *and* men submitting themselves to one another in reverent fear of the Anointed.
22. Wives [must submit themselves]⁽⁷³⁴⁾ to their own husbands as *they do* to the Lord,

The text in [brackets] indicates a textual variant, and here's the footnote I wrote for my translation. Please read the whole footnote carefully.

“must submit themselves” There's a textual variant in this verse centering on the verb for “submit”. In the source text for most modern translations, the word “submit” isn't present and is implied/carried over from verse 21 (“men submitting themselves”). However, **this omission is based on extremely scant textual evidence**. Very few manuscripts (*just: P46 B C1 Hier*) don't have an imperative verb (a *command*) here. Those manuscripts are early, but belong to a textual family known for omission. **Every other manuscript has an imperative verb (a command)** in either the 3rd person (“*must submit themselves*”) or 2nd person (“*must submit yourselves*”). The third person reading was chosen here because it has far more support from early manuscripts. Also, the endings for the middle and passive voice for this Greek verb are the same, so either could've been intended. In the middle voice, it contains reflexive force and thus has the connotation of voluntary obedience, **so “wives must obey” is more accurate to the intended sense** (*though less literal, despite this meaning being in the lexicons*). In the passive voice it could be translated “must be submitted”. The middle voice is more likely because the passive voice could indicate that their submission/obedience is being done to them (*i.e. they're being made to submit*).

As you can see, there's absolutely no hint of “mutual submission” in this verse. None whatsoever. We'll look at this passage a bit more further down.

Wrapping up “mutual submission” vs “wifely submission” in Ephesians 5

Even if I was completely wrong about the Greek, that still wouldn't change the meaning of the passage.

Even if it did say “submit to one another”, that still wouldn't change the basic meaning of the passage.

Why?

If you were helping me move and I said, “Everyone start loading the furniture; kids open the doors.” you would understand that the kids were an exception to “Everyone start loading the furniture.” The construction is the exact same here, only with the added clarity of gender-specific words.

The Bible never “not even once” says husbands should submit to wives; it says wives should submit to/obey their husbands 6+ times.

(And it says women should **not** have authority over men at least once, which we™ll look at in a moment.)

Galatians 3 “Neither male nor female”

This is another passage that some people use to say there is no authority in marriage.

Galatians 3:26-29

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For **all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, **there is neither male nor female**; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham™s descendants, heirs according to promise.

They say this verse makes everyone equal before God, and thus there is no authority in marriage.

However, context!

The opening of Galatians chapter 3 is one of my favorite passages in scripture. It speaks of how we received our salvation through grace and not by works. It says we are all equal in *salvation*; i.e. **we are all equally saved**. Please read the whole chapter in context. God™s grace saves everyone, regardless if they are Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; believers have all “clothed yourselves with Christ” equally.

We are all equally saved, which is the point of the passage.

I won™t quote the whole chapter, but I highly suggest you go read it. You™ll see that in context, Paul is talking about salvation; no one is “more saved” than anyone else.

Mutual submission is a common idea today, but it™s simply not Biblical.

Bible verses about authority/submission in marriage

Now we'll look at the other side, the idea of authority in marriage.

Genesis 3:16

Genesis 3:16

16 To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

Notice there are four specific parts to the curse on women:

1. I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth
2. In pain you will bring forth children
3. Your desire will be for your husband
4. He will rule over you

We'll look at each in turn.

#1 "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth conception"

The Hebrew word translated "childbirth" here is *heron*. It's only used two other times in the Bible and both times it clearly means "conception" not "childbirth". If you've ever wondered why a woman's period hurts, it's because of the curse.

#2 "In pain you will bring forth children"

Anyone who's ever seen/heard a birthing mother will understand this.

#3 "Your desire will be for your husband"

The Hebrew word translated "desire" is *teshuqah*. It's only used two other times in the Bible. Mountains of ink have been spilled trying to explain exactly what this word means, and I won't try to solve the debate here. It's used 3 times total. The other places are in Genesis 4:7 to indicate sin's "desire" for Cain, and in Song of Solomon 7:10 to indicate a man's "desire" for a woman.

Interestingly, there could be a very cause/effect relationship with #3 and #4, with a woman's desire for her husband being the direct result of him ruling over her. We talk more about this in [the 7th part of this marriage series](#), which explores what really attracts women to men, and men to women.

#4 "And he will rule over you"

I looked at the Hebrew words, and they mean exactly what they're translated. "Rule" is an accurate translation of the Hebrew word [\(mashal\)](#). It's translated as "rule/ruler/ruled" the vast majority of the times it's used. However "and I can't stress this point enough"

While #4 is definitely Descriptive, it's not (necessarily) Prescriptive.

God was not (necessarily) saying that man should rule women here " though it's said elsewhere " He was saying that man would rule over women.

There's a difference. Please don't read more into the text than is there. Saying that "rule" should happen might have been intended, but it's not clear enough " in this verse anyway " to say that. It's very clear in other verses, but not this one.

Further, let's take a look at a relevant passage in Acts. This is the high priest speaking, and he is giving advice to his fellow Council members about opposing the Christians.

Acts 5:38-39

38 So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for **if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown;**

39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.

Follow the logic.

If something is from men, it will fail. If something is from God and you fight it, you're effectively fighting God.

God said men would rule over women (or at least husbands over wives). If you set yourself against that decree, you might "be found fighting against God" Himself.

That's not a place I'd want to be.

Ephesians 5:22-24

We've already looked at this passage, but now we'll look at it a little deeper.

(Note: the BOS Bible correctly translates *Christ* as *the Anointed*, because that's what the Greek word *Χριστός*, *Christos* means. So *the Anointed* = *Christ*.)

Ephesians 5:22-24 (BOS Bible)

22. **Wives [must submit themselves] to their own husbands as they do to the Lord,**
23. because *the* husband is head of the wife, as the Anointed *is* the head of the church. (He *Himself* being the body's savior.)
24. But **just as the church submits itself to the Anointed, in this way also, wives should submit themselves to their husbands in everything.**

How many sermons have you heard and how many passages in the Bible are we told to obey God/Jesus? On the surface "according to this verse" wives are supposed to submit to their husbands the same way. On a deeper level, the meaning doesn't change.

This verse means exactly what it says.

Wives are to submit to their husbands just as they would to the Lord. (*The obvious exception is if a husband tells his wife to do something that's morally/biblically wrong; we'll talk more about the few exceptions later in the marriage series.*)

I want to point something out:

This is the strongest statement of human authority in the entire Bible.

I'm not aware of a stronger one.

Wives are told to submit to their husbands just as they would submit to the Lord. Think about that. God tells wives to obey their husbands just as they would obey God Himself. The obvious exception is if they tell her to do something wrong/immoral. But besides that, wives are commanded to treat their husband's commands as they would treat God's commands.

I once heard someone say wives should treat their husbands more like a boss at work. As you will see from the next verse that's not necessarily a bad analogy, but it's not quite strong enough. At a job, you listen to your boss even when you disagree or don't like it. You might respectfully suggest an alternative course of action "which is a good thing in marriage too" but if the boss overrides your objection, you listen to him.

God ordained a similar arrangement in marriage.

(*Now, women have a crucial role and shouldn't merely be servants to order around. See my article [How Crucial are Women to a Biblical Household? Very!](#) for more information.*)

In the following nine verses (*chapter 6:1-9*), God talks about children obeying their parents and servants obeying their masters. And remember, these were counter-cultural instructions because women were the full legal equals of men in the 1st century Roman Empire.

Notice too that a wife must submit to her husband in everything.

Thereâ€™s no exception clause in this passage. The only escape would be realizing she isnâ€™t required to do something that God commands not to be done (*sin*). So unless her husband orders her to sin, the wife must obey in **everything**.

No exceptions, except for sin!

â€ˆsort of.

The Bible does record one story where a woman is lauded for directly disobeying her husband. However, weâ€™ll cover this in more detail in [the article on a wifeâ€™s role in marriage](#). (*The passage is 1 Samuel 25, and the exception is when thereâ€™s a serious threat to life and limb; details in that article.*)

This might seem hard, but itâ€™s what God commanded, and for good reason. As we saw in [the first article of this series](#), a society literally falls apart when women abandon their assigned role. And God is serious about the penalty for doing so.

The Penalty for Wives Not Submitting

While Iâ€™ve heard the topic of authority in marriage taught, Iâ€™ve rarely heard the penalty for non-compliance taught along with it. In my opinion, thatâ€™s a deadly mistake on the teacherâ€™s part because the penalty itself is deadly. Not obeying Godâ€™s commands is â€ˆby definitionâ€™ rebellion and insubordination.

Here is Godâ€™s opinion of those sins: (*the prophet Samuel rebuking King Saul for disobeying Godâ€™s command*)

1 Samuel 15:23

23 â€œFor **rebellion** is as the sin of **divination**, And **insubordination** is as iniquity and **idolatry**. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.â€

Divination is a form of witchcraft/sorcery â€ˆboth of which are grievous sinsâ€™ and idolatry is obviously a most grievous sin. God says rebellion and insubordination are like divination and idolatry, thus knowing how God punishes those sins gives us an idea of how He might punish rebellion and insubordination. Hereâ€™s what God says about those who practice such things.

Revelation 21:8

8 **But for** the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and sexually immoral persons, and **sorcerers**, and **idolaters**, and all liars, **their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**â€

The sins of rebellion and insubordination are as serious as sorcery and idolatry, which are deserving of the lake of fire. God commanded women to obey their husbands just as they obey God. A woman who isn't doing that "a woman disobeying God Himself by disobeying her husband" is engaging in rebellion and insubordination by definition. (*Unless of course one of the two exceptions above applies*)

To any women reading this, if it sounds like I'm threatening that you'll end up in the lake of fire if you don't obey your husband, I'm not!

but God might be.

It's not 100% guaranteed, but it's certainly possible. Even a cursory reading of the Bible will reveal God's opinion of blatant, defiant rebellion. He doesn't tolerate it. Period. Rebellion incurs God's wrath, and that is a bad idea (*to put it mildly*).

Now, the good news is that you can repent. To any women reading this who haven't been obeying their husbands: repent and change your ways and God will forgive you. As it is written:

1 John 1:9

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Ladies: now you know the serious consequences of rebellion. Thankfully, God is more than happy to forgive if you repent and change your ways. ðŸ™,

1 Peter 3:1-6

This passage begins with the phrase "in the same way". Therefore, to get some context we'll look at the preceding verses to see what Peter was talking about.

1 Peter 2:18-20

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.

19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

Wives should be submissive "in the same way" that servants are to masters. Like we saw before, the boss/employee relationship is a modern equivalent. With that in mind, let's look at the passage.

1 Peter 3:1-6

1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

3 Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;

4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands;

6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

Again, I don't see a meaning other than the plain obvious one. It starts with "in the same way" after talking about how Christians should obey the government and servants should obey their masters. He goes further by giving Sarah as a good example because she obeyed Abraham and called him lord.

(A good parallel to Ephesians, because the church calls Jesus Lord and obeys Him as one; so also Sarah called Abraham lord and obeyed him.)

Sounds pretty clear.

Colossians 3:18

While the preceding verses don't seem to lean on this passage, the following verses do.

Colossians 3:18-22

18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.

22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Everything we saw about the word *submit* in Ephesians is applicable here because it's the same word.

Again, the command for wives to submit to their husbands is in the middle of a fairly self-explanatory list of admonitions. Each one is about obeying someone in authority over you, and wives submitting to husbands is on the list.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Ah, the infamous *head coverings* passage which isn't actually about *head coverings* if you look at it in Greek. This is the Bible's most complete treatise on marital authority. I have a whole article entitled [Does 1 Corinthians 11 Require Women To Wear Head Coverings](#).

Further, we've already covered the most significant portion of this passage in the earlier article on [the why of submission in marriage](#). However, it's so important that it's worth looking at in brief (though again you'll get far more information in [the article dedicated to head coverings](#)).

1 Corinthians 11:9-10

9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

10 Therefore **the woman ought to have authority on her head**, because of the angels.

(Note: many translations add a symbol of authority in front of the word authority. However, it has no basis in the Greek, and is added for "ahem" clarity. The NASB indicates this by italicizing it. You can double check me on this using [an interlinear Bible](#).)

The word *ought* that I've underlined is the Greek word *opheilō* ([opheilō](#)). *Ought* isn't a *bad* translation per se, but doesn't capture the full scope of the Greek. Here's the definition, copy/pasted from the lexicon (*emphasis added*).

3784 *opheilō* (a primitive verb, NAS dictionary) "to owe, be *indebted*, i.e. obliged to rectify a debt (*ought*).

3784 /*opheilō* (*owe*) refers to being ***morally obligated*** (or *legally required*) to meet an *obligation*, i.e. ***to pay off a legitimate debt***.

3784 (*opheilō*) originally belonged to the *legal* sphere; it expressed initially one's legal and economic, and then later ***one's moral, duties and responsibilities to the gods and to men, or to their sacrosanct regulations***. . . . *opheilō* expresses human and ethical responsibility in the NT (*DNTT*, 2, 662.663).]

This word is used in the parable in Mathew 18:21-35, where the king forgives his slave who owes him a ton of money. Then the slave beats up another slave who owes him a small sum of money. Same word, indicating a legitimate debt that needs to be paid.

Hereâ€™s the verse again with that understanding.

1 Corinthians 11:9-10

9 for indeed man was not created for the womanâ€™s sake, but woman for the manâ€™s sake.

10 Therefore the woman **is morally obligated** to have authority on her head, because of the angels.

The Bible says women are **â€œmorally obligatedâ€** to be under authority. Paul also directly addresses those who might disagree.

1 Corinthians 11:16

16 But if one is inclined to be contentious, **we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.**

According to scripture, this was the practice in the entire first century Church.

(Note: many egalitarian Christians argue that the word **â€œheadâ€** in this passage (κεφαλή , or **â€œkephalâ€** in English) means **â€œsourceâ€**, not **â€œauthorityâ€**. This objection is answered in my article on if [1 Corinthians is talking about head coverings](#).)

1 Timothy 2:11-14

This passage speaks of two things: women being quiet, and the issue of authority.

1 Timothy 2:11-14

11 A woman must **quietly** receive instruction with entire submissiveness.

12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain **quiet**.

13 For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.

14 And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

The word translated “quietly/quiet” in both verses is the Greek word $\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\sigma\iota\alpha$ ([hÃ©suchia](#)) and it means:

2271 hÃ©syxÃ©a (from hÃ©syxos, “quiet, stillness”) “**quietness, implying calm**; for the believer, 2271 (hÃ©syxÃ©a) is used of their God-produced calm which includes an inner tranquility that supports appropriate action. **This term does not mean speechlessness**, which is more directly indicated by 4602 (sigá, —) (J. Thayer). See 2272 (hÃ©syxios).

The second sentence that I highlighted in red isn’t always correct, and you can see that from its usage elsewhere:

Acts 22:1-2

1 “Brothers and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you.”

2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more **quiet (hÃ©syxÃ©a)**; and he said,

As you can see, hÃ©syxÃ©a can mean silent, but it doesn’t have to mean silent. Because the definition is a touch unclear, we’ll ignore this word for now because there’s another word/verse that is clear. (*We’ll look at when we looked at 1 Corinthians 14 further on.*)

However, while this passage is a little unclear on women being “quiet” vs “silent”, fortunately, the teaching on authority is quite clear.

1 Timothy 2:12-13

12 But I **do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man**, but to remain quiet.

13 For it was **Adam who was first created, and then Eve.**

If there is a clearer passage about whether women can teach or be in church leadership, I haven’t found it. The **Greek word used there above** is $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\kappa\iota\tau\alpha\iota$ ([authenteÃ©](#)). This is the only place it’s used in the Bible and it means:

831 autÃ©ntea (from 846 /autÃ©s, “self” and entea, “arms, armor”) “properly, to **unilaterally take up arms**, i.e. **acting as an autocrat**” literally, **self-appointed (acting without submission)**.

Thayer’s Greek lexicon says:

a. according to earlier usage, one who with his own hand kills either others or himself.

b. in later Greek writings **one who does a thing himself the author** (ἑαυτῶν ἑαυτῶν, Polybius 23, 14, 2, etc.); **one who acts on his own authority, autocratic**, equivalent to ἑαυτῶν ἑαυτῶν an absolute master; cf. Lobeck ad Phryn., p. 120 (also as above; cf. Winer's Grammar, Å§ 2, 1 c.)); **to govern one, exercise dominion over one**: ἑαυτῶν ἑαυτῶν, 1 Timothy 2:12.

The word literally means to act under one's own authority by rebelling against a legitimate authority (her husband).

Women aren't supposed to do that.

Further, Paul gives a reason for this and it's because of the created order.

Adam was created first, then God created Eve *from* Adam, and *for* Adam. Remember in [the previous article in this series](#) we saw in 1 Corinthians 11 that women were created *for man*, and *from man*. This "as we've already discussed" is part of the reason for authority in marriage.

As 1 Corinthians 11:9 says, man wasn't created for woman, but woman was created for man. Thus from a created order standpoint woman has a moral obligation to be under man's authority because she was created for that role, and thus is morally obligated to fulfill the role God gave her. That's what Paul declares based upon the creation in the Garden.

However, it's impossible for woman to pay her moral obligation to remain under authority if she's in authority.

Remember, part of the reason God created women was to help men. (*Genesis 2, starting at verse 18. We talked about this in [the "Why" of submission in marriage.](#)*) If women are in authority then men are helping women, not the other way around.

Putting women in authority actually makes it impossible for them to fulfill one of their God-given roles (helping men).

Further, as we also saw in the "Why" of Submission, wives imitate God by imitating Christ's submission to the Father in their submission to their husbands. Putting women/wives in authority robs them of the ability to do this, thus stripping them of one important opportunity to bear the image of God.

Does it make sense to put someone in a position that makes it impossible for them to do what God created them to do?

1 Corinthians 14:34-38

This passage starts in verse 26, with Paul describing what should happen when you assemble. He goes on to describe how things should be done orderly, and then comes this part:

1 Corinthians 14:33-34

33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, **as in all the churches of the saints.**

34 The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

Notice the red section, because there's a disagreement as to which clause it belongs to. You can validly make it part of the phrase "for God is not a God of confusion but of peace" in verse 33, or part of "The women are to keep silent in the churches" in verse 34.

Remember that in the original manuscripts, there was no punctuation.

None whatsoever.

The sentence endings must be supplied by the translators. They're usually obvious, but not always. The ESV "despite how badly it mangles many passages" actually puts the sentence break in a much more sensible place; (*for more on translation and why I don't like or trust the ESV, see [my article on Bible translation](#).*)

1 Corinthians 14:33-34 (ESV)

33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says.

Notice they break the sentence up differently, and it makes *far* more sense this way. Further, there's context earlier in 1 Corinthians to support this sentence structure. The following verse caps off the "head coverings" passage, which isn't really about "head coverings", but instead is the Bible's most complete treatise on authority between the sexes. ([article on that passage](#))

1 Corinthians 11:16

16 But if one is inclined to be contentious, **we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.**

Notice the parallel.

You have "nor have the churches of God" speaking about authority in chapter 11, and "As in all the churches of the saints" in chapter 14. They are directly parallel.

With that in mind, let's now look at verses 33b to 35.

1 Corinthians 14:33b-35

33b As in all the churches of the saints,

34 the women are to **keep silent** in the churches; for they are not permitted to **speak**, but are to **subject themselves**, just as the Law also says.

35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is **improper for a woman to speak in church**.

The Greek word for "subject themselves" is the exact same word used in Ephesians 5:22. It's the Greek word *ὑποτάσσει* ([hupotassÃ³](#)) and it means to submit in the sense of obey, just as the lexicon says. Unsurprisingly, the word used to indicate a wife must "submit" to her husband is also used to indicate that all things submit to Christ, for example in chapter 15:

1 Corinthians 15:27-28

27 For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS **IN SUBJECTION** UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are **put in subjection**," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things **in subjection** to Him.

28 When all things **are subjected** to Him, then the Son Himself also **will be subjected** to the One who **subjected** all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

As Ephesians 5:22-24 says, wives should submit (*be in subjection*) to their husband just as everything else is to Christ, and Christ to the Father. (*This connection is also explicit in 1 Cor 11:3*)

But what about women not speaking?

I used to think this passage in 1 Cor 14 meant that women must simply "keep it down" and not be disruptive. (*And an earlier version of this article reflected that.*) However, it was pretty clear that's not the case when I looked at it thoroughly and without my modern "cultural blinders".

The word translated "silent" is the Greek word *σιγή* ([sigaÃ³](#)), and it does mean "silent". It's used only 10 times in the New Testament, and you can look at all of them [here](#). It does mean "silent", as in "not uttering a word".

No joke.

The word translated "speak" is the Greek word *λαλέω* ([laleÃ³](#)). It's used almost 300 times in the New Testament, and every time it means simply "to speak". It's usually translated as: speak, tell, say, etc. It's used to refer to essentially all forms of speech/talking.

Silent does mean "silent" here.

(*Note: I will moderate this only slightly by saying I personally think this "silent" idea refers to speaking during the assembly of the church. That is, a woman "having the floor" as they say. But if everyone is singing, I don't see a reason to tell the women that they can't sing along. However, that is my own personal opinion. If a church wished to bar them from singing as well, that would be perfectly legitimate.*)

It's shameful for women to speak in church?

In verse 35, NASB95 says it is improper for women to speak in church. That translation doesn't capture the full force of the Greek there. However, the NKJV does:

1 Corinthians 14:35 (NKJV)

35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for **it is shameful for women to speak in church.**

The Greek word there is *aischros*, and it means exactly what the NKJV translated it to mean: *shameful*, though you could also translate it *disgraceful*.

Definition: shameful

Usage: base, disgraceful.

It comes from a verb that means *to put to shame*, or *to make ashamed*. The NKJV perfectly translates this verse as: *it is shameful for women to speak in church*.

Lest you think this is merely Paul's opinion, he explicitly says it's not. Paul seemed to know this would be contentious because he included verse 37 to indicate where this command came from:

1 Corinthians 14:33b-37

33b As in all the churches of the saints,

34 the women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.

35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; **for it is improper shameful for a woman to speak in church.**

36 Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

37 **If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment**

(Note: I've left off the last verse (38) in this section, but we'll get to it in a moment)

Notice that Paul explicitly says that *the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment*. This isn't from Paul, it's from God.

This is a direct command from God.

Now, you can say that “the things” Paul was writing about go back to verse 26 regarding order when the church assembles. However, you can’t say they *don’t* include verses 33b-35 about women “submitting themselves” and being silent when the church meets “” because those are the commands immediately preceding this “commandment” verse.

Now, I realize that forbidding women to speak in a church meeting is **radically** counter-cultural.

It might not even make much sense now. However, this is “the Lord’s commandment”, meaning we need to obey even when “” perhaps especially when “” we don’t understand why. As it is written, His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts.

Further, this command is actually in keeping with something that God does throughout the Bible “” which we’ll look at extensively in the next article.

A Final Thought on This Passage

Paul “” being inspired by God Himself “” added a penalty to those who don’t obey the commands that God Himself gave.

1 Corinthians 14:37-38

37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.

38 But if anyone does not **recognize** this, he is not **recognized**.

The Greek word there is ἀγνοῦμαι (agnoeÅ³) and it means:

I do not know, am ignorant of (a person, thing, or fact), sometimes with the idea of **willful** ignorance.

The word means to “not know” either a person or thing/fact. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon “” which is a more complete resource in most cases “” has an additional meaning:

1. to be ignorant, not to know
2. not to understand
3. to err, sin through mistake

Now, while the typical translation of this verse is unclear, the commentary and Greek aren’t. The word literally means to “not know” in the active voice, and thus in the passive voice it means to “not be known”. Commentaries almost universally take this position, probably because it’s an obvious one from the Greek.

One translation renders verse 38 as: “But if someone won’t know *this*, he isn’t known”, which I think is ideal.

That begs the question: who isn't he known by? Who doesn't know him?

Well, considering that he would be directly violating the command of God, there's at least one obvious answer. I'm not saying it's the right one, but commentators came to the same conclusion!

Matthew 7:22-23

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

I also highlighted the word 'lawlessness' because it's relevant. It's the Greek word *ἀνομία* ([anomia](#)), and it means:

458 *anomía* (from 1 /A 'not' and 3551 /*nómos*, 'law') "properly, without law; **lawlessness; the utter disregard for God's law (His written and living Word).**

458 /*anomía* ('lawlessness') includes the *end-impact* of *law breaking* i.e. its negative influence on a person's *soul* (*status* before God).

Thayer adds this nuance:

ἀνομία, ἀνομία, ἀνομία, ἀνομία, ἀνομία, ἀνομία, ἀνομία, ἀνομία, ἀνομία, ἀνομία;

1. properly, the condition of **one without law** "either because ignorant of it, or because violating it.

I'm not saying this is what Paul is referring to, but it's certainly possible, I might even argue likely. Others certainly have. So yes, ignoring God's commands about submission might mean that He doesn't know you. Yes, that's serious and clearly a salvation issue if I'm right.

It's serious.

(Note: There's a textual variant in verse 38 where the second instance of the word is an imperative; a command. So it would go from 'he isn't known' to 'let him not be known'.

There's a decent chance that "if this variant were original" it would refer to church discipline. That is, kicking the man out of the church for blatantly violating the command of God.)

One last thing: Wives aren't told to respect their husbands, they're told to revere them

1 Peter 3:1-2

1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

2 as they observe your chaste and **respectful** behavior.

The word translated "respectful" in that verse is the Greek word $\phi\omicron\beta\omicron\varsigma$ ([phobos](#)). It has three primary meanings:

1. Fear (as in *lâ€™m scared of something*)
2. A sense of awe
3. **Reverence**

The original KJV recognizes this, correctly translating it "reverence" in this verse. Ephesians reflects the same:

Ephesians 5:33

33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and **the wife must** see to it that she **respects** (*phobe³*) her husband.

The Greek word translated "respect" in the Ephesians verse above is $\phi\omicron\beta\omicron\varsigma$ ([phobe³](#)). It's the verb form of the word phobos used in 1 Peter 3 (*which we just looked at*). According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, *phobe³* has three primary meanings.

1. to be put to flight, to flee (Homer)
2. to fear, be afraid; the Sept. very often for $\chi\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$; absolutely to be struck with fear, to be seized with alarm
3. **to reverence, venerate, to treat with deference or reverential obedience**

I understand that requiring wives to "revere" their husbands seems laughable in today's society. Please don't forget it was equally laughable in 1st century Rome. God still saw fit to give these commands, proving that they transcend culture. You can always choose to disobey because we all have free will!

but I wouldn't recommend it.

We've already seen at least two things that indicate that submission in marriage might be a salvation issue.

Conclusion

Wives are told to submit to their husbands many times in the New Testament. Yet never once are husbands told to submit to their wives. Men are called to honor their wives (*and God won't listen to your prayers if you don't*), but they are never told to obey, submit, or revere them. Ever. Not even once. Further, in at least one passage the Bible is clear that women shouldn't have authority over men.

Further, there is the moral obligation for women to be under authority.

The Bible is a very patriarchal book.

It doesn't matter how you slice it, an honest look makes it clear that wives should submit to their husbands. Yes, that means obeying them. (*Though of course women aren't required to follow men into sin, and this doesn't apply to men and women in general; only wives to husbands and "as we see in the next article " never-married daughters to fathers)* Ignoring this prescription has drastic consequences for any society, and I would guess that's by God's design.

When women are the full legal equals of men, a society implodes every time. ([Please see the first article in this series for an explanation and proof](#))

If you don't like this, you'll need to complain to God because I can't change it. As we've seen, we can either follow God's plan or watch our disobedience rip society apart. As far as I'm aware, there is no third option.

In the next article in this series, we'll answer the question: [Does God View Women as the \(Social/Political\) Equals of Men?](#) That will give you an excellent "bird's eye" perspective on how God thinks a society should be arranged, especially in the relationship between men and women.

(You'll also learn which sin condemned mankind to struggle with sin. Biblically, it wasn't Eve eating the fruit. Further, Adam eating the fruit was his second sin, not his first according to God.)

Marriage Series Index:

- a. [How Crucial are Women to a Biblical Household? Very!](#) (*This article was written later, but serves as an excellent, balanced intro to gender roles in marriage. I highly recommend reading this article before the others.*)
1. [How Getting Marriage 'Wrong' Destroyed Every Great Civilization in World History](#)
2. [Gender Differences and the Biology of leadership](#)
3. [The "Why" Behind God Telling Wives to Submit to their Husbands in Marriage](#)
 - a. [Does 1 Corinthians 11 Require Women To Wear "Head Coverings"](#)
4. [The Bible on Authority & Submission in Marriage](#)
5. [Does God View Women as the \(Social/Political\) Equals of Men?](#)
6. [Biblically, What's the Role of Women in Society and Marriage?](#)
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8. [Biblically, What's the Role of Men in Society and Marriage? \(still writing it...\)](#)
9. [Is Polygamy \(Polygyny\) Biblical? Does God Allow it?](#)
10. Follow up articles coming...

- Appendix A: [Biblical Reasons for Divorce, When Remarriage is Allowed, and How Adultery Figures In](#)