



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: Eph. 5:15-22*

“Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise— 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil. 17 So don’t be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. 18 And don’t get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living, but be filled by the Spirit: 19 speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs, singing & making music with your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of Christ. 22 Wives, (submit) to your husbands as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:15-22 CSB)

### I. Five Signs of the Spirit’s Influence (Eph. 5:18-21)

A. Speaking/Teaching (Eph. 5:19a; Col. 3:16)

B. Singing (Eph. 5:19b)

C. Making Music (Eph. 5:19b)

D. Giving thanks (Eph. 5:20)

E. “Submitting” (Eph. 5:21)—what does ‘submit’ mean here?

- “In the Greek text Eph. 5:21 is the last clause in the long...sentence...which describes...a person who is ‘filled with the Spirit.’ The last mark of the Spirit’s fullness [submission]...is a loss of pride & self-will that leads a person to humbly serve others...This [is] Spirit-empowered submission.” [Tim Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, p. 50]
- “Mutual submission...is a general requirement for...all who are in Christ & it’s proof of the Spirit’s fullness”—M. Gorman

- ‘Submitting,’ Gk. “*Hypotassō*” is used in a list of participles describing how one fulfills the imperative to ‘be filled with the Spirit’ (Eph. 5:18-21)...All these ideas [participles] revolve around working together, mutuality, interaction, & unity in speech in a community...The focus seems to be on the togetherness & mutual dependence that comes from unifying in purpose to praise God.” [Joel S. Brown, *An Inter-textual Perspective on the Semantics of Hypotasso*, pp. 31-32]
- Submitting: “It is a phrase *too often neglected*...It names a test of spirituality which Christians too seldom apply...Many persons feel that shouts of ‘hallelujah’ & the utterance of...‘unknown tongues’ are proofs of being ‘filled with the Spirit.’... *Submission* to our fellow Christians...[is an] *unmistakable proof of the Spirit’s power.*” [Charles Erdman, *Eph.*, p. 106]

## II. Submission – “Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.” (Eph. 5:21 CSB. etc.)

- “Place yourselves under each other’s authority out of respect for Christ.” (GW)
- “Be willing to obey each other. Do this because you respect Christ.” (ICB)
- “Honor Christ and put others first.” (CEV); “Be willing to serve each other out of respect for Christ.” (ERV)
- “Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another.” (Message)
- “Give way to each other because you respect Christ.” (WE)

A. The ‘hinge’ between what came before and what follows i.e., between “*Be filled by the Spirit*” (Eph. 5:18) and “Household relations” (wife/husband; kids/parents; slaves/masters, Eph. 5:22-6:9)

- “*Eph. 5:21 functions as a hinge* which links the previous to the succeeding...The [‘household codes’ Eph. 5:22-6:9] are subsumed under ‘being submissive to one another’ [Eph. 5:21] which results from being ‘filled with the Spirit’ [Eph. 5:18].” [Stanley N. Helton, “*Eph. 5:21: Longer Translation Note*,” *Restoration Quarterly*, V. 40, #1 (2006) p. 40]
- “Although there is an obvious connection between Eph. 5:21 & 22, *Eph. 5:21 can just as easily function as a hinge between the two sections*. The thought of Eph. 5:15-21 flows right into Eph. 5:22-6:9. This section on the (extended) family...is the only major section in...Ephesians to begin without a conjunction...[so,]the instruction in the former section is meant to be ‘ringing in the [hearers’] ears’...as they turn to the issue of the family.” [D Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, p 651]

B. General Ethical Directives framed by Mutual Submission (Eph. 4:2; 5:21)

- “When the Spirit takes up residence in God’s people they...stop thinking only about themselves [&]...are encouraged to *submit to one another*. The [general] ethical section of this letter is *framed by this theme [mutual submission]*. In Eph. 4:2] Paul commanded the Ephesians to [conduct themselves] ‘with all humility & gentleness, with patience, bearing *with one another* in love.’ A church characterized by the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3) must be dominated by humble Christians who *defer to one another’s interests & value others above themselves.*” [Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians*, p. ]

C. Greek: ‘Hypotassomai’ or ‘Hypotassomai’ (vb.)– “*to set or place yourself under another*”

1. Is “submission” the best translation of ‘*hypotasso*’?

– “The Biblical...concept of *hypotasso* involves a *voluntary attitude* towards those who legitimately exercise authority over, or responsibility for, an individual...This is *significantly*

*different* from the cultural baggage of the English term *submit*, which seems to suggest the *surrender of oneself directly to the control of another*. It is not hard to see how translating *hypotasso* as the English concept of submission can create... negative reactions... Without even realizing it, readers interpret the text... with their own concepts of the importance of freedom & independence.” [David B. Bell, “*Submission & Its Conflicting Value Systems*,” in J. Gillespie (ed.) *Translating Values*, pp. 92-93]

– The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘submit’ as to ‘accept or yield to a superior force or to the authority or will of another person’... Based on “the English word ‘submit’... one tends to read ‘submitting to each other’ [Eph. 5:21] as giving authority to each other or giving up one’s will to another person... [However,] this idea of *attributing authority to another person in a hierarchy*, rather than to God, *is oppositional to the rest of the language & teaching within Ephesians*.” [Joel S. Brown, *An Inter-textual Perspective on the Semantics of Hypotasso*, p. 31]

– “*Hypotass?* definitely... has to do with believers’ connections & relationships to one another. However, limiting [its meaning to] ‘submission to other people’ seems to belittle, & even ignore, the implicit ideas that... together we are... to bring honor, glory, & praise [to] Christ.” [Joel S. Brown, *Inter-textual Perspective on... Hypotass?*, (2021) p. 36]

2. Some like the hierarchical notion of authority/submission, because it plays into their narrative

– “Submission in the NT (expressed by the word *hypotasso*) is *always submission to an authority*, and, therefore, the idea of obedience to authority seems inherent in this type of submission.”—John Piper & Wayne Grudem

– “Eph. 5:21... *does not teach mutual submission at all*, but rather teaches that *we should all be subject to those whom God has put in authority over us*—... husbands, parents, or employers.... Eph. 5:21 would be paraphrased, ‘being subject to one another (that is, to some others), in the fear of Christ.’ The argument is [based on] the word *hypotasso* itself... [which] *always implies a relationship of submission to an authority*.”—J. Piper & W. Grudem

– “Absolute [universal?] ‘mutual submission’ is popular today... But what Paul meant by submitting ‘to one another’ is explained through the particular examples of family relations (Eph. 5:22-6:4), so it is likely... ‘submitting to one another’ means ‘submitting to others *according to the authority & order established by God*,’ as reflected in the examples that Paul gives in the following verses [Eph. 5:22-6:4].” [S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, ESV Study Bible, p. 2271]

– Note: This view seems to deny the straight-forward reading of the text where both ‘*speaking to one another*’ (5:19a) & ‘*submitting to one another*’ (5:21) modify ‘be filled with the Spirit’ (5:18b) and apply equally to all believers. The phrase ‘*one another*’ occurs six times in Eph. (4:2, 25, 32; 5:19, 21) & applies universally to believers in the church.

3. “*Hypotasso* always implies a relationship of submission to an authority.”—J. Piper & W. Grudem

– “There is a tendency to assert that a word... like ???????? [*hypotasso*]... must mean exactly what it means in other passages or texts—while ignoring contextual factors... & other critical points of grammar. [Wayne] Grudem’s essays are perhaps the paragon of this approach. At first glance his position... appears convincing. However, there are *many examples where this is not the case*. In fact, a variety of... meanings for this word can be found.” [Karl L. Armstrong, “Meaning of ???????? [*hypotasso*] in Eph. 5:21-33,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity & Judaism*, V. 13, p. 155]

4. Others see submission in its Ephesian context (i.e., in the church, mutuality between all believers)

– In Eph. 5:21 “*allelon* [‘one another,’ is]...reciprocal...[which] ‘expresses a mutual relationship... among two or more members of a group’. Thus, the mutuality of...the verb *hypotasso* [‘submitting’]...evinces an *unfolding, ongoing, reciprocal activity* between subjects...”–Karl Armstrong

– “That this verb [*hypotasso*] appears with a reciprocal pronoun [‘*one another,*’] is very significant...The...pronoun [‘*one another*’] seems to *clash with the concept* behind the English terms of ‘*submission or subjection*’.”–David Bell

5. ‘*One another*’ in Eph 4:2, 25, 32; 5:19, 21 Ask: Do these statements (below) apply to all believers, or some subset?

a. “walk worthy...with all humility & gentleness, with patience, bearing with *one another* in love” (Eph. 4:1-2)

b. “...Speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of *one another.*” (Eph. 4:25 cf. Rom. 12:5)

c. “Be kind & compassionate to one another, forgiving *one another*, just as God also forgave you” (Eph. 4:32)

d. “Be filled with the Spirit speaking to *one another* in psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs...” (Eph. 5:18-19)

e. “Be filled with the Spirit...submitting to *one another* in the fear of Christ.” (Eph. 5:18, 21)

– If ‘*one another*’ in a. to d. (above) applies to all believers, that suggests it *also applies to all* in e. ‘submitting...’

– ‘*One another*’ characterizes Christ’s body: “we...are one body...& individually members of *one another.*” (Rom. 12:5)

6. “‘*One another*’ includes both leaders & followers—all mutually submit

– “Some [e.g. W. Grudem] argue [Eph. 5:21] is not actually mutual submission, but rather the submission of believers to those [leaders] whom God placed in authority over them...[So,] ‘one another’ [means] the whole church is involved in the submission to authority. [They allege this] reflects the [essential] Godhead in which the Son is [eternally] subordinate to the Father...There is a hierarchical order with which submission functions...However, the entire context of Eph. 5:18-21...concerns the whole church equally, implying the leaders *as well as the followers are intended* in Eph. 5:21, that is, *the leaders as part of the ‘one another’ are also to submit.*” [G. R. Osborne, Eph., p. ]

D. “In the fear of Christ” or “out of respect for Christ” (Eph. 5:21b)

- “Mutual submission within the broader [church] must be characterized by [‘in’] the fear of Christ”–Karl Armstrong
- “The true sense of ‘the fear of the Lord’ in the OT implies relationship...bowing before [God] out of amazement at his glory and beauty.” [Tim Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, p. 68]
- “A believer’s obedience to Christ will lead them to submit to one another.” [Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians*, p. 187]

### III. Mutual Submission without Hierarchy – “defer to one another” (Eph. 5:21) “serve one another” (Gal. 5:13)

#### A. Reciprocal Deference vs. Top-down Hierarchy

- “Brothers...*serve* [or ‘*be slaves to*’] one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in...‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Gal. 5:13-14) “This...adjusts an inherently hierarchical relationship (slavery)...by making it reciprocal...”
- ‘*One another*’ turns a one-way relationship of power & superiority into a mutual relationship of reciprocal deference, where each seeks to promote the interests of the other. Thus, submission ...[is] such that service & honor are continually exchanged.” [John M. G. Barclay, *Paul & the Power of Grace*, p. 70]

#### B. Mutual Submission without Hierarchy

- “The verb *hypotassomai* means to *voluntarily* place oneself under...a person or entity. Between Christians...there is to be a reciprocal arrangement whereby [all] are considerate & live to meet the needs of the other[s]. Here each member of the body of Christ...accepts a subordinate role in relation to all others. The result is a diminishing of hierarchical roles among members of the community.” [Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians*, p. ]

### IV. The Abuse, Challenge, Freedom & Limit of Submission

#### A. Abuse

- “Of all...‘Spiritual Disciplines’ [i.e., practices: e.g. prayer, fasting], none has been more abused than the Discipline of *submission*. Somehow the human species has an extraordinary knack for taking the best teaching & turning it to the worst ends. Nothing can put people into bondage like religion, and nothing in religion has done more to *manipulate & destroy* people than a *deficient teaching on submission*.” [Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 110]
- Submission “*Hypotasso*, [in the middle voice] is...reflexive...[which] highlights the concept that it is therefore *voluntary*. The NT concept of *hypotasso* is *not something which is enforced by power*, but rather encouraged...” [David B. Bell, “*Submission & Its Conflicting Value Systems: A Case Study*,” in J. Gillespie (ed.) *Translating Values*, p. 90]

B. Jesus’ Challenge: “If anyone wants to follow...me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, & follow me.” (Mk. 8:34)

- “Jesus’ teaching on *self-denial* is the only thing that will bring genuine self-fulfillment and self-actualization... Self-denial is simply a way of coming to understand that *we do not have to have our way*. Our happiness is not dependent upon getting what we want.” [Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 113]
- “...if we desire that God be among us, we must *sometimes set aside our own will* (though it seem good) so that we may have love and peace with others” [Thomas À Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, p. 40 (Latin original: 1418–1427)]
- “An old habit is not easily broken, and no man will readily be moved from his own will; but if you cling more to your own will or to your own reason than to the humble obedience of Jesus Christ, it will be long before you are a man illumined by grace” [Thomas À Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, p. 48 (Latin original: 1418–1427)].

### C. Freedom

- “The purpose of the Disciplines is freedom. Our aim is the freedom, not the Discipline. The moment we make the Discipline our central focus we will turn it into law & lose the corresponding freedom...Let us...center on Christ & view Spiritual Disciplines as a way of drawing us closer to His heart.” [Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, pp. 110-111]
- “What freedom corresponds to submission? It is *the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way*...The real issue is the spirit of consideration & respect we have for each another...In submission *we are at last free to value other people*.” [Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, pp. 111-112]

### D. Limits

- “The limits of...submission are at the point at which it becomes *destructive*. It then becomes a denial of the law of love...and it is an affront to genuine, biblical submission.” [Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 120]
1. Abusive relationships are *not* mutual submission.
  2. When submission is forced it's not submission, it's violence.
  3. When one person always (or most of the time) wants their own way it's not submission.

## V. Acts of Submission

A. To God—“Come to me, all of you who are weary & burdened, & I will give you rest.”—Jesus (Matt. 11:28)

B. To the Word of God

C. To others

1. Hesitate or resist submitting because previously they've been taken advantage of
2. Micro-submissions
  - a. Let someone in line before you (everyone is as valuable as you are)
  - b. Pick up socks, toys, do the dishes, clean room, fold laundry to serve family
3. Ask someone what they think & actually listen; or ask someone for help

D. In worship

### Questions:

1. Eph. 5:18b-21 mentions 5 activities related to “*being filled with/by the Spirit*”: [1.] speaking to one another; [2.] singing ...to the Lord; [3.] making music...to the Lord; [4.] giving thanks...to God the Father; [5.] “submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.” Consider each of these 5 activities:

- a. Which of these 5 are (explicitly) directed to the Lord, God &/or Christ?
- b. Which of these are directed towards fellow-believers?
- c. Which (if any) are directed to a higher human authority?

2. Eph. 5:21 is often translated as “*submitting...*” However, scholars suggest the “concept of *hypotasso...is significantly different from...the English term submit, which seems to suggest the surrender of oneself directly to the control of another.*” Below are alternative renderings of Eph. 5:21:

- a. “Place yourselves under each other’s authority out of respect for Christ.” (GW: “God’s Word translation”)
- b. “Be willing to obey each other. Do this because you respect Christ.” (ICB)
- c. “Honor Christ and put others first.” (CEV);
- d. “Be willing to serve each other out of respect for Christ.” (ERV)
- e. “Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another.” (Message)
- f. “Give way to each other because you respect Christ.” (WE)

– Based on CIT’s Video message (& what you’ve read) which of these (a. to f.) do you feel is preferable? Why? Discuss.

3. J. Piper & W. Grudem assert: “*Hypotasso* [‘submit’] *always* implies a relationship of submission to an authority,” so, “Eph. 5:21...*does not teach mutual submission at all...*” Yet, Eph. 5:21 says “submitting to one another,” which many call “mutual submission.”

- a. Do Piper/Grudem deny the straight-forward meaning of the text, or do they have a point? (What’s their point?)
- b. Does this passage of Eph. emphasize more “submission to a higher human authority” or “mutual submission”?
- c. Can you reconcile “submission to a higher human authority” & “submitting to one another” (mutual submission)?

4. John Barclay says: the phrase, “*‘One another’ turns a one-way relationship of power & superiority into a mutual relationship of reciprocal deference.*” What does he mean by this? How does this help us understand “submission” in Ephesians 5:21?

5. What positive experiences do you have regarding “submitting to one another” in the church?

6. Richard Foster gives a strong warning about the abuse of teaching regarding “authority & submission.” He says: “nothing in religion has done more to *manipulate & destroy* people than a *deficient teaching on submission.*”

- Do you have any experience regarding the abuse of teachings on “authority & submission”? Discuss.

