



Devotions Week Two

The final component of this week's lesson is a Bible study that enhances the big ideas from the video. There are five days of devotions to be completed during the week. Researchers found that couples who read the Bible and pray together daily have a nearly 100% success rate for their marriages, so we believe that developing that habit is non-negotiable.

If you already are involved in a daily study that includes reading passages from the Bible, please don't feel it is necessary to put that one on hold - these devotions are available to you as an option. The part that is not an option for a successful marriage is doing some form of daily Bible reading and study together.

Day One

Read: Ephesians 5:22-33

This is perhaps the verse most often quoted in regard to marriage, and with good reason. It packs a lot of information into a pretty compact reading. The parallel that is drawn is the relationship the church has to God with the relationship of a wife and husband. This is illustrating how the husband functions in much the same role that God functions in, and the wife's role reflects the role of the church. That is not to say that husbands are God! However, the way that they are to treat their wives is the same as the way that God treats the church. Wow! Talk about a tall order for the men! Christ loved the church and gave up His life for it; guess what men . . . You are to love your wives with that same intensity of love. Just like Christ nurtures and cherishes the church, husbands are to nurture and cherish their wives. Just like Jesus was the model of behavior for His church, men are to be the models for their wives.

In response, wives are to submit to their husbands. The word submit means to agree to someone's authority over you. Wives are to reflect the church's role of coming under God's rule, they are to come under their husbands and give their husbands authority over them. This holds true when the husband is reflecting and acting in accordance with God's will. It's important to remember the complete hierarchy here: God is at the top, the husband functions under God, and the wife functions under the husband. Actually the wife has it the best of all because for each layer of submission there is also a layer of protection. The only time this becomes an issue is when the hierarchy gets messed up and God's ultimate rule is ignored. Any time anyone steps outside of the pyramid of protection, they are giving up their right to be in authority over you.

Discussion Questions

- What do you think? Does the relationship of Christ and the church parallel how marriages are designed to work?
- Are you satisfied with your roles as specified by God? Men, are you ready to step up and love your wife to the point of dying for her? Women are you ready to respectfully let your husband lead you?
- Are you ready to let God be the one under which all other boundaries are set? Can you think of time that following God's will is a bad idea?

Close your time by praying together. You may pray on your own or use this one as a model:

Jesus, thank You for loving us enough to die for our sins. We come to You as sinners and ask for Your protecting hand to come over us. Help us to keep our decisions and actions in line with Your will. Give us the trust that is needed to move into our Godly roles of husband and wife. Lead us as we begin moving into the practice of loving and leading, respecting and supporting. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Day Two

Read: 1 Peter 3:1-7

Peter has been writing about several different groups of people who need to show Biblical

submission in a variety of contexts. In this section he is addressing submission within marriage. While he talks specifically about women who are married to unbelieving husbands, all women can gather some important take-aways from these verses.

Go back and re-read verses 1-2, but think in your head about “husbands not obeying God’s word” as husbands who have trouble living out their role of husband to love and lead. That distinction causes these verses become very inclusive. Now, think about how that applies to your marriage. Women are to demonstrate a respectful attitude and keep their conduct pure in order to influence their husband’s willingness to obey God.

Keep going with verses 3-4. We aren’t supposed to rely on our looks to be beautiful or desirable, we are to let our inner beauty shine through. That old saying about beauty being only skin-deep comes to mind at this point. It isn’t that God wants us to ignore our appearance or not keep up with the latest fashion trends; rather, He is emphasizing the point that we need to understand the order of importance. Our first goal is always to be pleasing God, and to Him a gentle and quiet spirit is far more precious than outward appearances. A wonderful side effect of putting God’s will first, is that our husbands will also find that behavior beautiful and appealing. Verses 5-6 demonstrate that it has worked that way since Old Testament times with Sarah and Abraham.

At verse 7 we have a change of direction. Peter stops talking to the women and addresses the men. They are told to live in an understanding way, honoring their wives because they are in need of protection, and they should do this because wives are of equal importance to God. The reward husbands receive from practicing this lifestyle is unhindered prayer. That’s a pretty good exchange; God honors faithfulness to His commands and will protect those who are living within the bounds of His guidance.

This shows that women aren’t the only ones who are living in submission. Men are also expected to live in submission to God and to the authorities put in place over them. Unfortunately, the word submission has gotten a pretty bad reputation over the years because it has been used to harm a lot of women in the name of God - though that is a gross misuse of the principle and never what God intended submission to be.

One way to look at submission is as layers of protection. Submission is actually agreeing to live within the boundaries someone else has established. We actually do that all the time, but don’t necessarily think of it as submission. Think about living as a citizen of any country;

because we are under the protection of that government, we agree to follow the rules/boundaries that are set by the people in charge. When we do what is expected we are protected, but when we step out of those guidelines we give up that protection. At our jobs we agree to do and not do certain things that the company has set as boundaries. If we work within those boundaries and a conflict emerges with someone outside of those boundaries, the company can offer us protection because we have done what they asked. In our families, children are expected to do what their parents have told them. When they are within the boundaries of their parent's expectations, then the parents can protect and defend their behavior, but when those boundaries are ignored there isn't a lot that parents can do to defend the actions of their children. Submission isn't a bad thing; it is really quite comforting to know that someone else has your back; especially when that someone is God!

Discussion Questions

- Does your family follow the Biblical model of submission? Is God the leader at the top that drives all of the other boundaries that are set? Do each of you function within those guidelines, or are you sometimes prone to push the envelope a bit? How can you help each other be more successful in staying within God's boundaries?
- Ladies, talk with your husbands about your concerns surrounding submission to him. Are his expectations or requests of you in line with God's will? What areas do you feel are out of line? Is he asking or expecting you to do something you feel isn't right? Consult the Bible or a spiritual leader if you need to verify whether or not something is in line with God's will.
- Men, talk with your wives about your actions toward her. How do you react when you feel she has acted inappropriately? Does she feel that you are demonstrating an understanding attitude toward her or does she fear you? What changes can be made to improve this area? Do you feel that you honor and protect her? Does she? How do you live that out?

Close your time by praying together. You may pray on your own or use this one as a model:

Lord, we come to you today trying to live our lives the way You intended. Give us the strength to keep working toward the marriage that You designed for us. Help us to open our

hearts and eyes to ways that we can love and lead, respect and support each other. Let us see each other as You see us - as people of equal and great value, as Your loved children. In Your Son's Name we pray. Amen.

Day Three

Read: Galatians 5:16-25

We have been looking so far this week at the ideas of leadership and submission. Yesterday's emphasis was on the inverted pyramid model of submission - wives are in submission to their husbands and both are in submission to God and His will for us. Today's reading clarifies what being in line with God's will looks like. Specific actions are listed that demonstrate living according to the world's standards, and specific traits, or fruits, are listed that show we are living in God's will and as His people.

The tricky part is that living in God's will is a day-by-day, minute-by-minute battle. We do live in the world, and because of that we are bombarded constantly with the things of this world. Believing in Jesus as your Savior doesn't mean that we are suddenly relieved of the pressures of this world, it means that we are choosing to not give in to those pressures. We are human, and we will mess this part up; but we are God's people and we can ask for and receive His forgiveness. We are God's people; we can ask for and grant forgiveness to each other when we mess up. Verse 26 exemplifies this. In the New King James Version it is worded, "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." We are to work together to help each other live in the Spirit.

True forgiveness releases the offender from the consequences of their actions - that means that the slate is wiped clean; you don't get to penalize each other for what was done. You accept each other as you are - sinful humans in a sinful world who will make mistakes. When you yourself are perfect (which, by the way, won't happen here on earth), then you can expect perfection from your spouse, until that time you can expect perfection from God. He is the One you need to go to for filling your needs. It isn't fair to your spouse to hold him or her to that standard of perfection.

We each need to strive each day to become more like Jesus. When we do that each day will be better than the day before; the result being that our last day here on earth will be our

best day. We won't get there completely until we join Him in heaven, but it is in His model that we can find the peace we are all looking for. He is the perfect model of both leadership and submission. He is the perfect model of living in His Father's will. He is showing us the way we should go; we simply need to follow Him.

Discussion Questions

- Think about the works of the flesh. Which one(s) do you struggle with the most? Talk with each other about how you can be a support for each other in this area.
- Think about the fruit of the Spirit. Where does each of you see this playing out in the life of the other?
- Consider your own hearts - what things are you refusing to truly forgive your spouse for? What are you still holding in your heart? Do you need to seek forgiveness for your own hard-heartedness? If you are having trouble forgiving, spend some time in prayer with your spouse over this. Seek God's help in softening your heart so you can give each other forgiveness.

Close your time by praying together. You may pray on your own or use this one as a model:

God I repent of holding others to my standards of perfection. Please forgive me of judging others by my standards and not seeing how I need to forgive them just as you have forgiven me. Please allow me today to see how I can forgive my spouse and free them from the bondages that I have created. In Your Son's name we pray. Amen.

Day Four

Read: Titus 2:1-8

Let's look closely at the directives given to the men and women in these verses. The lists are given then ended with the result. For men, the result of living Godly lives is that people who oppose you have no ground to stand on in their accusations. It goes back to living your life in submission to God's will. When you operate under His guidelines, He can offer you protection; in this case He can offer the protection of a good reputation in your community. The women are instructed to live exhibiting certain behaviors so the word of God isn't

blasphemed. That's a pretty important task! Check out these definitions of blasphemy: 1. Profane or contemptuous speech or writing about or in action toward God, 2. Blasphemy can refer to any slander, including any word or action that insults or devalues another being, and 3. An action causing the glory of God to be diminished through direct insult or deliberate disobedience. Women, your actions are a powerful testimony about your devotion to God.

Men should be _____ so that opponents can have nothing evil to say about you.

- Sober
- Reverent - respectful
- Temperate - not extreme or excessive
- Sound in faith, love, and patience
- In a pattern of good works
- Showing integrity and incorruptibility
- Using sound speech

Women should be _____ so the word of God is not blasphemed:

- Reverent (respectful) in behavior
- Not slanderers
- Not given to much wine
- Wives that love their husbands
- Mothers that love their children
- Discreet - careful with speech and actions to avoid cause offense or to gain an advantage
- Chaste - sexually pure
- Homemakers
- Good (goodness only comes from God)
- Obedient to their husbands

Discussion Questions

- Do think that any of the actions listed above are contrary to God's will for you? Is living in submission to God something that is desirable to you, or so you cringe at

having to give up your “freedom” to live as you desire? Why is that?

- As you read through the lists above, what stands out as the easiest/hardest actions to demonstrate consistently? What does your spouse feel are your most displayed attributes?
- Which area do you feel you need to become better at living out on a daily basis? How can your spouse be supportive as you begin to grow in this area?

Close your time by praying together. You may pray on your own or use this one as a model:

God, be with us as we are struggling with submitting our lives to Your will. Help us each to see where we need to grow and retrain ourselves to be able to reflect Your standards to the world. Help us to live in love and respect for one another, as is Your will. In Jesus’s Name we pray. Amen.

Day Five

Read: Romans 12:1-2

Paul is pleading with the Romans to change their lifestyle. He is begging them to live their lives in a manner that will be acceptable to God, which he says is their reasonable service to Him. I have to agree that it sounds fair - Jesus went willingly to be beaten, mocked and crucified for my sins. Worst of all was, for however brief a moment, He was totally separated from God when He took my sins upon Himself as the perfect sacrifice. It seems like “reasonable service” that I change some of the habits in my life.

We are to live, not as the world dictates, but according to what God says is right. That part gets pretty tricky in a world that is bent on pushing its self-first agenda. We need to take our stance daily that we won’t live by the standards that our friends, coworkers, or neighbors set. We need to take the stand that we will live in the model that God designed, even when the people around us tell us that mindsets like that are antiquated. We need to make that choice even when friends warn us to watch out for ourselves because you never know what might happen. We need to be unwavering in our belief that God’s way is the only way that will work.

Discussion Questions

- Which areas of your life are most swayed by what society says?
- What can you say to friends and family to defend the reasoning behind the leader/supporter roles?
- How does the idea of Biblical roles in marriage sit with you by now?
- Can you live with that mindset in a world that holds such a different value system?

Close your time by praying together. You may pray on your own or use this one as a model:

God, thank You for loving us enough to send Your Son to pay the price for our sins. Remind us of His sacrifice when we start to think that it is too hard to live as You ask us to. Strengthen our resolve to function in the roles You designed for us so that our marriage can function the way that You intended. Help us to see the areas we still need to work on and make us willing to support each other in that growth. Thank You for leading us and guiding us. In Your Son's Name we pray. Amen.

