

Explore the Bible Series for April 1: Exercise the power of submission

March 29, 2007

Posted: 3/20/07

Explore the Bible Series for April 1

Exercise the power of submission

- 1 Peter 3:1-12

By Kathryn Aragon

First Baptist Church, Duncanville

Let's face it—none of us likes to talk about submission. We're afraid we will be told to do something we don't want to do. Or worse yet, we will be forced to give up our will to someone else. Sadly, even between husband and wife, submission is a topic we'd rather not discuss.

Submission defined

Let's take a look for a moment at that little word "submission." What exactly does it mean? Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines the word as "the condition of being submissive, humble or compliant; an act of submitting to the authority or control of another." Is it any wonder we are afraid of the word? Being under someone else's control is a frightening prospect.



[For a printer-friendly version, click on the printer icon at bottom of page.](#)

The word “submission” is derived from the Latin word *submissio*, which means an act of lowering. I am reminded of a description of Jesus in Philippians 2:6-8: “Who, being the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.”

Submission is the reality of imitating Christ. Although we like the idea of doing things Jesus’ way, we draw the line at humility, servanthood and especially at death. Ironically, though we talk about the need to show the world our faith, we fail in the one area that would illustrate what Jesus was all about.

Submission is love acted out

Paul tells us in Philippians 2:3, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” We are commanded to take care of others’ needs before we think about our own. Jesus says it plainly, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” And what is his commandment? To love. “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

If we have any ideas about ignoring this command, Jesus reminds us a

student is not above his teacher (Matthew 10:24). Obviously, submission is an important issue. Jesus demonstrated this over and over again. He taught that if we want to be great, we must be a servant. He even took the position of the lowest servant in the household and washed the feet of his disciples. When Jesus does this, we call it power and greatness. When we are asked to do it, we cringe and call it weakness.

Our discomfort causes us to dance around the issue. We don't really want to deal with it, so we impersonalize it. We discuss it, analyze it and tell everyone what a good thing it is. We even talk about Jesus' submissiveness, but all this talk is mere posturing. We're really just trying to keep it "out there." We're keeping our distance so we don't really have to do anything about it. Sadly, in all this talk, we fail to bring it home. Even worse, we fail to bring it into the home.

Bringing submission home

Submission is not something we should be afraid of. It is a beautiful plan by God for everyone to be treated well and to feel his love.

Picture this: In your home, every member of the family is more concerned about everyone else's needs than their own. They are urging one another to take the biggest piece of dessert, refusing to accept the best seat in front of the television, and helping one another with their chores. As you drive through town, no one is cutting one another off. People wait their turn at the four-way stop. At work, there is no backbiting, no jealousy. When someone gets a promotion, everyone rejoices with him or her. When someone is overloaded with work, everyone chips in to help. It's a pretty picture, isn't it?

Now take that picture home once again. God calls husbands and wives to mutual submission. We resist this idea because we fear it means we will

never get our way. And we're right. If we are truly compromising, we won't get our way. And at the same time, we will.

Let me explain. We already know that when two people must share all their space and property, conflicts will arise. Each spouse comes into the relationship with set ideas about how to manage this space and property. So the battle begins. We each seek to get our way. The idea of compromise simply means we convince the other person to see things our way.

But this isn't compromise at all. Compromise, or mutual submission, means both people get some of their way. Neither person gets all of their way. Two separate ideas are dissolved, and one unified idea is created. Like the marriage union, the two become one. This boils down to neither person getting their way while, at the same time, both are getting their way.

We like to talk about living out our faith. We like the idea of being a testimony to the world. Perhaps the best testimony we could give is a unified, peaceful home. We need to take our faith home with us. We need to realize it applies to us, not just others, and as we live out our faith at home, our families will be strengthened.

Unfortunately, we tend to get lazy at home. We'll return insult with insult and rejection with an even bigger rejection. Peter calls us to a higher standard. Let's bring Christ's love into the home. "Live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (vv. 8-9).

We want God's blessings, but we want them for free. God asks us to obey him and offers blessings as a reward. If we really want our own needs to be met, we must learn to do the uncomfortable thing and take care of others' needs first. God's plan seems contrary and wrong, but it is the only way

we'll really find peace in the home. It's the only way we'll enjoy his blessings. "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (v. 12).

Discussion questions

- How does the idea of mutual submission make you feel?
- Do you trust your family enough to stop trying to meet your own needs and to focus on their needs?
- Paint a picture of how people treat one another in your home.
- What could be done to make that picture line up with God's picture of submission in the home?