

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

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The "S" Word

Submission. What does it mean? The question, asked of me by women only, never seems to refer to submission to civil law, military officers, the boss one works for, or the school teacher. It's submission to a *husband* that is the sticking point.

Instead of resorting to Webster this time, I'll give you Oswald Chambers' definition: "Submission means, etymologically, surrender to another, but in the evangelical sense it means that I conduct myself actually among men as the submissive child of my Father in heaven."

How do I learn to do that? Any perplexity ought to send me first to Jesus. How did *He* submit? His whole life on earth demonstrated an unconditional surrender to the glorious will of His Father: "I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me" (Jn 6:38, NIV). Do we want to follow Him in this? Yes, we say, oh yes. But then—oh dear!—what if the will of the Father happens to be our submission to the will of a man? Nothing could be less to our liking. We search for every loophole.

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22, NIV). Many are the discussions I've heard on this one, almost all of them directed to what it "can't possibly mean," rather than to the plain word of the Lord. The statement is simple. Not easy for women like me, but *simple*, that is, I understand it only too well. As Mark Twain said, "I have far more trouble with the things I do understand in the Bible than with the things I don't understand." Worst case scenarios are immediately put forward—"What if my husband asks me to do something immoral?" Heads nod vigorously. Cases are described. But the question was what submission *means*. Chambers has put it well—that I conduct myself as God's child. The spirit of God's Son was the spirit of submission, no questions asked as to His own safety or comfort, no effort to engineer things for Himself, but rather an utter handing over of all His powers to His Father, a perfect confidence that the consequences of this obedience lay in His Father's hands.

"But my husband is fallible," you say. So's mine. But my submission to him *is* obedience to God. How far am I prepared to trust myself into my Father's hands? That is the real question. We must learn to *submit* our "What if's" and "Yeah, but's." To the humble and honest soul who does not proudly and arrogantly assume that God's arrangement of things will not "work" in her case, the light of grace will always be given.

"But Elisabeth—you don't seem to realize that *my* case is an exception!" Is it? Then it's not my business. I try to stick to what the Bible does say, not to what it doesn't say. God didn't give us any footnotes. Take your special case to the foot of the cross. Have a long, honest look at it there. Let the light of Christ illuminate your situation. Then do whatever *He* tells you.

Why should a wife submit to a husband rather than the reverse? Are we not equal? No, not equal in the sense of interchangeable. The heart of the matter is a mystery: the mystery of Christ and the church. Try reading Ephesians 5:22-24, reversing the nouns. It's nonsense. God assigned husbands and wives different *positions*, each representing a tremendous verity: the husband representing Christ, the wife the church, His bride. This is a divine arrangement, not chosen, earned, or deserved by either husband or wife, not conferred by either on the other, but designated by God Himself. I am thankful for this arrangement because I know it is a revelation of divine wisdom and love, given for our freedom and peace.

I have been thinking, talking, writing, about this for years—not because it's my favorite subject (far from it!), but because it keeps coming up. I confess that I am not Exhibit A of the submissive woman, but in my old age the Lord in His wonderful patience and mercy is showing me how simple it is just to keep my mouth shut. That's what it comes down to most of the time. *Sometimes*, of course, my responsibility as a helper for my husband requires my gently calling to his attention something he has perhaps overlooked in making a decision. He listens, and occasionally sticks with his original plan anyway. Do I fall in with it graciously, quietly, in the spirit of Christ? Most of my testings come in the *little* things, when I automatically want to put forward

my own preferences, arguments, logic, clarifications. Relinquishing those has meant a new freedom from stress and a new thankfulness for my husband Lars Gren. Isn't that amazing? It shouldn't be—I knew all along that trust and obedience are the *only* way "to be happy in Jesus," as the old gospel song says.

"If you obey my commands," Jesus said, "you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my JOY may be in you and that your JOY may be complete" (Jn 15:10-11, NIV, emphasis added).

And what about the husbands? They've been given a far tougher assignment: love your wives as Christ loved the church. Give yourself up for her to make her holy. Love your wives as your own bodies (Eph 5:25-28). Who could balk at submission to a man who really did that? No man does it perfectly, but even if he did, we'd still balk, I guess, for we balk at submission to Christ Himself, who loves us perfectly!

*Oh Lord, have mercy upon us and
incline our hearts to keep Your law.*

Shall We Go for the Gold?

Anna Alexander of Roswell, Georgia, whose 37-year-old husband died very suddenly in 1985, wrote:

I remember saying to the Lord the morning after Mike died, "Silver would have been just fine.... Did we have to go for the gold?" But since I'm in the furnace my goal is to come forth as pure gold and to challenge everyone I come in contact with to do the same. Job 23:10 has become my life verse: "He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me I will come forth as gold." I'd like to share an acrostic that includes four principles I've lived and I believe can apply to any trial:

G God doesn't make any mistakes

(Ps. 46:10, Is. 45:9)

O Operate with eternity's perspective

(2 Cor 4:17, 2 Pt 3:14)

L Live one day at a time

&

Look for a blessing each day

D Do something for someone else

(Mt. 25:40)

Two Sisters' Pact

We had a free airline ticket that had to be used before the end of March. My first thought is always grandchildren. Might one of them come from California to see us? Lars consented, so we told Walt and Valerie to decide which child it should be. Walter, the oldest, is tied up with the swim team. Jim and Colleen had had their turn. Two are too young. So it was to be Christiana, eleven, or Elisabeth, thirteen. Christiana told this story:

When we found out that one of us was going to go, we were waiting expectantly for Mom and Dad to tell us which one it would be. Elisabeth pulled me into the bathroom and said, "Christiana, we need to talk about this. Let's make a deal. If I go, you'll promise not to get upset, whereas, if you go, I won't be upset." I said, "Of course I'll promise." We shook hands and went and told Mama what we had done. After we had begged and begged my dad said quietly, "We've decided to let Christiana go." And Elisabeth said, "I'm very happy for you." My mom and I hugged her and said, "Oh, that's very sweet of you, Elisabeth—thank you!"

She's here as I write this, sitting in the recliner by the window in our bedroom, doing math homework. She leafs through an old hymnbook and plays and sings; she washes dishes, sets the table, irons, reads George MacDonald, walks with us in the snow, teaches me to play Dutch Blitz, listens to an Isak Dinesen tape, helps me with print-outs for the computer, writes in her journal, plays her favorite tapes for me, quotes a British comedienne (with excellent English accent), and generally blesses us.

"Grandchildren are the crown of old age" (Prv. 17:6, NEB).

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Qualified?

Lord, who am I to teach the way
To little children day by day,
So prone myself to go astray?

Lord, if their guide I still must be,
O let my little children see
The teacher leaning hard on Thee.

—Leslie P. Hill

A Love Story

From a young woman who was “prepared by the Lord by reading *Passion and Purity*.” She left an active dating life to trust the Lord first and fully in the area of romance. She wrote:

I decided to “will” the romantic side to sleep, as it were, until it would please the Lord to awaken it. For eight months, at twenty-seven years old, I didn’t date.... I knew I was not to be “romantic” or use men in being taken to dinner, etc., when I knew they were not who the Lord had for me.

Then, I met Charles (not his real name) who asked me to lunch.... My “romantic” side was awake, but I knew he needed time to do what I had done in making the Lord first in the lovelife. We didn’t date for a couple of months until he felt the “go ahead” with three rules from the Lord: 1. Quiet time daily. 2. Bridle your heart. 3. Don’t touch her. That was in March. At Easter he held my hand for the first time when my father initiated it at prayer for dinner. June 6 he asked me to be his wife and one week later he kissed me for the first time. We’ll be married in thirty-four days and counting!

Charles is thirty-five, never been married. We are both highly active, social, professionals. We have discovered true romance in having “not a hint of impurity,” and seeking first His kingdom. I am so blessed. I have *such* respect for Charles and am so honored by him. Praise be to God for the great things He has done.

Women in the Work World

Because I want to be faithful to what Scripture *does* say I often refer to that passage which tells me, as an older woman, what I am supposed to say to younger women: Titus 2:3-5. But, they want to know, is it wrong for a single mother to work? Is it wrong for a woman who has no children at home to work? Is it wrong for a woman to work because her husband insists on it? The last question is not quite so difficult, since a wife must submit and trust the results to God. I cannot answer the first two. So, for you who so far have found it necessary to work I want to offer some encouragement and comfort.

1. “My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:19, NIV). Just remember that *God* must be the judge of our needs. Being wise, powerful, and loving, He can be fully trusted to do just what He says.

2. You only know what you have to do *today*. None of us knows the future. Be faithful today—do your work faithfully, thoroughly, honestly, and gratefully. “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Col. 3:23-24, NIV).

3. Be a lady. Betty Greene, pilot during World War II and later with Mission Aviation Fellowship, told me, “I made up my mind if I was to ‘make it in a man’s world,’ I had to be a lady.” A true lady is recognized and respected by men. Keep your honor, your distance, and your close touch with God. He will protect you.

4. If you are truly abandoned to the Lord, He will show you if/when He has a different assignment for you. Stay in touch with Him.

Bible Study for Little Ones

The Find Out series has been specially written for parents to use with their five and six-year-old children. A set of six books, 50 readings in each, is \$21.95 postage included. Scripture Union, 7000 Ludlow St., Upper Darby PA 19082. (1-800-621-LAMP)

Prayer

The Dohnavur Fellowship suffered great damage to trees and buildings during a cyclone. Thank the Lord that though many in the district were killed, Dohnavur people were spared. (I am not authorized to solicit funds for them, but many of you who love the writings of Amy Carmichael, who founded the DF, would want to know. Checks made out to The Dohnavur Fellowship may be sent to Mrs. Charles Schwartz, 3260 SW 20th St., Miami FL 33145.)

Praise God for the heartening response we receive from listeners to Gateway to Joy and readers of the Newsletter and books. Thank Him with us for the excellent health and daily strength He gives Lars and me; for His constant help in our work together.

Pray this prayer for your church: Gracious Father, we pray that You will fill us with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where we are corrupt, purify us; where we are in error, direct us; where in anything we are amiss, reform us. Where we are right, strengthen us; where we are in want, provide for us; where we are divided, reunite us; for the sake of Jesus Christ Your Son our Savior. Amen.

Keep in Touch

Are you moving? Getting married? Leaving school? *Don't forget to send us your change of address.* The post office DOES NOT FORWARD third class mail like the Newsletter. *Please remove your address label below and send it with your new address to:* The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, Post Office Box 7711, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7711.

Travel Schedule

July–November 1993

July 16 Windham, NH; Windham Bible Chapel, (603) 898-9899.

July 23 Haywood County, NC; Bethel Baptist, (704) 648-6621.

July 24-25 Tuxedo, NC; Camp Greystone, (704) 693-3182.

July 26 Omaha, NE; Pope Paul VI Institute; Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers, (402) 390-6600.

August 16-18 Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

September 13-15 Asheville, NC; Billy Graham Training Center, (704) 298-2092.

September 16-18 Eagle River, MI; Lois Stout, (906) 482-1435.

September 26 St. Louis, MO; Eagle Forum, Phyllis Schlafly, (202) 544-0353.

October 15-16 Bakersfield, CA; Fruitvale Community Church, (805) 589-9733.

October 22-24 Whiting, NJ; America's Keswick, (908) 350-1187.

November 5-7 Grosse Pointe, MI; Christ Church, (313) 885-4841.

November 11-12 Charleston, SC; College of Charleston, Ellenor Mahon, (803) 792-5640.

November 13 Spartanburg, SC; Westgate Family Physicians Training Center, Donald Dunlap, (803) 574-0070.

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