

Submission in Marriage

Discussion Guide for Titus 2:5b

to be... submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Marriage is the most difficult and rewarding relationship into which any of us enter. Very few things in life truly have the power to “make or break” you, but marriage carries with it that exact level of intense commitment.

Nobody can be halfway married. We are either all in or all out. That’s why when people fail their spouse, even in ways that wouldn’t bother another friend, it feels like someone has cut the spouse off at the knees.

Add to this intense commitment the natural human tendency to ignore or despise the things in life that are most familiar, and you can quickly understand how marriage can either bring out your absolute best self or the worst.

There is no way in one discussion that to rehash everything from our study of Ephesians 5. It would be worth your time to go back listen to Austin’s sermons from then and read the discussion guides for theology you can apply to your marriage.

Christian marriage doesn’t fit into any of the sinful ideas about wedded life that culture tries to create. Christian marriage is neither female-centered nor male-centered; it is God-centered. Marriage is proven as the best way for raising children, but children are not the focus. Marriage is proven as a path economic prosperity but getting rich is not the goal. Marriage is proven to improve health and self-actualization, but it only works when you sacrifice yourself.

For the sake of our discussion today, review these axioms about marriage to set the stage for a healthy discussion:

- Marriage is God’s idea, not man’s. (Genesis 2:18)
- Whatever we believe about marriage reflects the things we believe about God. (Malachi 2:10-16)
- Marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman exists to reflect God’s eternal covenant with his people. As such, it is not intended to be broken or taken lightly. (Ephesians 5:31-32)
- Men and women are different. God made us that way and He made us good. (Genesis 1:27, 31)
- Marriage is good. (Genesis 1:28)
- Submission in marriage is good. Jesus’ submission to the Father is our model for submission. (Colossians 3:18)
- Servant-leadership is the model for headship that Jesus gives. (Ephesians 5:25-30)

- Your spouse is not God; therefore he/she is not perfect. (1 John 1:8)
- Marriage only works when love and forgiveness are freely given. (Ephesians 4:32)
- Love and forgiveness can only be freely given after they have been freely received from God through Christ. (Colossians 3:12-14)
- Divorce happens not because God decreed it, but because people are sometimes so sinful that they refuse to repent of things that make marriage impossible. (Matthew 19:8)

How can these axioms still be true in a marriage of two sinners?

How can two sinners be influenced by God enough to stay together for life and be blessed?

Back in November I wrote a discussion guide titled "Unity through Diversity."

Marriage can be difficult and full of conflict simply because husbands and wives are very different people who often see things different ways. This is not necessarily a problem. God actually designed marriage this way.

The problems arise because we are self-centered and begin to see our spouse as an obstacle. We focus on ME getting MY WAY instead of US reaching OUR goals.

Take the rest of this discussion time to appreciate God's design in bringing two different people together so they become greater as one. We're not only different as men and women, but also in personality.

The differences in men and women are well-known and often discussed. The differences between two individuals sometimes take time to assess.

Take 10 minutes for everybody in your Life Group to take a Myers-Briggs personality profile on your phone. <https://www.16personalities.com/>. Share the results at the end of the survey either with your spouse or with the entire group.

(Group leaders will want to do this beforehand so they can become familiar with what a personality profile is. You will find it to be very informative.)

A word of caution:

Do not use personality profiles as a substitute for Bible study. These are imperfect products of human beings studying each other and not what the perfect Word of God says about your identity in Christ.

Do not use personality profiles to determine whether or not you are "compatible" with somebody. Personalities are very complex and show themselves differently in different people.

These profiles are tools to help you become aware of yourself so that you can know areas

where you will have to work to be more understanding of the ways that you interact with others.

Any two personalities can become friends or spouses. The key is how they actually work within their personalities to make a successful relationship.

Submission and headship must be worked out different for people with different personality types. For example, some wives naturally take adversarial stances and argue with their husbands over many things. To an outsider, it may appear that those wives do not submit to their husbands, when in fact they are very loving and submissive. The adversarial tone of many conversations is actually the wife helping her husband in the way that she knows will bring out his best reasoning capabilities so that he can lead both of them down the best path possible. Instead of taking the reins of the marriage herself, that wife is pushing her husband to be the type of leader in whom she can take joy in submitting.

Take my wife, Jennifer, and I as a case study.

My personality type is ISTP-A. Jennifer's is ESFP-T. Our differences are much more pronounced than our commonalities. I am a very strong introvert. Jennifer is a strong extrovert. I am a thinker just as strongly as she is a feeler. I am off the charts assertive in the way I my personality carries out and she is very turbulent.

We found as a team that me being an introvert often balances her being an extrovert. I am extremely quiet where Jennifer is more talkative. It sometimes creates conflict in social situations where I need to be the one to introduce people. Those conflicts have helped to make me a more effective pastor and leader by making it easier for me to take the lead in talking to people.

When solving problems, I often think through them with cold logic while she empathizes with other people. Both sides need to be considered in order for me to make the best decisions.

The real danger for our marriage can come in my assertiveness.

I am a very difficult person to sell on a new idea. When I make a decision I very rarely second guess myself. I can come across as dismissive because I see little need to convince other people that I am right. They should just automatically see things my way and get on board.

I could very easily bulldoze Jennifer and get my way in every decision we make as a couple. If I ignore her, however, that could lead to bitterness and resentment as well as open me up to poor decision making caused by my own blind spots.

She has become the one person who I trust to tell me what I don't want to hear. She is submissive enough to be willing to have difficult conversations, even when she knows that in my flesh I could potentially be a jerk about it.

One of the great benefits of marriage for me is that it has softened some of the harsh edges that

naturally come with my personality. I have learned to be a much more compassionate and empathetic person as a result of being married to a person who wields those as strengths.

Discussion Questions

- Are you surprised by your Myers-Briggs test results?
- How many different personality types are represented in the group?
- Are you able to observe those personality traits in your small group interactions?
- How are you and your spouse alike?
- How are you different?
- How does biblical submission look in your marriage (or potential future marriage)?
- How does leadership look in your marriage (or potential future marriage)?
- How has/could marriage changed you for the better?

Related Resources:

- Myers-Briggs Test: www.16personalities.com
- The Way Series at www.daretoventure.org
- Unity Through Diversity: daretoventure.org/2017/11/unity-in-diversity