

A Wife's Submission (#1)

A WIFE'S SUBMISSION TO HER HUSBAND

{Part 1}

Since this lesson concerns a sensitive subject about women, I feel compelled to do something a little unusual in the sincere hope that my comments will be more convincing as well as more acceptable.

Though not a member of the church of Christ, Elizabeth Rice Handford, the wife of a preacher, the daughter of a famous preacher who trained his girls to wear only godly clothing and let their hair grow, wrote a book from which I've chosen to take probably 80% of my remarks. (No, the theme of this study doesn't concern the clothing or hair issues.) So...

What is this sensitive subject about which Elizabeth wrote? Well, it concerns a wife's submission to her husband; she entitled the book, *Me? Obey Him?*

Six days from the dawn of time, God created man and woman, Adam and Eve. That day God established the single most important relationship a human being can ever enter into with another human being: He gave man ... woman, someone intended to be his "helpmeet," a term referring to one person who fulfills (or "helps" to "meet") the needs of another person. But one dark day, instead of listening to God through her husband, Eve listened to Satan, believing his lie and introducing condemnation into the world. (I said that Eve didn't "listen to God through her husband" for two reasons: [1] The command not to eat of the forbidden tree was given by God to Adam before Eve was created (Genesis 2), which, since she was punished by a just God, means that Adam passed the command on to her, and [2] I believe that Adam's love for her overcame his love for God at the point she ate of the tree, so he ate as well, perhaps because he didn't want her to be cursed alone. I think that's just as rational an explanation as Paul's indication that he would've allowed himself to be doomed if it would've saved his Jewish brethren [Romans 9:3].)

In a voice that must have stricken dread into Eve's heart, God said to her, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). I believe we've generally misunderstood and therefore misapplied this verse. The only other place in the Hebrew where I find this same language used is Genesis 4:7 where God told Cain that sin's desire was for him, but he was to rule over it; the

meaning is clear: sin wanted to have authority over Cain, but Cain was not to allow sin to gain that control. So in Genesis 3:16 when He was speaking to Eve, God was in a sense prophesying that there would always be what we call “the battle of the sexes”; in other words, in general, women would always have a desire to be their own master by attempting to usurp man’s authority. (Incidentally, in the Greek version of the Old Testament, Genesis 3:16 has God telling Eve that her “submission” would be to her husband, and he would rule over her, and this command or statement of God still stands today, even in the 21st century.)

Well, without going any further with my opening comments, let’s begin to follow Elizabeth’s book: She wrote, “There are three major reasons for this command. And because the why of the command makes the what of the command more bearable, let’s think first about why God requires a wife to obey her husband. *Makes it bearable? There! It slipped out! Alas, fellow-women, I confess that obedience even to a really good man isn’t easy, and sometimes it’s nearly intolerable [as Genesis 3:16 indicates it would be]! That much I admit—but stick with me for a while. Won’t you?*” She began by referring to how...

God’s creation requires order.

Before the first sin, God set up a chain of command, requiring man to be in authority over woman. After the apostle spoke of not permitting women to have authority over men, the first reason he gave is that “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (First Timothy 2:13).

In any enterprise leadership is required—someone has to be in charge; but no one, no matter how much authority he has, operates without restraints over him: even Jesus, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, is subject to the Father (First Corinthians 11:3). So there’s no shame for a woman to be under authority if the Lord Jesus—very God Himself—submits to the authority of the Father. Furthermore, position in a chain of authority has nothing to do with one’s worth: despite the masculine gender, a woman can be saved AND be her own priest. (Think about that: not only has God done away with priests having to be from a certain family, He’s even done away with priests having to be men!)

God created man with the ability and responsibility to provide for and protect the home; his body carries the seed of life, so he’s responsible for the children that are born—to guide them, nurture them, and direct them.

God made the woman to be a keeper of the home, to make a haven within its walls, a retreat from the stress of battle for every family member; besides, her body is fashioned for being a wife and mother. Her body is shaped for the bearing of children, and all the senses of her being answer to the wail of a baby. ("And," Elizabeth asked, "why, oh why, would anyone think that all this is degrading?")

A woman's confidence in her ability to be a helpmeet, sufficient for her husband's needs, comes as she finds her place in the order established by God. Elizabeth then went on to point out that...

Woman's nature requires her obedience.

Back to First Timothy 2 again..., after the apostle spoke of not permitting women to have authority over men, the second reason he gave is that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression" (v 14). Elizabeth wrote: "We perhaps have the impression that women as a class are more spiritually minded than men, with sensibilities more refined and purer thoughts. It hurts my feminine pride to have to admit that is not necessarily true! A woman may be more susceptible to spiritual error than a man because of her intuitive, emotional thinking. Intuitive thinking is God's gift, and infinitely valuable, but it needs the balance of reason. I should add, too, that a woman does not have to be led into error. That is one reason God commanded her not to usurp authority over the man, so she can be protected from false doctrine. A wife who rejects authority leaves herself open to every false teacher who will 'creep into households and make captives of gullible women..., always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth' (Second Timothy 3:6-7)."

First Kings 11 tells us about how Solomon's wives turned him into an idolater, which played a big part in the division of the kingdom and a thousand years of civil war. (Jeremiah 44 also speaks of women who seized spiritual leadership and led God's people into idolatry.) Genesis 16 tells of Sarah assuming spiritual leadership in the home by persuading Abraham to have a child by her handmaiden, a union which brought alienation, heartache, as well as thousands of years of conflict between Arab and Jew. Genesis 27 tells of Rebekah's conspiracy against Isaac for her favorite son, Jacob, to receive the patriarchal blessing, and surely we remember all the chaos that caused.

Genesis 4 tells of Zipporah's rebellion against her husband, Moses. When Moses and Zipporah stopped at a motel on the way to see

Pharaoh at God's request, Zipporah witnessed God wrestling with her husband, trying to kill him; as God held Moses in the grip of death, Zipporah found a sharp stone and circumcised her son, Gershom, after which God released Moses. Now how did Zipporah know why God was about to kill her husband? The clue is found in what she said to her husband: "You are a husband of blood to me" (Genesis 4:25). Apparently Moses intended to circumcise the child, but Zipporah protested that it was "too bloody"; she evidently didn't like her husband's bloody religion, but to save his life, she circumcised the child, although still in rebellion since they didn't go on to Egypt together. Think of the results of her irreverence...

1. By interfering with Moses' spiritual leadership in the home, she nearly caused his death and ended up having to circumcise her child "herself"!
2. She lost all the reward of being a helpmeet to Moses in the greatest crisis of his life. (And how he must have needed it in those overwhelming days!) And...
3. Judging from the importance given it throughout Scripture, she missed being a part of one of the most glorious events in the history of mankind! Elizabeth's third reason is that...

A wife's submission depicts the submission of the church to Jesus.

The entire passage of Ephesians 5:22-33 speaks of this very idea. A wife is to obey her husband because she pictures the obedient bride of Christ, cleansed and ornamented, entering into the unspeakable joy of union with her Lord. How could that kind of obedience be considered burdensome? (Cf. Matthew 11:28-30.)

Now that we've discovered why God commands a wife's obedience to her husband, Elizabeth wrote, let's see what kind of obedience God requires.

The inspired apostle Paul (an unmarried man) wrote the following: "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). "Just as the church is subject to Christ, so let wives be to their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:24). "Let the wife see [to it]

that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). "Wives, submit to your own husbands as is fitting in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18). "The older women [are to] ... admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, [and] obedient to their own husbands that the Word of God may not be blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5).

The inspired apostle Peter (a married man) agreed by writing, "Wives, be submissive to your own husbands.... For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God..., [were] submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are" (First Peter 3:1 & 5-6). So, firstly, Elizabeth noted...

A wife is to obey her husband regardless of his spiritual condition.

A wife obeys her husband whether he is a Christian or not, whether he's spiritually minded or not, whether he earns her respect or not; it's his God-given position as head of the wife that she honors, not his personality. In fact, the wife of a non-Christian should be even more conscious about being obedient to her husband in order that she may convert and save him (First Peter 3:1-2 & First Corinthians 7:13). Secondly...

A wife is to obey her husband regardless of her "feelings" about God's Will for her.

Elizabeth said to suppose that a wife feels God wants her to do the opposite of something her husband wants her to do; it's something not addressed in the Bible, but she feels very strongly that God wants her to act contrary to what her husband demands. What should she do? Well, the Bible teaches that she should ignore her "feelings" and do what her husband says. By doing this, she can be certain of what God wants her to do, as if He had spoken from Heaven. Elizabeth then wrote, "I heard your gasp. It's hard to believe that the man you are married to, lovable and wonderful as he sometimes is, often grumpy and temperamental—it's hard to believe that a man could be the voice of God in your life!" Then she directs her readers to Numbers.

Numbers 30:6-16 teach two major truths: (1) that a husband is given the right by God to prevent his wife from taking a spiritual step she may "feel" that God wants her to take, and (2) that if he does, God holds him accountable—"he shall bear her guilt." So here's a good

woman who feels a burden to do a certain thing for God, and she makes a vow to it. In obedience to God's Word, she asks her husband's permission to do it; if her husband forbids it, if he won't permit her to do it, then God says she's free of her vow—her husband is the one who'll stand accountable to God for it. If it turns out that his decision was wrong, then he's the one who'll bear the blame, which is reminiscent of how God placed the primary blame on Adam for the sin brought into the world (Romans 5), even though Eve was the one who sinned first. Hannah's vow in First Samuel 1 illustrates the practical working of this principle: Hannah promised God that, if He would give her a baby boy, she'd give that boy back to God, but it wasn't until Elkanah had approved the vow that she was able to keep it.

Elizabeth told of a woman who took Proverbs 31:16 about the virtuous woman who bought a field as justification for buying a lot for a new house when her husband had already told her not to, but that Scripture obviously doesn't give a wife permission to go against her husband's will. (Perhaps that's an example of how a woman is more easily deceived.)

At this juncture, Elizabeth considered a couple wives and their interesting and informative stories.

Let's consider king David's wife, Michal.

Michal, daughter of king Saul, David's first, passionate love, is an example of God's punishment on a rebellious wife. David was still only a shepherd boy (though anointed for later kingship) when word came that Saul would be pleased for him to ask for Michal. He risked death by killing 200 Philistines for her dowry, and she gladly went to be his wife; in fact, she even saved his life once, risking her father's paranoid anger, when Saul tried to kill David. After David fled to the wilderness, Saul betrothed Michal to another man, and ten years passed before David could reclaim her as his wife.

After the kingdom was established, David brought back the ark of God which had been at the house of Obed-Edom for 20 long, sad years. It was a thrilling day when David brought the ark back to Jerusalem! Since David couldn't seem to contain his joy, he danced before the Lord with all his might; but as Michal watched from a window, the Bible tells us that she despised him in her heart. When David came

home to bless his family, fulfilling his high-priestly obligation to his own (mind you), Michal reviled him. The sin of her rebellion was intensified because she hated him so much and probably only for his goodness and his joy in the Lord; it seems that she was just plain old jealous. The result? Second Samuel 6:23 says that "Michal ... had no children to the day of her death." But God's punishment didn't even end there: after she adopted the five sons of her sister, all five of them were slain to atone for Saul's breaking an oath made to the Gibeonites (Second Samuel 21:8-9).

Obviously God doesn't take a wife's dishonoring rudeness to her husband lightly. So wives need to be very careful what they say TO their husbands and what they say ABOUT their husband to others. Perhaps a good way for a wife to keep herself in check, so to speak, is to treat her husband as she would her father. For example, before saying something, she asks herself, "Would I say this to my father (especially if I were still at home under his direct authority)?" Or "Would I say this to my friend about my father, belittling him in her eyes? And what's my motive? Is it to vent or gain pity? Or is it to find someone to help me deal with a delicate situation?" See, attitude is all-important. In fact, biblically speaking, it even seems that a wife doesn't have the privilege of expressing herself to her husband in irate ways for two reasons: (1) he has the authority of the last word, and (2) along with that authority, he, not she, is the one who must answer to God (and she should be thankful for that); so a wife's expressions of animosity (whether through slamming doors, withholding affection, or speaking to him irately) are either to manipulate him to get her way or to get revenge which is supposed to be left to God (Romans 12:19 & Hebrews 10:30).

Is there any instance in the Bible where a woman disobeyed her husband and was commended for it? Many Bible scholars say, "Yes, in the disobedience of Vashti toward Xerxes." I don't think we need to justify the actions of a pagan queen, but nevertheless, as Elizabeth did in her book...

Let's consider Xerxes' wife, Vashti.

The story is found in Esther chapters 1 and 2. Xerxes gave a feast, but permitted great freedom to his guests. He didn't force anyone to drink wine (1:8). He was an absolute monarch, but he didn't seem to behave like a tyrant. Anyway, let's notice what Xerxes asked his wife to do. The Bible says he asked her to come before him "wearing her royal crown in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials,

for she was beautiful to behold" (1:11). Did he ask her to commit a sin? There's no indication that he did. Even though it's been suggested that he was asking her to come with only her crown, thus naked, the Bible doesn't say that. An interesting passage in Herodotus says that King Darius (Xerxes' father) told the Macedonians, "We have a custom when we make a great feast to bring with us to the board our wives and concubines and make them sit beside us." So Xerxes may not have required anything at all out of the ordinary when he sent for Vashti. When Vashti refused to come, Xerxes actually reacted with remarkable restraint. The man who reigned from India to Ethiopia was obviously accustomed to being obeyed, so we'd expect him to order Vashti's immediate death; instead, he sought advice (1:13). Her punishment ended up being a mild one, considering her crime, and the letter that was sent out to the 127 provinces about her punishment didn't stress the insult to the king, but the need for every man to bear the rule in his own house (1:20-22).

By the way, have you wondered why Esther's obedience to Mordecai was referred to so often? Perhaps it was on purpose—perhaps the writer was contrasting her obedience (to her adopted father, incidentally) with Vashti's disobedience (to her husband) and the differences in their results.

[Part 2 is found on another webpage.]

[Tony E. Denton, November 2000.]

Acts 10:36 ~ Jesus Is Lord of All!

A Wife's Submission (#2)

A WIFE'S SUBMISSION TO HER HUSBAND

{Part 2}

Primarily using the thoughts presented in a book by a woman, in the foregoing portion of this study, we talked about three main Bible ideas: (1) "why" a wife is to be submissive, (2) in "what" ways she is to be submissive, and (3) a couple examples of the results of rebellion as opposed to submission. Now, in this lesson we'll continue our study of Elizabeth Rice Handford's book entitled *Me? Obey Him?* by talking about a wife's concern for her rights.

She begins the second half of her book by writing, "It just doesn't

seem fair,' you wail. 'Can't I ever do what I want to do? Don't I have any rights?' You picture yourself as a Victorian housewife, long-skirted and fully bustled, bending over a scrub bucket and string mop, pushing back a tendril of hair from your sweating face. You picture your husband, mustached and glowering, standing over you with a whip. 'If I do what you are saying,' you argue, 'I'll just be a plain old slave. Don't I have any rights?'" The answer is ... "No." Why? Because no Christian really has any rights (except the right or choice to obey or not to obey the Lord); we (Christians) lost our rights when we rebelled against God.

Christian women, therefore, have no rights, not because they're women, but because they're sinners just like men: Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned, and Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death or Hell. However, since we've accepted the Lordship of Jesus and His ransom for our sins, we gave up any rights we may have had (or thought we ever had) to Him—He bought us with His blood and therefore owns us (Acts 20:28).

To the Christians at Corinth, Paul wrote, "Do you not know that ... you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (First Corinthians 6:19-20). Likewise, to the Christians at Rome, he wrote, "Having been set free from sin, you became the servants [slaves] of righteousness" (Romans 6:18). Since we are slaves to Christ, a most loving and wonderful Lord who bought us from everlasting destruction, we ought to be happy to do anything He bids.

Jesus illustrated this humility when He washed the disciples' feet, giving them an example that they should do to others as He had done to them (John 13:15-17). In fact, Elizabeth wrote that this is the background of First Peter 3:1 where Peter said, "Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands." Wives are to be in subjection "likewise." "Likewise" to what? The answer is found in the preceding verses (21-23): "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth'; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him [the Father] who judges righteously.... Likewise, you wives, be in subjection...." Like whom? Like Jesus! The submission of the Lord is the example: He submitted not just to the tender ministrations of His Father, but also to the revilings and curses, persecution and suffering of men. He is the example not just to obey a gentle and kind husband, but (though I

hope and pray that you don't have one like this) a harsh and mean one as well, and this fits right in with the humility Peter spoke of concerning wives having gentle and quiet spirits (v 4).

Even though Christian wives (like all Christians) are slaves to Christ, yet there are at least three privileges they have in Christ.

1. A woman has the privilege of choosing her life-long mate. Even though wives must be obedient to their husbands, they have the wonderful advantage of choosing the men they'll be subject to for the rest of their lives. (Incidentally, the bride's promise to obey her husband shouldn't be omitted from her wedding vows as so many have done in the past few generations.) Women don't have the choice of fathers to obey, but they do have the choice of husbands to obey. The one authority most pervasive and long-lasting in a woman's life is the one she can choose. Consequently...
2. When a woman chooses to marry, she has thereby also chosen the privilege of being free from the burden of decision-making and the grave responsibility and consequences that go along with it. When wives grant their husbands the responsibility for the direction of the home and the making of decisions, they also give them the responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. One wife said, "When I found out Dave was supposed to be the head of this family, it sure made life simple. Now he makes the decisions, and he's stuck with them!"
3. The greatest privilege a loving, submissive wife has is that of being a helpmeet to her husband. King Solomon wrote, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). There's a wonder, a multiplication, in the union of a man and woman, far more than either of them could accomplish alone: it isn't the simple addition of $1 + 1 = 2$; in fact, the passage seems to imply that in this case $1 + 1$ equals something more like 3, because it says that a "threefold" cord isn't easily broken.

A wife who deeply loves her husband, who earnestly prays for him, and who eagerly helps him can inspire him to service far beyond what he could have done alone; but, it's all tied to her obedience to him, perhaps because her honest dependence on him draws out that fervent effort. Rollo May told of a Greek island where no woman has set foot for 500 years, and where the monks who live there act and speak effeminately. Why? Probably because a man needs a truly womanly woman to keep his masculinity alive.

Solomon also wrote, "Who can find a virtuous [or an excellent] wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Proverbs 31:10-12). This good woman, this obedient wife, has earned the complete trust of her husband; since she's committed to doing what he wants and needs, there's no conflict of interest. He knows she won't betray him before business associates or friends; everything she says and does reflects on him only positively. Verse 23 says that her husband is honored by men. Why? Because of her support. Then verse 28 says that her children and husband praise her!

When God said that it wasn't good that the man should be alone and that He would make a help-meet for him, He made it clear that a man has weaknesses and insufficiencies. If a wife doesn't bring into her marriage every skill, every gift and talent, every womanly perception—her total heart and mind and moral conviction—then she, in effect, robs her husband of what God intended for her to provide him. This godly, faithful, obedient wife will be used of God to enrich the entire world: just like the old proverb about how the motherly hand that rocks the cradle rules the world is true, so the proverb about how that behind every successful man is a successful woman is also true.

I've often wondered if Mrs. Job ever regretted not being the helpmeet to her husband in his terrible testing that she was meant to be. He sat on an ash heap; his body, a repugnant mass of boils; children, house, and land all gone. He needed someone to care for and comfort him, and the one he married to be that person, the one who bore his children and knew his uprightness better anyone else, ignored him sometimes (19:17) and told him to curse God and die at other times (2:9). God created women with the capacity for more compassion than men have, so a woman who, like Job's wife, acts in such a manner, has simply extinguished the fire of that wonderful gift. Just think about the regret Mrs. Job must have had when God vindicated her husband

with double everything that he had before. Her failure must have haunted her the rest of her life!

Now there's *this* very relevant question...

What if my husband won't take the leadership in our home?

It's important to remember that a wife isn't to merely permit her husband to be the boss when she wants; if it's done that way, then she isn't letting him rule at all—the attitude has to be that “I'm going to accept my God-ordained place and obey him in everything” (Ephesians 5:24). Most men hate scenes: they despise confusion and disorder, so they'll go to almost any length to have peace in their homes, including letting their wives have their way rather than argue. So before wives complain that their husbands won't take the leadership of the home, they need to search their hearts carefully. Do you, as a wife, rely on his judgment? Are you willing to commit yourself to his decisions? Or would you complain to him or others about a decision he made? If a wife isn't willing to let him lead, then she shouldn't complain that he won't take the lead, because it's very likely that he won't fight for his authority, especially when he gets enough beatings outside the home. Furthermore...

Wives shouldn't mistake their husbands' gentleness for weakness—a gentle man can lead his home just as competently as an assertive man; besides, a loving wife who leans on her husband will call forth his strength and masculinity. Listen to examples that Mrs. Handford gave.

“A friend I'll call Edna learned this to her genuine surprise and pleasure. She's a strong, big woman, smart, competent mother of four husky teenage boys. Her husband is quiet and soft-spoken. When she first heard she was supposed to obey her husband, she snorted, ‘It won't work!’ But she said she'd try. So when the boys would come to her for permission, she'd sweetly say, ‘Ask you father.’ When a decision needed to be made about painting the house or buying a new appliance or the thousand and one important decisions that have to be made for a family, she kept her mouth closed. Imagine her delight when her husband assumed an interest in the home he had never had before and guided the family with a sureness she had never seen before. ‘It works! I've never been so happy in my life,’ she said.”

“Gayle said to me, ‘I want Joe to take charge of this family, and he won't. He makes me make the hard decisions and do the discipline. I told him he needed to make our son straighten up and do right, and

he said he thought I was being too hard on him. I wish my husband would take charge!' [Come to find out] Gayle had fallen into the trap of thinking she wanted her husband to lead, not realizing that, when he did lead, but in a direction she didn't think he ought to go, she didn't want to follow [or support him]."

Now, what if, in the situation where a husband is directing the home, he makes a bad decision? How can a wife change her husband's mind?

Proverbs 25:15 says, "By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone." Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." See, the right response by the one under authority will soften the attitude by the one in authority; a husband bent on a wrong course of action can be persuaded to change his mind—perhaps even to his own surprise. Ecclesiastes 10:4 says, "If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post; for conciliation pacifies great offenses." Resistance to authority isn't the answer when a woman feels a decision is wrong, rather she must appeal the decision quietly, waiting for God to work in her behalf. So, again, how does a wife get her husband to change his mind? Not by outrage, not by harsh words, not by threats, and not by withholding her love, but by her meek (without anger) and quiet spirit (trusting God), she can provoke her husband to do right (see First Peter 3:4).

In conclusion, Mrs. Handford made these three points.

1. For the sake of the children, wives need to submit to their husbands.

Children are frightened and confused by conflict in the home. Wives may know that their arguments with their husbands are under control, but the children don't know that; all they know is that they love both parents and that they know of homes that have been broken by divorce. When a mother rebels against the father's authority, the loyalties of children are bound to be divided; a child has no defense against such fears. Then on the other hand, a wife can't really be sure that their quarrels are under control. Quarrels between a husband and wife, like small campfires in the forest, can suddenly rage out of control. In any unresolved conflict between husband and wife, there's always great danger to the marriage, however trivial it began. Children instinctively know the sanctity of the home itself is endangered

when there's conflict over who's boss.

Not only will the children suffer from fear, but they'll also learn from a rebellious mother to be rebellious themselves. Children will ultimately rebel against and resent all authority: parents, schools, bosses, husbands, and policeman— in short, the very structure of life itself! The end of the road of rebellion is certain heartache! Wives and mothers don't need to fear that their obedience will lessen their children's respect for them, for when they set the standard by their obedience, they can require the same obedience from them: the command to obey father and mother (Exodus 20:12) shows that God requires the child to obey mother equally to father—that's the chain of command. When a mother obeys her husband, she enhances her own authority with the child. If mothers love their children, if they long for their future happiness and usefulness, they must make sure they submit to their husbands, the father of those children.

2. For the sake of husbands, wives need to submit to them.

Friction between spouses is a terrible consumer of energy: it drains the body of drive, wastes the resources of the mind, dissipates the usefulness of emotions, and consumes large amounts of time. Imagine how quickly a man would turn his steps homeward in the evening, after a day of grappling with the world, if the wife who should be waiting for him at home met him with words of tenderness instead of a set of ultimatums. Then there would be no need for the defenses a man sometimes uses: the briefcase full of office work, the newspaper attentively read, the television on full blast the whole evening; there'd be plenty of time for talking and communing and plenty of energy for sharing and loving. A man so loved and so sustained would face the world the next day with zest and courage and likely be much more successful in the work he attempts.

3. For the welfare of wives themselves, they need to submit to their husbands.

There's a strange paradox in Scripture, echoed in many places: if we would live, we must die (John 12:24); if we would keep our lives, we must lose them (Matthew 10:39); if we would be free, we must submit ourselves as slaves to Christ (Romans 6:18); likewise, a woman who wants to know true freedom as a wife, must submit herself to her husband's God-ordained authority.

Obedience certainly has its final great reward in Heaven, but it also has present rewards: "If you keep My commandments," Jesus said, "you will abide in My love.... These things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:10-11). Likewise, "Happy is he who keeps the law" (Proverbs 29:18). And "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them" (John 13:17). See...

A woman's submission to her husband liberates her from a multitude of frustrating, binding problems and conflicts; her obedience frees her to become a whole woman and lets her use, to the ultimate, every gift she has of wisdom, inventiveness, and love. The wife who submits to her husband will share a oneness with him, a communion she never dreamed of, an emotional peace and security positively unattainable when she struggles with him for power in the home.

If wives want God's blessings on their lives, if they want Him to listen to their prayers and smile in approval, then they must be sure to not allow the sin of rebellion to go unchallenged in their lives.

Let me share one more interesting point with you that I not only read in Mrs. Handford's book, but also heard somewhere.

Does a wife have the right to expect her husband to make her happy?

Women have the feeling that they do, perhaps because when they were young they read so many romances with those "so-they-fell-in-love-and-got-married-and-lived-happily-ever-after" endings. But the truth is, there's no man on Earth who can make a woman happy: he can provide for her welfare, but he cannot guarantee her happiness; even his total love and devotion won't make her happy.

The story goes that when a preacher and his wife (John & Mary) were answering questions from an audience, one of the ladies in the audience asked Margaret if John made her happy. Because John felt that he was such a wonderful husband, he puffed out his chest awaiting his wife's answer. When his wife said "No," he figured that

there must be some great reasoning behind her answer, so he asked her to explain it. She told the lady that she found out in their first six months of marriage that he would never make her happy. John felt even worse then, but waited to see if she was finished. She finally went on to say, "See, I realized he'd never make me happy because that's exactly what I expected him to do—make me happy. But after six months, I finally realized that the only person who can make me happy is me. The moment you become a happy person, everyone else will add to your happiness. After that, John added to my happiness immeasurably." Then John began to smile again.

Well, in case you want to purchase this book for yourself, let me remind you that it's called, *Me? Obey Him?* by Elizabeth Rice Handford, published by The Sword of the Lord publishers.

[Tony E. Denton, November 2000.]

Acts 10:36 ~ Jesus Is Lord of All!