

How to Improve as a Wife

Various Scripture

Disclaimer: The following are Dr. Jeff Stott's sermon notes and manuscript. They have not been carefully proofed for spelling or grammar. All Scripture quotes are from the New International Version unless noted.

["The Impossible Dream" skit]

Every Christian wife wants to be a wonderful wife. She wants her husband to be proud of her, love her, like her, and cherish her... but you don't have to be perfect to be a wonderful wife, you only need to be growing. As a Christian you have everything you need to achieve and do and become everything God wants you to achieve and be. Don't try to become the perfect wife, just be the loving wife God created you to be.

How do you do that? Let me give you three things from the Bible on how to improve as a wife. God may speak to your heart about one of these. You will know it when He does it. Three key principles that every wife should consider.

1. Submission: Yield to your husband's leadership.

The first principle I want us to look at is **submission**. **This is where you yield to your husband's leadership.** Let's look at a couple verses and then let's talk about them.

Ephesians 5:22

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord."

1 Peter 3:1

"Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives...."

To help us understand this, let's look at some general Biblical observations about submission.

First, submission is a kingdom principle. The Bible teaches that citizens are to submit to the government (1 Pet. 2:13-14), employees are to submit to their employers (1 Pet. 2:18), the young are to submit to the older (1 Pet. 5:5), and a wife is to submit to her husband (1 Pet. 3:1; Eph. 5:22). So God is not picking on wives and trying to make your life miserable. It is a universal divine principle that applies to many relationships. Today we are focusing on the husband and wife relationship in connection with submission.

Secondly, submission is a Spirit-filled act. Notice the context and how submission is introduced in Ephesians 5:18-21. It says we are to be filled with the Spirit. One of the results of a Spirit filled life is that we submit to the authorities that God has placed over our lives, whether it's a government, an employer, a spiritual leader, or a husband. It takes supernatural power to truly submit. Submission is an act of the Holy Spirit working in your life.

Third, submission brings order and structure. The term "submit" has a military connotation and indicates soldiers or troops being drawn together in order, none breaking rank, turning on each other, or walking in disobedience to those in authority over them. Submission is a divine principle that God uses to bring order to government, businesses, churches, and marriages. There has to be some kind of chain of command whether in government, businesses, churches, or marriages. Somebody has to make the final decision.

What does submission look like for the wife?

First, a submissive wife yields to her husband's leadership. As a Christian wife you recognize that God has given the headship or leadership of the home to your husband. There will be times that you and your husband will disagree about a matter, when that happens someone has to make a final decision. That someone is the husband and God will hold him accountable for his decisions.

Pam, my wife, she is really good at this. We will sit down, discuss an issue, look at the options, talk it through together, I will hear her thoughts on it, and she will hear mine. Then she will say something like this, "I know this is a tough decision. You know where I stand on it, but whatever you decide I'll support you on it." She has just yielded herself to my leadership.

Secondly, a submissive wife is not inferior to her husband. Many wives believe that to submit to their husbands is to lie down, roll over, and play dead. Even if your husband tells you things and does things that make you feel inferior and less of a person, I want to say to you, you are valuable, you are important, you matter to God, and you are significant. You are not inferior to your husband. Don't allow your identity to be dwarfed or destroyed by your husband's ego or selfishness. You matter to God.

A few years ago there was this man who wanted to meet with me and the worship leader of the church I was pastoring at the time. He wanted to talk to us about the music. He had his wife with him. As he talked, she never looked up. She never looked at him. Occasionally, he asked her something and she would agree with whatever he said. She seemed afraid of him. Below him. Afterwards, I asked the worship leader if he noticed the same thing and he did. That's not Biblical submission. That's not what God is talking about.

Third, a submissive wife does not yield to sinful requests. You should never submit to a request or a behavior that is ungodly, evil, or unholy. If your husband demands that you get drunk or do drugs with him, if he wants you to commit immoral acts with others, or if he tells you to assist him in committing a crime or telling a lie, you must respectfully say no. The Bible never commands a believer to submit to evil or immoral commands.

Fourth, a submissive wife does not yield to abuse. If your husband is abusing you in any way you should leave the house, stay with a friend or relative and work on the marriage from the outside. Your safety and the safety of your children do not have to submit to abuse.

Fifth, a submissive wife is equal to her husband. They are valued equally. They are both equally important. They are equals, but they have two different roles. A fork and a spoon are equals in the kitchen, but they have two different roles. In God's divine design He created marriage in such a way that for it to work at the maximum level the husband should lead with a sacrificial heart and the wife should follow with a submissive heart. Again they are both equal, but they have different roles.

To be submissive doesn't mean you become your husband's doormat. Nor does it mean you remain silent when you have opinions or ideas. Quite the contrary; marriage is a working together, a complementing of one another's gifts and abilities. In a godly marriage, a wife's thoughts and opinions are to be as highly valued as her husband's. We would be missing God's point if we thought a submissive wife should never disagree with her husband or a husband should never yield to his wife. In the Garden of Eden, Eve was given to Adam as a complement and a helper – not a subservient being. She was formed from a rib taken from his side, not a bone scraped from the bottom of his foot.

2. Spirit: Focus on your inner beauty

If you want to improve as a wife learn how to correctly submit to the leadership of your husband, but there is a second principle wives can focus on and that deals with your **spirit**. **This is where you give attention to your inner beauty.** Look with me at **1 Peter 3:1-5**, "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, (2) when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. (3) Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. (4) Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (5) For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful."

Here's the point I want you to grab: Minor on the outward *appearance*, and major on the inward *attitude*. God's Word is not saying, "Do not wear make up or

jewelry.” It is not saying that wives should ignore their appearance. Every husband likes for his wife to look nice and to look healthy. Wives, you can get your husbands attention with your outward appearance, but you keep your husband’s attention with your inward attitude.

Wives you are told to major on at least four areas regarding the beauty of your inner self.

For one, major on purity (2). Verse 2 says that your husband should be able to see the “purity” of your life. Be faithful, have high morals, keep your life clean from sin. When your husband thinks of you he should think of you as someone who has an innocent life, not worldly. It’s inner beauty.

Secondly, major on reverence (2). Verse 2 mentions the “reverence” of your life. This deals with your dignity. When your husband thinks of you, he thinks of stateliness, nobility, and honor. You carry yourself with humble confidence and respect for others. You are not driven by scorn or hatred. You speak with respect about your husband and about others. You carry yourself in such a way as to bring honor and dignity to your family. It’s an inner beauty.

Third, major on gentleness (4). Verse 4 tells us that an inner beauty comes from having a “gentle” spirit. Instead of being rude to your husband, you are kind. You are kind in the way you talk to him, even when he has made you mad. Instead of demanding your way, you are considerate keeping in mind his feelings and agenda. Instead of being harsh, be sweet.

The opposite of being gentle is to be cruel, unkind, insensitive and unforgiving. I know your husband is difficult to love and follow at times, but God knows the power of a gentle spirit over the long run and God knows the damage of an unkind spirit as well. He knows the damage it can bring. Trust God on this and have a gentle spirit.

Fourth, major on quietness (4). This does not mean silence. It refers more to peacefulness and calmness. You don't lose your temper. You don't have emotional outburst. You have a quietness about you. You don't walk around grumbling, complaining, criticizing, or nagging.

3. Love: Care for your husband

If you want to improve as a wife and improve your marriage there is one more thing you can do and it deals with **love**. **Learn how to care for your husband.** **Titus 2:3** says, "Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. (4) Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands...."

I want you to notice that the Bible says the older women are to "train" the younger women how to love their husbands. They are to be trained. This tells me that healthy loving habits don't naturally happen, the new wife has to be trained, taught, and educated on how to love her husband. The person to do the training is not the new husband, but the older godly wives.

In **1 Corinthians 13** we are told that love is "patient." What does being "patient" with your husband look like and sound like? How do you know when you are being impatient or patient with him? How can you grow in your patience toward your husband? You have to be trained and this is where older godly wives come into place.

You are also told that love "does not boast" and "is not proud." Do you ever belittle your husband to make you look or feel better? Do you criticize him to make you look or feel smarter? How can a wife learn not to do this? Again this is where older godly wives step in.

The point is, husbands are difficult to love. It's not always easy for a wife to demonstrate love to her husband. Ladies, I want to encourage you to get with other godly ladies and talk about how to express genuine love to your husband. Read books by godly women on the subject. Listen to women who have the

spiritual gift of teaching regarding marriage and relationships. Place yourself under godly and Biblical training.

Conclusion

I realize today, in this building are wives at different places in their marriage. Some of you are married to great men, godly men who love God and who love you. Some of you are married to men who don't know the Lord and sometimes you wonder if your husband even cares about you at all. The rest of you are somewhere in between.

No matter who or where you are in your marriage. I want to challenge every wife here to commit yourself to your husband 100%. You can begin by praying, "God, you made me a woman and you gave me a husband. Help me to honor You as a woman and as a wife. Help me to be submissive to my husband, to focus on my inner beauty, to respect him and love him. Lord, I ask that you place godly women in my life to help me grow in these areas as a wife. In Jesus name, Amen."

The first place any marriage should start is with their relationship with Christ. Let me encourage you to commit your life to Jesus Christ today, whether you are the husband or the wife.