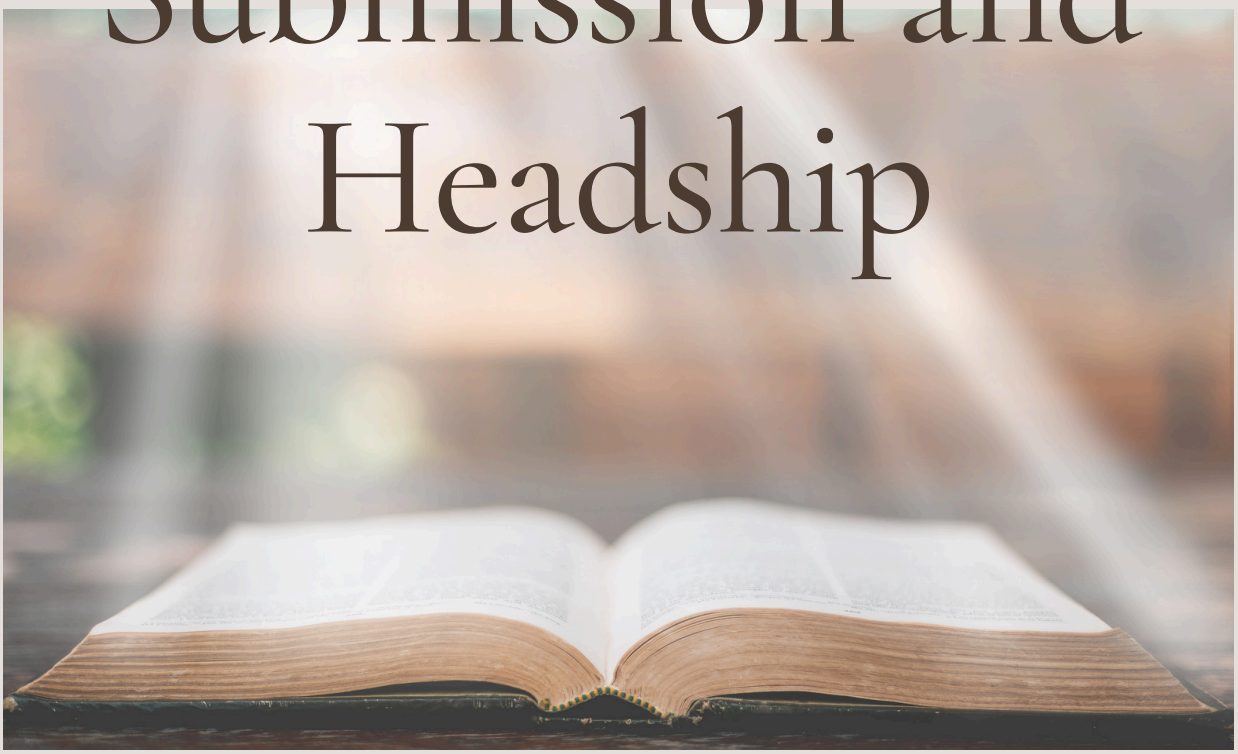
FOUR MISUNDERSTOOD BIBLE VERSES ABOUT Submission and Headship



The Hidden Pattern That Changes Everything

BY SUSAN DEWBREW

The Pattern We've Missed for Centuries

Have you ever read a passage in Scripture and thought, "Something about this doesn't feel right?" Me too, especially when those passages seem to contradict what Jesus taught and demonstrated.

The verses on submission and headship were like that for me until the Lord opened my eyes one Sunday morning while reading Philemon. After finishing this small epistle written to a slave owner, I turned the page back to Titus. Guess what I saw? Every time Paul (and Peter too!) instructs wives to submit to their husbands, he also instructs slaves to submit to their masters. It's in the same context. It's the same message!

This isn't coincidental. (And in case you are wondering, no, God is not pro-slavery.) This deliberate pattern reveals something profound about God's Kingdom strategy: be in the world but not of the world so you can transform it from the inside out.

It was never God's design for any human being to subjugate another. That was a result of the curse, not creation. Both slavery and patriarchy were modeled after the fallen world's dominance-based power systems. Jesus came to establish His Kingdom that would transform the world from inside out.

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Just as we now understand that biblical instructions to slaves weren't endorsing slavery as God's design for human society, we must also recognize that instructions to wives weren't endorsing God's eternal design for gender hierarchy either.

Let's look at four key passages that demonstrate this pattern:

1 Ephesians 5:21-6:9

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ."

2 Colossians 3:18-4:1

"Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them... Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord."

3 1 Peter 2:18-3:7

“Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters... Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands... Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life."

4 Titus 2:1-10

"Teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live... Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children... and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God... Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them."

01 Working Within Broken Systems

In the first century, both slaves and women had no choice but to submit—it was the law. Paul and Peter weren't endorsing these systems; they were showing believers how to live in Kingdom freedom while surrounded by oppressive structures.

The phrase "as to the Lord" and "in the same way" are keys. Just as Christian slaves served earthly masters "as to Christ" (not because slavery was right but because serving with a Kingdom mindset transforms systems from within), wives were to elevate their submission from cultural requirement to Kingdom strategy.

In doing so, the slaves and the women moved from a powerless position of “having to” obey to a powerful position of “getting to”. They even took it up a notch and served them as if they were the Lord Himself!

That’s a radical act of free will. It’s a radical act of love. So radical in fact that it unleashes the Kingdom into those dominance-based power structures, so that eventually the love of Christ would permeate and transform hearts. Then humans would no longer want to dominate other humans.



02 The True Meaning of "Head"



The Greek word for "head" (*kephalē*) refers to source of unity, not boss. When Paul uses this metaphor in Ephesians 5, he emphasizes that Christ as head makes the Church His body—they become one. Similarly, the husband as "head" points to unity, not hierarchy.

This is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." If "head" meant "authority over," this would make Christ subordinate to God—a heretical teaching. If it was a pyramid structure for society, it's not in the right order. Rather, it was about source and unity.

Paul immediately clarifies this in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12: "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."

It's a beautiful circle of interdependence, not a chain of command.



03

Subverting Systems Through Love

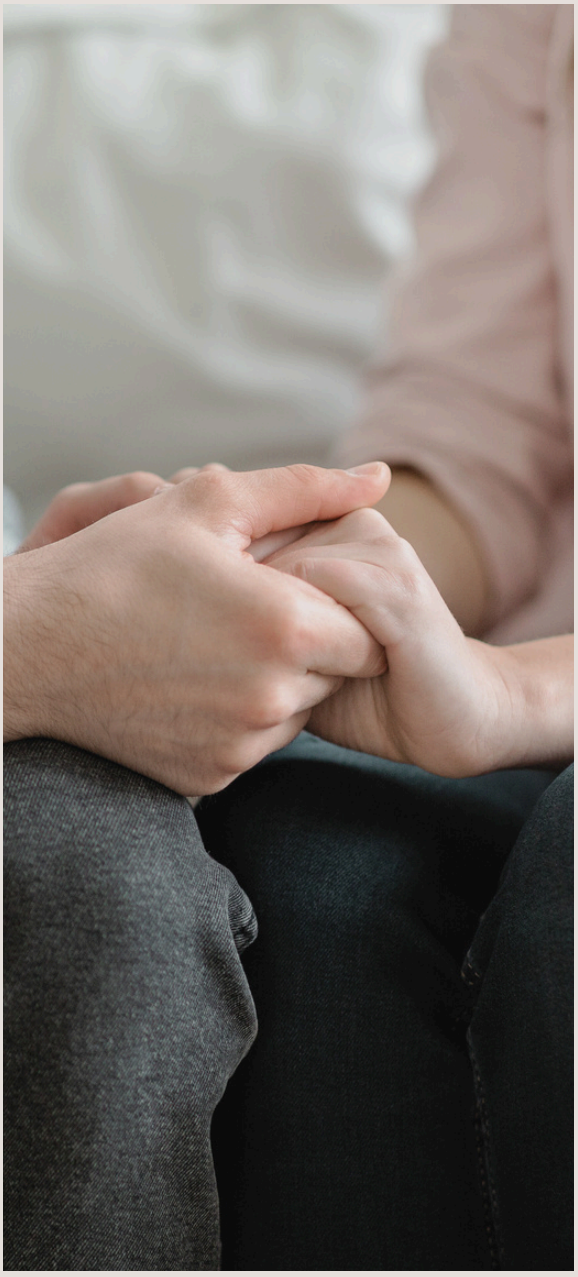
Peter's instructions in 1 Peter 2-3 reveal the strategy clearly. He begins by describing Christ's submission on the cross—which wasn't passive acceptance but a strategic act that released transformative power. Then he tells slaves, wives, and husbands each to adopt this same attitude "in the same way."

Christ's submission wasn't about accepting permanent subjugation to human depravity—it was about releasing Kingdom power that would ultimately overthrow the very systems that crucified Him. Likewise, the submission of both slaves and wives wasn't meant to perpetuate their subordination but to transform these systems from within.

04 The Foundation of Mutual Submission

The context of Ephesians 5:22 is crucial. In the original Greek, the verse doesn't even contain the word "submit"—it borrows it from verse 21: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." This mutual submission is the foundation for everything that follows.

The husband's call to "love as Christ loved the Church" is essentially a call to submission. You can't love as Christ loved without laying down your life in service, which is what true submission means. This is mutual submission in practice.



The Revolutionary Implications

When we recognize this pattern—that instructions about wives' submission always appear alongside instructions about slaves' submission—everything changes. These passages weren't establishing eternal hierarchies; they were showing believers how to navigate them while unleashing Kingdom transformation.

Reversing Repression:

1. Just as the Gospel put an "expiration date" on slavery, it did the same for all forms of supremacy, including male dominance. How quickly those systems would fall depended on how deeply believers embraced and lived out Christ's revolutionary love.
2. Submission in God's Kingdom is always mutual. Everyone is called to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). The husband as "head" doesn't mean authority but refers to his responsibility to initiate the kind of self-giving love that makes two people truly one.
3. Paul and Peter weren't endorsing patriarchy; they were subverting it through love. They were showing how to work within broken systems without surrendering to them—just as Joseph did in Potiphar's house and Daniel did in Babylon.
4. The husband's call to love the wife as Christ loved the Church is essentially a call to submission. You can't love as Christ loved without laying down your life in service, which is what true submission means. This is mutual submission in practice..

Living in this Truth



Understanding these passages in their true light liberates both men and women to build relationships that reflect the relationship of the Trinity itself, which is a beautiful dance of mutual love and honor. It frees us from dominance-based hierarchies that distort God's design and limit His people's full potential.



When we recognize that neither slavery nor gender hierarchy was God's original design, we're free to embrace the new creation reality where:

- Relationships are built on mutual honor rather than control
- Leadership flows from loving service rather than positional authority
- Both men and women fully express their God-given callings
- Marriage becomes a picture of Christ and the Church, a powerful union



Rather than viewing these passages as establishing gender roles that divide us, we can see how they actually point to the love that unites us—the same self-giving love revealed in Christ that will ultimately transform all human relationships.

If you'd like to explore these revolutionary insights further, check out my book ***"BLIND SPOT: Breaking Free from Distorted Views of Biblical Submission and Headship."***

This eye-opening book examines how we've misread these passages for centuries and offers a refreshing perspective that aligns with the liberating power of the Gospel. This truth will break off centuries of chains that have disempowered millions of people – men and women alike. It's time for the kingdoms of this world to become the Kingdom of our King.

- SUSAN DEWBREW



About Me



Hi, I'm Susan Dewbrew!

My journey changed forever one Sunday morning. Sitting in my husband Gregory's big comfy chair, where he spends time with the Lord daily, I experienced an eye-opening revelation. Here I was staring at the "slaves submit" verses in direct proximity to the "wives submit" verses.—It was the same message! And it was NOT endorsing dominance-based hierarchies in humanity.

In that moment, everything changed. I had been speaking and writing for years about how the Bible had been misinterpreted regarding women. And it was "wives submitting" that was the one area everyone seemed to get particularly hung up on. No matter how well we explained the words for biblical submission and head, there was a hard spot in people's hearts.

Here I sat with a game-changing revelation. It wasn't just about what words Paul and Peter chose—it was their specific strategy that came to life right in front of me! My book BLIND SPOT was born from this revelation—realizing we've filtered Scripture through flawed perceptions, missing how God's Kingdom intentionally and strategically makes all forms of supremacy impossible.

By day, I am a real estate broker. I founded Dewbrew Realty in Dallas-Fort Worth, rooting my business model in Kingdom principles. But my deepest passion is seeing healing in individuals and unity in homes. My husband, Gregory, shares this vision. He also founded Harvesting-In-Mansfield food bank and writes a short devotional, "The Daily Vitamin."

Join us in this Kingdom revolution! The truth has been hiding in plain sight—come and see!

Susan

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