

DECEMBER STUDY

I Surrender My Marriage



Our culture is saturated with ideas about “following your heart” and relationship advice. As humans, we crave the relationship of marriage and the benefits it has to offer.

Marriage is fulfilling, but it is also challenging. Our culture craves the intimate relationship only found in marriage, but is searching to find it on “our terms” and not God’s. We think our terms will eliminate difficulty.

Our gender roles are blurred and compromised; “commitment” becomes a relative term; and love an adjective instead of a verb.

We have allowed these principles to enter into our Christian culture. We search for fulfillment in our Christian marriages and do not realize we are searching in cultural principles instead of surrendering our marriages to God’s standards.

Surrendering Our Roles in Marriage

“Stop making your obedience to God contingent on your spouses actions.” This quote reminded me of one of the most revolutionary truths given to me for my marriage: both my husband and I are God’s children.

We hear this all the time, but in my marriage, tendencies are to get caught up in which child is justified in his or her actions.

If my husband speaks to me dis-

respectfully when aggravated, I can either choose to respond hastily with some pet peeve of mine and start a war, or I can choose to act biblically. Choosing to spout back with a smart remark gives God two children to have to “deal” with, but choosing to act in a way pleasing to Christ, only gives Him one child to discipline.

For some reason, this view has changed my perspective on marriage dramatically. Perhaps we feel we have to take on the role of God to take vengeance or correction into our own hands.

When we choose to react in the wrong way, we block God from dealing with the situation in His wisdom. When we react in a way pleasing to God, it paves the way for His conviction to work more powerfully than our meager words or petty actions ever could.

Reflective Questions: Read 1 Peter 3:1-6. This passage gives wives instructions on how to “win” husbands and faithfully carry out their role as wives.

What does verse 1 say about “nagging” our husbands?

Does nagging work or not work?

Verse 2 gives us an alternative to nagging. What is it?

Practically, what would this behavior look like in your own marriage?

Although taking pride in our appearance is not wrong, verse 3 points out that this alone will not bring a lasting effect of pleasing God or our husbands. According to verse 4, what will work?

How does a “quiet and meek” spirit look in a marriage?

Do you think carrying out the biblical role of a wife could convict husbands to carrying out their biblical role?

Application: Ask God to reveal the situations where it is harder for you to give up your own ideas of how to control a situation or argument in your marriage. Confess how difficult it may feel to live out the role specified in 1 Peter 3 and ask God to lead you in practical ways to start living out this role. Ask God to use your actions to make it easier for your spouse to fulfill his role as a husband.

Surrendering Our Source of Completion

When I was dating, I often heard the well-meaning advice: “Find a mate that completes and complements you.” With bright-eyed ambition, I set out to find this person. I walked down an aisle and said my marriage vows with this advice still ringing in my head. I thought that surely I had found “the one” who would complete me and give me full joy. Though searching for Godly character traits is wise, I was diving

into marriage for all of the wrong reasons. Although unaware of my attitude toward marriage, I went into it looking for service for myself and for fulfillment in ways my husband would provide for me.

Of course, I intended to hand out service and kindness myself, but my overall ambition for marriage was to be served and to let someone else make me happy. I didn't understand that marriage would become my most important and lifelong ministry of servanthood.

The longer I am married, the more I understand God's purpose and constitution of marriage. I see His genius in joining two

fallible and incomplete people into the same household with opposing male and female brains.

Although it seems like a recipe for extreme disaster that can magnify our faults and our selfishness, it also has the ability to make us mature in love by requiring us to emulate Christ-like love when we don't feel like it.

You see, marriage has made me complete, and not because of my husband's servitude or character traits, but because I have found that marriage is my most important act of service and ministry—forcing me to draw closer to Christ and plead that He make me more like Him.

Read Colossians 2:10; Philippians 1:6; John 15:9-12.

John 15:9-12 speaks of the source of our complete joy. Does this passage say our joy and fulfillment comes from others' actions?

What is our source of full joy according to this passage?

When looking at your own marriage through the "lens" of Philippians 1:6, what do you see?

Application: Ask God to help you identify the difficult parts of your marriage where it is harder for you to have a joyful attitude of service. Thank God for the promise found in Philippians 1:6 and ask Him to help lead and strengthen you, continuing the work He has started in your marriage, and making you more like Him. Pray the same for your husband.

Surrendering to Submission

“Submission.” Somehow, this word from Ephesians 5:22 and other Scriptures, has become one of the most controversial words we have ever heard as women. Some negativity may be tied to a culture where life became a “man’s world,” and women simply revolved around them.

Somehow, it could be tied to an experience in an argument when a husband disrespectfully blurts, “You are to respect and submit to me!” It could be tied to forms of abuse. No matter the source, negativity is far from what God intended for this dreaded word “submission.”

As a young wife, I often struggle with submission, but I am growing. In experience and in God’s Word (Hebrews 13:17), I find that God gave us the submission role because it offers us rest and freedom. As women, we tend to find many things to worry about, but when we are submitting to our husbands, we are, in a sense, relinquishing those worrisome issues. We’re saying, “God, I’ve respectfully voiced my opinions and thoughts to my husband. Now, I am trusting you to convict him and lead him toward the right decisions.”

When we take our hands, our nagging, and our spiteful words and actions out of the equation,

it reveals that our trust in God is deeper than our trust and reliance in our husbands.

Submission to our husband shows we value our relationship with Christ even more because we are showing a deeper trust in Him, His conviction, His leadership, and His commands.

Submission paves the way for God to work at His full potential in our husbands’ hearts and in our homes.

Reflective Questions: Read Ephesians 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Samuel 25.

Many women are in difficult marriages or situations, and the submission principle is even harder to follow. One of my favorite stories about a woman exhibiting submission, gracefulness, and wisdom in an impossible situation is the story of Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. Abigail put aside her emotions and saved her household and David.

How might this story have ended if Abigail acted resentfully toward her husband?

What did Abigail do in verses 36 and 37 that showed she was still submitting unto her husband as unto the Lord?

Did God show He was in control in this situation?

A common and extreme misconception is women are to never speak and voice their opinion. Is that the case in the story of Abigail?

What are some other Scriptures or biblical principles that offer answers to this question?

Finally, submission is often mistaken for making a woman “weak” or “dumb.” Do we see that in the passages just read?

Application: Spend some time with God, asking Him to reveal where you have difficulty submitting to your husband. Ask God to give you the strength to change those areas and to use that submission to strengthen your marriage, your relationship with Christ, and your husband’s relationship with Christ. Also, pray that God will strengthen your husband’s leadership in your home and live out his role to love you “as Christ also loved the church.”

*Note: Submission does *not* include allowing abusive situations to continue. If you are in an abusive situation, please seek counsel and help.

Surrendering Our Marriages to the Meaning of “Love”

“But I just don’t love him anymore.” This is a tired excuse many pastors and counselors have heard many times. Of course, the woman (or man) using this excuse is trying to say the feelings she has toward her husband doesn’t make her happy anymore; unaware she is admitting she doesn’t put forth the effort to show acts of love.

Somehow, we have confused “love” as a description of our feelings instead of a verb. When we enter a marriage, we make a commitment to God and to our spouse to show acts of love, independent of our feelings. We have reversed the order of feelings vs. love.

Will our acts of love and service always change our spouse’s actions toward us? Maybe not always, but we do it because we love God and we promised Him we would show love without contingency upon our spouses’ actions or our feelings.

When I want to host a “pity-party” about loving my husband when

I think he does not deserve it, I remember Christ's action of laying down His life. This is the very definition of love. I cringe when I think about where I would be at this very moment if Christ had decided whether or not to show love based on His feelings. He chose to renounce His feeling and show love to us—the very ones beating and mocking Him, spitting on Him, and nailing Him to a cross.

Reflective Questions: Read 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 4:7.

We refer to 1 Corinthians 13 as "The Love Chapter." Are all of these "love" definitions feelings or actions?

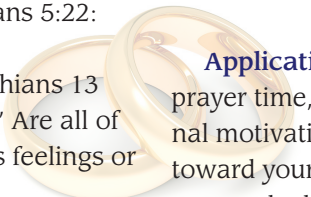
According to 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, do our marriages even have hope without acts of love?

Do these Scriptures seem to imply that we can have an attitude of love from our own human effort or desire?

How do you think we acquire and exhibit this type of love? (See Galatians 5:22; 1 John 4:7)

Does 1 Peter 4:8 suggest our love is meant for people (or husbands) who don't sin or disappoint us?

How can we keep an attitude of love toward our spouse when we do not "feel" like it?



Application: During your prayer time, reflect on your internal motivation in showing love toward your spouse. Ask God to reveal where you could show more love toward your husband that would bring glory to His Name. If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, ask Him to remind you of His sacrifice so you can emulate that same love and sacrifice daily. If you have not accepted Christ as your Savior, I encourage you to accept and experience this selfless and unconditional love (John 3:16).

About the Writer: Emily Frady, resides in Pikeville, Tennessee, with her husband Jacob. They have two young daughters. Emily is a Special Education preschool teacher and enjoys playing music with her husband.