

Submission

What is Submission:

When we practice the Spiritual Discipline of Submission, we place our lives under God's authority. Submission begins by yielding or surrendering first to God and then to the Scriptures, then to other people. Richard Foster says that submission is "the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way... If we could only see that most things in life are not major issues, then we could hold them lightly... In submission we are at last free to value other people"

Jesus showed us the example of true humility. The King of kings himself even lived in submission to the very people he created! Jesus confined himself to human flesh, obeyed his parents, relied on his disciples for support, performed menial tasks, surrendered to soldiers and ultimately demonstrated the greatest form of submission – His death on the cross.

What are the benefits of practicing submission? The greatest spiritual danger most of us face is pride – an inflated sense of self and a need to have our own way. Submission teaches us the truth about ourselves: God is in charge. We learn to accept guidance and correction from God and others. In submission we receive freedom from the bondage of always needing to have things our way.

Submission reminds us that we NEED God. When we practice submission, we learn that strength is found through our dependence upon Christ. We become secure in the knowledge that God loves us. Therefore we no longer feel the need to "prove" ourselves to others, to always be right or obtain the latest and greatest item to prove our own importance. It also teaches us to regard others as equals, and not think of ourselves as "better".

We submit out of love for God. Our submission to God should be joyful and grateful. As we surrender, the thought of what we have given up enters our minds less and less. It's like the writing of a blank check. Sign it and turn it over, saying, "Fill it in and cash it, Lord." In other words, we commit before His asking, that whatever He asks, we will do. Our agreement to do what He asks is not dependent in any way on what He asks.

Since submission is such a difficult disciple, there is enormous potential for it to be misunderstood, so it is important that we define what it is NOT. It is not simply yielding to every pressure, nor is it always capitulating to someone else's opinion or demands (many times we are called to stand up for our beliefs and refuse to do things that are against the scriptures).

Getting Started:

- Submit to Scripture: The Bible is God's revealed word. By following it's teachings we honor God. .
- Submit to our families: How many of us have difficulties going on in our homes that are simply prideful conflicts? How many of us need to simply give in or let go? Often the issues we are fighting about are simply not that important. We fight out of a desire for power or a need to control. Scripture says look not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others.
- Submit to the believing church: If there are jobs to be accomplished in the Church, peace to be made, comfort to be given or prayers to be prayed, then we should be available to do those things. If you feel the task at hand is not something you should have to do, then consider the example of Jesus gave us in John 13 when he washed the disciples feet.
- Submission in daily life – how do you react when someone ignores the “merge” signs, zooms to the front and then expects to cut in at the last minute? What other ways can you practice appropriate Christian submission to others in daily situations?
- Submission to persons. Focus on the way you view other people, especially when they place demands on you, disagree with you or criticize you. Do you outwardly do what they ask but inwardly rebel against them? Do you feel like a martyr? Remind yourself that the real issue is your own spirit of consideration and respect for the other person.

Ideas for more in-depth practice:

- Evaluate and become aware of your attitudes: Write down the last three times you can recall getting angry or frustrated with another person. Now that you are somewhat removed from the situation, make an honest assessment of it. Was it really that important? Did the argument arise because you were insisting on your own way? Was that necessary?
- Make a conscious commitment for one day (or perhaps even a few hours) to submit to everyone (within reason.) Let go of your own need to be right. Allow others to do things their own way without harboring judgment or resentment. At the end of the day, reflect and possibly journal about the experience. Did you feel more relaxed knowing you were going to let others do it their way and you didn't have to “correct” or “instruct” people? Was it hard to do this? What did you struggle with most?

- Submission to events. Before going to bed, review the day and note one thing that went wrong--like getting caught in traffic, finding no parking place, or having to drop what you were doing in order to do something else. Remember your feelings of irritation or anger, and what you said to yourself inwardly. Replay your memory and experiment with different things to say to yourself until you find one that frees you from irritation or anger in such situations.

Relevant Quotes:

- "Jesus took a towel and a basin and redefined greatness." -Richard Foster
- "What God asks of us is a will which is no longer divided between him and any creature." – Francois Fenelon
- "...surrender to God's will is the Father's claim, the Son's example and the true blessedness of the soul." Andrew Murray
- "We grow up into Christ by growing down into lowliness." JI Packer
- "The highest level of fellowship—involving humility, complete honesty, transparency, and at times confession and restitution—is sustained by the discipline of submission." - Dallas Willard

Biblical Basis:

- "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal 2:20
- "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit." Gal 5:25
- "Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.'" John 5:19
- "He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.'" Mark 8: 34-35
- "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." – 1Pet 5:6-7
- "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." - Ephesians 5:21
- "Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers." – Rom 12:10-13
- "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." Phil 2:3-4
- "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matt 6:10 (KJV)
- "He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.'" – Mark 9:35