

Sermon outline:

One Challenging Definition

Two Challenging Examples

Three Challenging Words

Four Challenging Implications



One Challenging Definition that changes our world view

The dictionary defines submit as ‘accept without resistance the orders or treatment or lot met with, give way, yield (to authority, insult, conqueror, etc)’ and submissive as ‘unresisting or meek’. These all carry with them a negative connotation of weakness and passivity. Yet Jesus, as he always does, turns our understanding on its head and redefines whole words and concepts, saying, ‘Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.’ (matt 5:5) The **meek** are the “gentle” (cf. [11:29](#)), those who do not assert themselves over others in order to further their own agendas in their own strength, but who will nonetheless **inherit the earth** because they trust in God to direct the outcome of events. Cf. [Ps. 37:11](#). So there’s clearly something quite different at work here. On the face of it, the Bible means the same thing when it describes submission, but there is nothing negative about this. We are to be more than conquerors through submission, not doormats. The centurion who asked Jesus to heal his paralysed servant understood this. He was a man submitted to authority and knew it was a discipline of power.

The Faith of a Centurion]

[5] When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, [6] “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” [7] And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.” [8] But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.

[9] For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." [10] When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. [11] I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, [12] while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [13] And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

(Matthew 8:5-13 ESV)

From the concordance for further study: see appendix B

Bearing in mind this is a discipline, and we view all disciplines as centred upon Jesus, and a means in our own lives of drawing us into a freedom of life with him, what then is submission as the Bible defines it? It is to gladly, freely subject and yield oneself to a higher authority, namely God himself. It is to joyfully confess that there is one who knows best and far better than we ever could, so we can with deep contentment offer our lives to him and follow his leading. And when there is a conflict between the ways of God and our own desires, we know that we should trust his ways. And this presents us with a great freedom in life. It means an end to battling for power over our own lives and the lives of others. Jesus put it this way,

[34] And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [35] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

(Mark 8:34-35 ESV)

In other words, Jesus is teaching us that the way to self-fulfillment is through self-denial.

But why is this such a challenge for human beings? Why is the concept so counter-cultural and greeted with such hostility? In the Garden of Eden, the temptation was to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then we would be like God. And here is the crux of the matter. Sin is declaring we don't need God, we can become our own gods, knowing everything ourselves, and not having to defer to a higher authority. Our sinful desire is to dominate our own lives with our will, and by extension also exercise control over others. And because many have experienced the domineering control of others, we're resistant to the concept of submission without seeing that the desire for power and control is also a blight in our own lives. Our lives can become a battleground – who has control of my life? I want control, but I make a mess of it. I want to make all the decisions but get into all sorts of scrapes of my own making. God's way is different but until the Holy Spirit begins his work of regeneration, I can't even begin to see it or apply it.

Rom 8:7 for the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed it cannot.

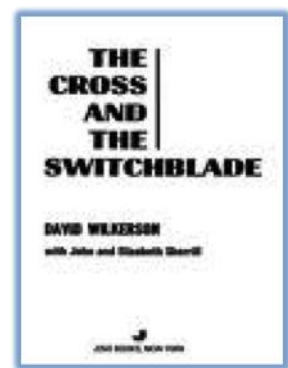
But once the Holy Spirit begins to work in our hearts, we become alive to God. The heart of the issue is therefore a faith issue. Do I trust that as I hand my life over to the control of God, I am absolutely doing the very best thing I could with it? If I do, then submission is seen as not just 'another discipline' but it is the very

heart of the Gospel. Jesus Christ died and was raised to life to deal with my sin and independence, which had me ruined. I am now free to submit my life to my loving heavenly father and be released from the power that sin had over me. And if we don't stand firm in that freedom, if we try to wrestle control back to ourselves, we are foolish and find ourselves slipping into bondage again.

Gal 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

At this point you might like to watch a short video clip called 'The Stool', that illustrates submission to God. Click on the hyperlink or copy and paste the following into your browser if the hyperlink is not enabled:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3qh2dJxUy8&feature=related>



Two Challenging Examples – the sign and the reality

Abraham – read Genesis 22 to get the story

In the Bible the first mention of something is often a very powerful sign to point the way to a greater reality. That reality is there in seed form but often only seen with the wisdom of hindsight. The story of Abraham being prepared to sacrifice Isaac is in many ways a very strange incident and, if it happened today, would have us speed dialling the Child Protection Duty Officer. But we need to understand that Abraham was a man of his time and God was teaching us all a very important lesson through this. And it wasn't that we should slaughter children, but that submitting to God's will, even in the face of great personal cost, releases God's provision and blessing on a massive scale.

Let's pick up just a few aspects of the story to illustrate this, before turning to the life of Jesus to see how it foreshadowed a greater reality.....

*[God] said, "Take your son, **your only son Isaac, whom you love**, and go to the land of **Moriah**, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*

(Genesis 22:2 ESV) – reminds us of John 3:16 and that the Temple and Golgotha were both part of Mount Moriah

On the third day – it took three days from the decision to obey to God providing salvation, and Jesus was in the tomb for three days.

*“Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” [8] Abraham said, “**God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.**” So they went both of them together.
(Genesis 22:7-8 ESV)*

*[14] So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “**On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.**”
(Genesis 22:14 ESV)*

The act of submission releases a huge promise of God.....

*[16] and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, [17] I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, [18] and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”
(Genesis 22:16-18 ESV)*

So what does this story teach us? Even when it seems strange or unfathomable, submission to God’s ways releases his promises. It’s even a means of escape from our enemy:

*[6] But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” [7] Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [8] Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
(James 4:6-8 ESV)*

Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2)

Before he commenced his earthly ministry he withdrew into the wilderness and there was tempted to do things his way rather than following the will of the Father. But he **set the pattern** that was to follow for the next three years. As he walked Palestine healing the sick, casting out demons and teaching about God’s love, he **confirmed** again and again that he had chosen to do the will of the Father.

And then we come to the Garden of Gethsemane...

*[36] Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” [37] And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. [38] Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” [39] And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”
(Matthew 26:36-39 ESV)*

In the garden Jesus once more submitted himself to the Father’s will. It was **signed** as he prayed and allowed the soldiers to take him even though he could have called on legions of angels. It was **sealed** as he stood before authorities and did not open his mouth to defend himself though he was the King of Glory, and it was **delivered** as he hung on the cross so that he could proclaim, ‘It is finished’. The will of the Father had been accomplished.

The Old Testament speaks prophetically of piercing as a sign of submission:

[21:1] “Now these are the rules that you shall set before them. [2] When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.

[4] If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone. [5] But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' [6] then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever. (Exodus 21:1-2,4-6 ESV)

The psalms speak of the innocent suffering yet being vindicated and Jesus quotes the psalm from the cross
[22:1] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
(Psalm 22:1 ESV)

*[16] For dogs encompass me;
 a company of evildoers encircles me;
 they have pierced my hands and feet—
 [17] I can count all my bones—
 they stare and gloat over me;
 [18] they divide my garments among them,
 and for my clothing they cast lots.*

(Psalm 22:16-18 ESV)

Isaiah speaks of the suffering servant who would be pierced for our transgressions
Is 53:7-12

And in the gospels we see the reality
John 19:34,37

But if we see this as a sad story of injustice, we've completely missed the point. His submission to the will of the Father was the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham completely – God himself provided the lamb for the sacrifice. The only son, beloved of the Father, was bound onto the wood and sacrificed on mount Moriah, that through him every nation should be blessed. And as Abraham foresaw, there would be a resurrection (Gen 22:5 and Heb 11:17-19). Death would not be able to hold the beloved son and so the promise would be released. That everyone who calls on the name of the Lord should be saved. This is not the God who demands that we make sacrifices. This is the God who himself provides what is necessary for life in all its abundant freedom.



Three Challenging Words that ring in our ears

John the Baptist

28] You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' [29] The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. [30] He must increase, but I must decrease."

(John 3:28-30 ESV)

Jesus

Mt 20:26-27

Mt 23:11-12

Mk 9:35

[42] And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. [43] But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. [45] For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(Mark 10:42-45 ESV)

Lk 22:26

Paul

[17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18] And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, [20] giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, [21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

(Ephesians 5:17-21 ESV)



Four Challenging Implications to our assumptions and preconceptions

Hierarchy goes out of the window: *Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21)*

NT gives several instances of relationships and looks at submission from both sides. This is not to be seen as an exhaustive list, rather examples of how this works out. Wives are instructed to submit to husbands, but husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.

[Wives and Husbands]

[22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

[25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

(Ephesians 5:22-28 ESV)

[Slaves and Masters]

[5] Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, [6] not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, [7] rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, [8] knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. [9] Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

(Ephesians 6:5-9 ESV)

[Children and Parents]

[6:1] Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2] "Honour your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), [3] "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." [4] Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

(Ephesians 6:1-4 ESV)

[Rules for Christian Households]

[18] Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. [19] Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. [20] Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. [21] Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. [22] Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. [23] Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, [24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. [25] For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

[4:1] Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. (Colossians 3:18-4:1 ESV)

Submission can be one of the most abused of the disciplines and we may have had some very bad experiences in certain areas of others exercising inappropriate and unreasonable power over us. But as we see that submission is to God and this frees our spirits to soar, it enables us to have a right view and exercise of submission. The apostle John was imprisoned on the isle of Patmos by corrupt authorities (to whom we are told to submit), but his spirit was free to experience wonderful things. Some might say self-denial and submitting to someone else's will means we'd lose our identity. But did Jesus lose his identity as he set his face towards Golgotha? The Jewish authorities and the Roman government were using their power inappropriately, but Jesus still submitted because he knew he was submitting to a higher power, a higher authority who was ultimately in charge. So inappropriate use of power by others doesn't let us off the hook or mean that we don't have to act according to the words that we've heard. There is no 'Get out of jail free' card.

Some might have been very badly affected by this in the past, and the temptation is to run away from the subject. But today God can release us from the damage caused by others and help us to have a right view and practice. There are four aspects of relationships that frequently give people trouble

1. parents – we may have parents who exercised a great deal of power over us, consciously or unconsciously so that our spirits were made timid and imprisoned, or we became rebellious in response to their attempts to control us
2. work – we may serve a domineering boss or supervisor. They may be authoritarian imposing their will on you and making unreasonable demands
3. marriage – your spouse may not be prepared to keep their side of the bargain made on your wedding day
4. church membership – you may have experience of oppressive church leaders who demanded submission from you.

Those wrong views are colouring the way you behave now and you need to forgive whoever has wronged you in this way so that God can bring healing into the situation and help you to experience the freedom he has for you.

[Retaliation]

[38] "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' [39] But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. [40] And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. [41] And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. [42] Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

[Love Your Enemies]

[43] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' [44] But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your

Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

(Matthew 5:38-45 ESV)

Appendix A: Further areas for study:

1. What are the limits of submission and why is that important?
 - a. What would we do about the scripture (Romans 13:1) telling us to obey all human authorities if we lived under a corrupt regime that demanded we do things against the word of God?
 - b. How do we submit to someone, such as a boss at work, when they're not treating us very nicely?
 - c. What do the following scriptures teach us about submission in difficult circumstances:
Matthew 5:39 and 44?
2. Why was Jesus' teaching on submission so revolutionary?
3. What is the freedom in submission and have you entered into any experience of this?
4. Foster, in his book, 'Celebration of Discipline' describes seven acts of submission:
 - a. To God: Father, Son and Spirit
 - b. To the Scriptures
 - c. To our family
 - d. To our neighbours and those we meet in our daily life
 - e. To the believing community
 - f. To the broken and despised
 - g. To the world

Which of these challenge you most and why? What action can you take?

Appendix B: From the concordance

Verb: *hupeiko* (Strong's 5226) – to retire, withdraw hence 'to yield, submit' is used metaphorically in Heb 13:17 of submitting to spiritual guides in the churches.

But also translated 'subject, subjection'

Verb: *hupotasso* (Strong's 5293) – primarily a military term, 'to rank under' denotes:

- a. to put in subjection, to subject 1Cor15:27(3x),28(3rd clause), Eph1:22, Heb2:8, etc.
- b. in the middle or passive voice, to subject oneself, to obey, be subject to Lk2:51, 10:17, 20, Rom8:7, 10:3, 13:1, 5, 1Cor14:34, 15:28, 16:16, Col3:18, Eph5:21, Titus2:5, etc

Adjective: *enochos* (Strong's 1777) – held in, bound by Heb2:15

*Noun: **hupotage** (Strong's 5292) – subjection 2Cor9:13, Gal2:5, 1Tim2:11, 3:4*

SUBMIT (ESV Bible)

Genesis 16:9 The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and **submit** to her."

Psalm 81:11 "But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not **submit** to me.

Romans 8:7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not **submit** to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

Romans 10:3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not **submit** to God's righteousness.

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not **submit** again to a yoke of slavery.

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, **submit** to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:24 Now as the church **submits** to Christ, so also wives should **submit** in everything to their husbands.

Colossians 2:20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you **submit** to regulations—

Colossians 3:18 Wives, **submit** to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and **submit** to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

James 4:7 **Submit** yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1 Peter 3:5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by **submitting** to their own husbands,

SUBMISSION (ESV Bible)

Romans 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

1 Corinthians 14:34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in **submission**, as the Law also says.

2 Corinthians 9:13 By their approval of this service, they^[1] will glorify God because of your **submission** flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ^[1]Or *you*

Galatians 2:5 to them we did not yield in **submission** even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

1 Peter 2:13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution,^[1] whether it be to the emperor^[2] as supreme, ^[1]Or *every institution ordained for people* ^[2]Or *king*; also verse 17

SUBMITTING (ESV Bible)

Ephesians 5:21 ...**submitting** to one another out of reverence for Christ.

1 Peter 3:5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by **submitting** to their own husbands,