

The Art of Community Series

Week 6 - The Art of Submission

The Story of Esther & Philippians 2:3-4

June 2nd, 2019

As we continue diving into this series on the art of community, we've decided to tackle the very interesting, and sometimes provocative, topic of "submission." As Krissy and I were brainstorming about potential topics, our eyes lit up when the words "tradition" and "submission" came forward. We both chuckled a little as we began to think through how these words might be perceived as we introduced the topics to the church. We wondered excitedly about how we could reconstruct "submission" for those of us that get a sour stomach when we hear that word uttered from a pulpit. Truly, most of the utterings, in my listening experience, have been references to Ephesians 5:22, "Wives submit to your husbands...husband love your wives as Christ loves the church." Admittedly, this excerpt from scripture is NOT inherently misogynistic, however, often times it becomes a diving board for soapbox sermons urging wives to be meek and mild, and at its worst, spineless, while refraining from challenging husbands to love like Christ. Phew, this conversation can get hairy real quick. So, as I continue typing, I've come to almost wish I could change the topic because it might be more daunting than I originally realized. Yet, here we are. Deep breath.

Though we could most definitely spend a great deal of time examining Ephesians 5:22 for all its worth, I'd like to focus on a much broader version of submission found in the story of Esther.

In a nutshell, Esther's story is one of subjugation under King Xerxes, then exultation to queen status, and finally a willing submission of her own life for the lives of her people. Esther's example has inspired many to stretch outside of themselves for the greater will of God.

Word Study

Submission - **hupotasso** - to put under, subject to. [Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, G5293](#)

As this study developed, an interesting relationship came forward. It seems "submission" has a dance partner, and her name is "humility."

Humility - **tapeinos** - make low, lowliness of mind. Tapeinos and its cognates are found about 270 times in the LXX. NIDNTI, Vol. 2

The foundation of this is found in Jesus' own way of life, as he interpreted it in his invitation in Matt. 11:28 ff. He is "meek" and "lowly in heart." The two thoughts stand parallel and show that Jesus was submissive before God, completely dependent on him, and devoted to him, and at the same time humble before men whose servant and helper he had become (Lk. 22:27; Mk 10:45; Matt. 20:28). NIDNTI, Vol. 2, p. 262

I'd also like to tie Esther's story of humility and submission to Philippians 2:3-4,

"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

A Benedictine nun, Sister Joan Chittister, has an incredible way with words. She tackled this topic in an excerpt from her book, Radical Spirit.

"Submission to the will of God, of course, requires that I finally learn to relinquish my rabid devotion to self-will. The entire world, the whole universe, is the treasure house of the will of God, the mind of God for us all. It means that when I find myself liking my ideas and my plans better than others, struggling to impose them, cutting people off in conversation before they can even lay out all of their ideas, the caution light will go on in my heart. I will then begin to think again -- only this time I will be thinking about everyone else's ideas and answers, plans and visions, needs and hopes for life. Not simply my own...Humility is the virtue of liberation from the tyranny of self." *P.P. 46 ff.*

Sister Joan also goes on to describe what true humility and submission are NOT.

"Spinelessness, the adulation of weakness in the face of evil when strength is what's required, only makes a person more interested in social approval than in following Jesus. The inability to speak up for the truth, for justice, for the end of social corruption is NOT humility. It is, at best, a mask that hides our inability either to make a decision or to take a stand in the face of sin...Authority must never trump justice." *P.P. 42-43*

Queen Esther understood these things. She stood up with the gentle strength of a humble leader, and saved a nation. She submitted to the will of God, emptying self-will, and became a humble servant and helper to her people.

As Philippians 2:3-4 challenges us to think of others as better than ourselves, we must raise others up with our whole selves in order to live like this. This doesn't mean unnecessarily lowering our view of self in order to compensate, but, instead, to lift the value of others above our own value as Christ has done for us.