

When Submission to Your Husband Turns Into Abuse

I rose early this morning, grabbed a cup of coffee, and walked into our in-home office. My mind was too busy to focus, so I picked up my husband's Bible that has served him well for many years. When I opened it, there was a small piece of paper folded neatly inside. Intrigued, I opened it and read it. I was almost brought to tears when I read the words that were written so long ago. It was a list of qualities he was praying for in his wife. I read quickly wondering what his mind was thinking more than 11 years ago before we were married.

The list written is as follows:

1. *Good family, especially relationship with father – (check)*
2. *Tall – (I'm 5'6" not necessarily tall)*
3. *Pretty – (I know he thinks I am pretty, he tells me 100 times a day)*
4. *Loves God – (check, without a doubt)*
5. *People person – (I smiled when I read this one as I have never met a stranger)*
6. *Humble – (when I met Jesus I was so messed up! My life back then really helped this one.)*
7. *Able to pray, prays for me – (double check)*
8. *Close relationship with God – (yesssss)*
9. *Can complement my gifts and ministry – (why I was attracted to him in the first place)*
10. *Loves kids (I loved this one to as we have 4 kids, 2*

biological and 2 adopted)

I paused and continued to read, but as I read the last desire, I stopped.

11. Can live without me, totally in love with God. Loves God more than me and has a servant's heart ...

With that, the list ended. I sat for a moment and absorbed the sweet, thoughtful list Eddie had been praying more than 11 years ago. The “can live without me” desire really caught me off guard.

Now, everyone who knows me knows that I was born a leader. I have a strong personality, and after I realized who I was in the Lord, I have been driven to do anything I can for His name. While being a strong man himself, Eddie has fanned the flame of my dreams since day one of our relationship. I always looked at him in awe as I would drop another dream bomb on him and his response was, “You can do it. I support you.” It hit me this morning that exactly who I am is exactly who he was hoping for. He isn’t intimidated by my strength. He wanted it. He isn’t challenged by it. He encourages it.

My husband and I are one unit (Gen. 2:24); operating as one unit drawing from our strengths and helping each other in our weaknesses. We are a team; we always have been.

I was married to an abusive man before I married Eddie. My previous first husband would recite the verse, “husbands submit to your wives” and then abuse me. I was completely turned off by the word submit, because of the abusive way it had been used against me. However, in that first marriage, I found the Lord. I began a true relationship with Him. God ransomed me from myself—literally as I was suicidal—and through His word, began to heal me. He eventually released me from that first marriage, and because of His faithfulness, I knew I wanted to follow His design for marriage.

I began to study the Bible where it talks about marriage and the blueprint therein. The Bible speaks plainly to men, telling them to love their wives as their own bodies, sacrificially (Eph. 5). When I read the verse about submission, I cringed. "Women, submit yourselves to your husband,"—Eph. 5:22. After the history of being abused with this verse, I knew I needed to study more.

I found that the word submission comes from the Greek word "Huppotasso" which means to willingly place yourself under. It is actually the same word used with Jesus submitting to God on the cross. Jesus and God are equal, however Jesus chose to place Himself under God's desire for the cross. My cringing eased when I saw the word "willingly."

There is no force involved with submission AT ALL. That's called abuse, not submission. In our marriage, it isn't a requirement for me to cater to Eddie's every whim, and I don't believe the Bible teaches that. I do things for Eddie not because I have to—who would ever like that? We both do special things for each other because we love each other. If I am being completely honest, Eddie does special things for me much more than I do them for him.

Studying this word gave me a huge perspective on marriage. Eddie and I are equally important. Neither one more important than the other, but in the rare event we don't agree on a decision, I choose to place myself under his leadership. We make all our decisions together. We pray and seek the Lord, then discuss our direction, and don't move forward until we are united in our decision. I believe unity is another thing God desires in a marriage. Raising four kids and running two organizations, we must be a team. We must operate God's way and we are committed to it.

Our marriage may not look like the submissive wives marriages you've seen before, but we are acting exactly as we know pleases God.

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