

# God-Ordained Followers

“ . . . and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.” Ephesians 5:21 NAS

The Word of God is nothing short of amazing. If you have followed this “God-Ordained” series you have seen that God has an answer for everything. He clearly has an answer for human relations: man to God, husband to wife, wife to husband, parents to children, children to parents and members of His Church to one another. For the statistically minded, there are 106 references to one another in the New Testament and there are 52 different verses containing 30 different commands describing the manner in which we are to “one another” one another. It is from these verses that we will be looking at what it means to be in a God-ordained relationship with followers of Christ.

## Love One Another

The book of 1 John, not the gospel of John, is quite clear about how and why those who know God will be loving toward God and toward each other. 1 John 4:16 says, “**God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**” Which puts into perspective what he said earlier in 1 John 4:7-8 “**Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God . . . .**”

Many of us are familiar with these passages of Scripture and kind of numbly nod our heads up and down in agreement. We have heard the words, we have tried to love and have sought to be loved but “it doesn’t work.” Too many Christians have bought into a humanistic definition of love that is rooted in feeling. Christian love, like Christian unity, is often portrayed as everyone being in a blissful state of euphoria where everything goes right and we have no disagreements. This viewpoint says conflict is bad. Actually, conflict is a natural part of growth.

Love is a relationship, defined by who God is, not a list of responsibilities. Love is a decision to be in relationship, as God chose us as His children (**John 15:16, 19**), not a feeling based on whether or not I am being pleased. God’s love is a decision not based on how righteous we are. Although love includes compassion and mercy, it also demands admonishment of those in rebellion, encouragement to those who are fainthearted and help to those who are weak (**1 Thessalonians 5:14**). Sadly, this kind of balanced love is not often taught or modeled in The Church. True love means speaking the truth in love (**Ephesians 4:15**), even when it hurts. That means we speak to each other the words God has for each of us, for God is love. Followers of Christ seeking to live in a God-ordained relationship with others will love each other in their maturity and their immaturity. This love will be displayed by a willingness to be corrected when wrong, to correct when wronged, to encourage the fearful, to be encouraged when afraid, to be helped when weak and helpful to the weak. This kind of relationship requires the next attribute of God-Ordained Followers.

## Clothed with Humility

“ . . . all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**” 1 Peter 5:5 Humility is not a word frequently used in the American culture. Paul, in a letter to the Philippians probably put it better in terms we

can understand, **“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”** Philippians 2:3-4 He gives us here not only the command, to **“regard one another as more important than himself”**, but also gives the means by which to accomplish that, **“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit”** but to have a humble mind. Truly loving someone else is not at all difficult when I get ME out of the way. The mortal enemy of true love is self. The only antidote to self is Christ.

Notice how carefully God has crafted His Word. He not only gives us the command and what is necessary to fulfill that command, He then gives us the example of what it looks like to be clothed with humility toward one another. **“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus . . . .”** Philippians 2:5 Then He describes how Jesus was the perfect example. Our example! With Christ as our example and humility of mind our practice, it puts the next aspect of a loving relationship into proper focus.

### Submit to One Another

In this American age of individualism it is almost unpatriotic to suggest that one person should submit to another. As we have seen in other aspects of God-Ordained relationships. God's Word does not fit well with Americanism. All our life we are to be subject to others. Children are subject to parents, wives to husbands, laborers to employers and citizens to government authority. Generally speaking, every follower of Christ is subject to every other follower of Christ. Specifically, every member of a congregation is subject to those God has placed in leadership over them, in particular, the elders.

### In General

The fifth chapter of Ephesians is often referred to when the relationship of a husband and wife is sought. Many forget that there are 21 verses, before the description of the role of husband and wife, which describe the relationship each believer is to have with every other believer. It is interesting that this teaching begins with admonishing each of us to be **“imitators of God”**, **“walking in love.”** Verse 21, the concluding verse on our general relationship with each other, puts our relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ very clearly, **“. . . be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”** Unless there is submission there can be no admonishment, encouragement or help given. One has to be willing to be corrected, encouraged or helped for each to be given. On the other hand, one must be mature in their relationship with Christ to be able to admonish, encourage and help in His name.

It is easy to live life from a selfish perspective. Speaking from a humbled mind, clothed with humility toward others puts that selfish perspective to death. Part of being imitators of God is speaking the words of God to each other and keeping quiet where God has not spoken. God gives us the purpose for our speech in **Ephesians 4:29** and **Colossians 4:6**

### Specifically

**“Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”** Hebrews 13:17 This is straight talk from God. God appoints the leaders of the church (**Ephesians 4:11, Acts 20:28**). He appoints them to oversee the members of His Church. When we understand that each of us in The Body of Christ is to be subject to one another, that the position of elder is appointed by God, that the elder is accountable to God for our souls and that He defines their responsibility, it makes sense to come under their authority. For those of us who are strictly motivated by, **“What's in it for me?,”** take a look at the end of verse 17. It is unprofitable for me to not obey and submit to the elders God has placed in authority in The Church.

## Why Not?

As we have seen, God's Word is quite clear on the relationship we are to have with fellow Christians. We are to love one another with the True Love of God. We are to humble ourselves and submit to each other. We are to obey and submit to those whom God has placed in leadership over us. With His Word so clear, why are we not living this way?

The bottom line is Trust. We do not trust that our leaders are God's leaders. We do not trust that our leaders have our best interests at heart. We do not trust our spouse to fulfill their God-ordained roles and responsibilities. BUT, the bottom line is that we do not trust God. We do not trust that His plan will work. We use as our standard of measurement as to what does or does not work, whether or not it pleases ME.

There it is again, ME. "I" am the fountain of wisdom. Not God's Word. Not God's plan. But ME! God has addressed that as well, "Thus says the Yahweh, 'Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the Yahweh. For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, A land of salt without inhabitant.'" Jeremiah 17:5-6 Compare that with, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Yahweh And whose trust is the Yahweh. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes; But its leaves will be green, And it will not be anxious in a year of drought Nor cease to yield fruit." Jeremiah 17:7-8

You have one of two choices. You can believe His Word and live by it faithfully, or you can reject His Word and go your own way. There are no other options. Trying to mix man's wisdom with God's Word doesn't work. His Word is True. ". . . choose for yourselves today whom you will serve . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Yahweh." Joshua 24:15