

Clothed With Christ – Put On Submission

1. Some spiritual disciplines are easier than others. We might even enjoy some spiritual disciplines. I quite like study, silence, simplicity, solitude, service...but there is an “s” word that is more difficult for me and it might be for you: “submission”
2. I was raised to be independent and to be able, when required, to stand alone regardless of what was coming at me or what others were doing. I was taught, in the words of the writer of Hebrews, not to “love my life so much” that I would fail to stand when required.
3. But I wasn’t taught much about submission. I knew all about submission to my parents and to the teaching of my church. I think I ended up knowing a lot more about submission than I realized. I was taught to love and serve others and how to place their needs above my own...but I wasn’t aware that that was submission and it was a spiritual discipline I could grow and shape into something real and beautiful.
4. Paul Miller wrote a book called “Love Walked Among Us.” When working with churches and mental health workers, he often starts his presentations by writing these words on a flip chart: “I don’t do anything on my own. I only do what I see my dad doing.” He then asks the attendees what this sentence reveals about the mental health of the writer.
5. In the age of inward focus and pop psychology, just a few years past a national obsession with Oprah and Dr. Phil, the analyses come fast and clear: the writer has separation issues. He is weak. He has blame issues. He is codependent. You get the idea.
6. That is when Miller reveals that these words were said by Jesus in **John 5:19-20**. Jesus is the model of submission but who here would call him weak? He was a man of purpose and intention. He was no pinball bouncing around in reaction to whatever was said or done around him; he knew who he was, his mission, and how to accomplish it.

7. Even under the greatest pressure imaginable, he stayed strong and ready to do what had to be done (**John 17**).
8. I decided that this sermon belonged here and not two weeks ago. When a nation is celebrating being freed from a king, it is hard to remind them that we HAVE a king, and we are to bow our knee to Him. In fact, it is a GOAL of ours to be in submission to that king.
9. As we did with forgiveness, we need to clearly state what submission is NOT. It is not a loss of freedom. Too many fear that, if they give themselves to Jesus in every moment, they will no longer be free to do what they want to do...and there is some truth there. But the tragedy is that they think they are free now when no one is free outside of Christ.
10. Paul said you either serve the Lord or you are a slave to sin. More than that, you are a slave to this world that has endless claims on you: believe this, be outraged at this, march here, don't march there, post this, pass this on, be afraid of this, shelter in place from that. Outside of Christ, the world owns you and makes you dance its dance daily.
11. Dylan was right – you're gonna have to serve somebody. Jesus reminded us that no one can serve two masters. Joshua told the Israelites to “choose you this day who you will serve.” Martin Luther said that accepting the call of God to preach placed him in chains, but he found freedom in those chains.
12. Some fear that submission is a loss of identity. We call that the Popeye complex (“I yam what I yam” – the grandmother’s statement during a wedding at Rochester). The truth is that we find freedom, meaning and significance when we choose to serve others and to bring them pleasure and peace. It is a choice. Submission means we have taken control of our lives and offered them to Jesus (“Are you afraid to make your own decisions?” I just made one)
13. You will lose yourself in Christ or you will lose yourself in the gray nothingness of the world. Doctor Martin Lloyd-Jones was the most prominent physician of his day. He was even the personal physician of the royal family, but he gave it all up to preach to coal

miners in South Wales. When the London Times ran a story on him, the angle was “how could such a wealthy, prominent man give up everything and leave behind money, position and power?”

14. Lloyd-Jones responded “I gave up nothing. I gain all. It is an honor to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.” We only find freedom when we find our purpose in Christ, that purpose for which we were created ([Psalm 139](#)).
15. God gave us families to teach us submission (parent, child, husband, wife – and all the seasons). Successful families buzz around each other in order to help each other. Successful Christians buzz around their neighborhood to do the same thing: show Jesus.
16. The woman in Proverbs 31 did what she did because of her fear of the Lord ([Proverbs 31:30](#)). [1st Peter 2:11-4:11](#) is all about submission. [Titus 2:1-14](#) is all about submission. I’ll read vv.11-14.
17. [Ephesians 5](#) says we are submit to each other. [Ephesians 6](#) says we are to submit because a war is going on. [Psalm 119](#) is all about submitting to the will and law of God.
18. It is in letting go that we find our freedom. It is in laying aside ourselves that we find our purpose. It is in recognizing the right of God to be our King that we find the yoke of Jesus – a yoke that IS easy and light, just as he said it would be.
19. If you find any of this strange, remember that our God won by dying and invaded the world through the womb of a not quite married teenaged girl in a backwater town. This is how we win: submission to God. That is a choice that only strong people can make.
20. Do the hard thing.