



Dancing  
With the  
One You  
Love

Living Out  
Submission  
in the  
Real World

CINDY EASLEY

## Chapter Two

# Why Is Submission So Hard?



It is better to live in a corner of the roof  
than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

—PROVERBS 25:24 NASB

In June 2006, Lawrence Summers, the president of Harvard University, resigned his post after weeks of verbal assault from the faculty. Dr. Summers's egregious action was not embezzlement, moral deficiency, sexual harassment, or abuse of power. In fact, Dr. Summers had merely stated an idea that many scientists agree with. He suggested that innate differences between men and women may be one reason fewer women succeed in math and science careers. Dr. Summers was inviting further research and intellectual debate. However, he received a no-confidence vote from the Harvard faculty and was forced to resign.

Can you imagine what would have happened if Dr. Summers had suggested that men are the head of the home

## Dancing with the One You Love

while women are to be submissive? I doubt he would have made it out of the room alive. In our culture the mere mention of different roles in marriage can set off a firestorm—even in our churches.

Submission is not a popular idea. It is not culturally acceptable or open for discussion in a society that worships equality. The idea of submission is never portrayed in our “the husband is an idiot married to a beautiful and brilliant woman” era of sitcoms. It’s no surprise that God’s roles in marriage are often so misunderstood and maligned. No wonder maintaining a submissive attitude can be so difficult.

## Back to the Garden

In the previous chapter, we peeked into the garden of Eden as God created the man and his wife. We read that God said it was not good for the man to be alone and created a helper for him. After God introduced these two, the Bible says, “The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Gen. 2:25).

Wow! A perfect man, a perfect woman, a perfect marriage. No sin, no selfishness . . . nothing to prevent this couple from being all God intended them to be. Sadly, this state of perfection did not last long. I’m sure you know the story. . . .

God planted a tree in the garden, calling it “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:17), and told Adam not

## Why Is Submission So Hard?

to eat from this tree. God gave this directive to Adam when he was alone, before the woman was created. We assume that Adam was to relate this message to his wife. The man was put in the position of being responsible for obedience to God's instruction.

### The Choice that Changed It All

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field . . ." Genesis 3:1 (NASB) describes. Have you ever considered why this wily serpent approached the woman instead of the man? I don't think it was because she *was* a woman, or that she was more easily fooled. I think the Serpent went to Eve because *she had not received the instructions directly from God*.

In other words, she was relying on Adam's leadership. Perhaps Adam had not clearly relayed God's message. We know Eve did not quote God's instructions verbatim. She added a few words. God had told Adam not to *eat* from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:17). But when the Serpent questioned Eve, she told him, "God told us we can't eat from it *or touch it*" (see Gen. 3:3).

Perhaps the Serpent plucked the fruit off the branch and handed it to Eve. Nothing happened. She didn't die. Yet she was touching it. By adding to God's words, or misrepresenting them, she opened her mind to the possibility that God was wrong. All that the Serpent needed was a little foothold, a little doubt, to question God's goodness.

## Dancing with the One You Love

Of course, hindsight is 20/20, but what if the woman had replied, "You know, let me check with Adam. God talked to him about that tree"?

Some commentators argue that Eve was deceived, therefore not entirely responsible for her actions. Maybe, but I find that hard to swallow (pun intended). Even if she didn't have all her facts straight, Eve knew that particular tree was prohibited. The woman chose to disobey God's Word. I like to remind my kids that every choice, good or bad, has a consequence. And in this case, it was a matter of life and death.

Immediately, Adam's and Eve's eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked and hid from God. How tragic! Their disobedience broke their bond of perfection. Shame, guilt, and embarrassment entered their relationship. But another result of Eve's choice related directly to her: "To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you'" (Gen. 3:16 NASB).

Through that one choice, evil flooded the world and everything changed. Never again would life be free from the ravages of sin. Eve would experience pain in childbirth, and sorrow in raising children.

Adam and Eve also experienced heartbreaking loss in their marriage. God had created them to be a team. The man was the perfect head and his wife the perfect helpmeet. But now that was irreparably broken.

## Why Is Submission So Hard?

### *Lessons from the Dance Floor*

---

YEARS AGO MICHAEL surprised me with dancing lessons. As a little girl I was enchanted with musicals, especially those featuring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. They danced with grace and elegance, and I just knew I had that same rhythm in me. So we joined ten other couples in an elementary school gym and began to learn the waltz, the fox-trot, and even the tango.

Our dancing was not even remotely similar to what I'd seen on television. However, as we learned the steps, we also saw a correlation to our roles in marriage.

First, we learned that if I didn't follow Michael's lead, we just stood there. Because I spent most of the time going backward, following his lead was an act of faith. More importantly, I had to "feel" Michael's lead to be able to dance. Sometimes I needed Michael to direct more clearly, which meant he needed to place more pressure on my back or hand.

It's the same in our marriages. Sometimes wives can't follow because we don't know where our husband is going. We need to ask our husbands to be clear as they lead so we can dance!

---

## Dancing with the One You Love

Much has been made of the word “desire” in Genesis 3:16. Often, the word is given a sexual connotation, as in “you will lust after your husband, or desire him sexually.” But in this context that doesn’t make much sense. What would sexual desire for her husband have to do with him ruling over her? How could that be a part of God’s judgment? In most marriages, a sexually enthusiastic wife would be helpful to the relationship, rather than detrimental. (And all the men said, “AMEN”).

That same word, “desire,” appears in a completely different circumstance in the story of Cain and Abel. In Genesis 4 we learn that Cain and Abel brought sacrifices to the Lord. But God rejected Cain’s sacrifice, and Cain reacted with rage!

*Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it” (Gen. 4:6–7 NASB).*

Obviously, sin does not desire Cain sexually. Rather, the desire is for control. If Cain could not master his anger, sin would control him. The word “desire” is the same in both contexts. It makes much more sense for Eve to desire to control her husband, while finding that instead, he will rule over her.

Let me make one very important point. God’s judgment does not authorize man to be an abusive, authoritarian despot. Instead, in this Scripture God was reinstating the head/helper roles that He gave to the man and woman in

## Why Is Submission So Hard?

Paradise. However, with the emergence of sin, these roles became a point of tension rather than a result of the team-mate relationship that God intended.

### *No Hide-and-Seek?*

---

I AM A VISUAL LEARNER. When I read a story I see it in my mind, like a movie or a snapshot. For years I envisioned Eve and the Serpent talking, with Adam in the distance somewhere tending the garden or frolicking with the animals. But Genesis 3:6 says Adam was “with” Eve. It doesn’t appear that Eve had to go find Adam. If he wasn’t standing right beside her, he could have been within earshot . . . perhaps listening to the debate between the Serpent and Eve. If this was the case, Adam was abdicating his role of leadership. Eve picked it up. She ate and gave the fruit to him. She led. Now God was telling Eve to put the mantle of leadership back down . . . and forcing Adam to pick it back up.

---

## Eve and Mary

Eve had it all. She lived in a beautiful garden, had an abundance of food and a godly man, and never had to worry



## Dancing with the One You Love

about what she wore. Life could not have been more perfect. But Eve believed the lie that God was withholding something better. She craved power and control. She wanted to be like God.

Eve had all the information she needed to make a wise choice. Although she may have had limited comprehension of God's ways, she did know God's character. God had forbidden the couple to eat the fruit from that one tree. That should have been all Eve needed to know. Rather than relying on her understanding of God's character, she decided to choose for herself.

Eve's decision ended all that was good. She lost her home, her happy relationship, and the easy life she enjoyed. One disobedient choice had devastating results. But the choice was all hers. No one made her take the fruit and place it to her lips. No one forced her. She doubted God's love and chose her own fate. If Eve had chosen to obey God's command, she would have remained in that ideal environment.

I think we are all like Eve. Every day, whether we fully grasp it or not, we face a choice whether or not to follow God's will. But we can't base our decision on our own limited understanding. We must base it on the truth of who God is.

Sometimes God requires things that don't make sense to our finite minds. We may attempt to mold God's instructions to fit our comfort zone. But God can see what we cannot, and knows far more than we can ever appreciate. Just like Eve in the garden, we may not agree with some

## Why Is Submission So Hard?

directions God gives. But God realizes the implications of our obedience or disobedience even when we don't. And His plans are always for our ultimate best (Jeremiah 29:11).

Eve was not the only woman in Scripture who faced a dilemma of faith. Another young woman also encountered the challenge of obeying God's will. Although her life was certainly not perfect, it was going quite well for a Jewish girl. She lived in Nazareth and was engaged to a wonderful man. But all that would end when Mary chose to obey God's design for her life. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary . . .

*The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus" (Luke 1:28–31).*

Mary was favored by God. He chose to pour His grace on her. This statement troubled her because she did not see herself as special. She was a normal Jewish girl, yet she gained God's notice. The angel tried to prepare Mary for his next few words by starting with, "Don't be afraid." But she wasn't afraid, not yet. She was perplexed.

*"You will be with child and give birth to a son. . . ."* Ah, now the reason for fear. Mary, the young girl favored by God, had a problem. She wasn't married, and she was a virgin. When Joseph found out about Mary's pregnancy, he would have every right to divorce her, which would bring disgrace upon

## Dancing with the One You Love

Mary and her family. An unmarried woman with a child would never find a husband, leaving her without any means of support when her parents died.

Even more drastic was the rule of Hebrew law, which stated that a woman caught in infidelity should be stoned. Although that was not the common practice during Mary's day, it was still a potential threat. Mary had every reason to be afraid, yet she was not.

After clearing up her questions with the angel concerning her virginal conception, Mary responded with eagerness to serve her God:

*"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said"* (Luke 1:38).

Though young, Mary was not ignorant. She knew the God of the Old Testament (Luke 1:46–55), and was ready to follow His path. Mary was sure of her relationship to her God. She was His humble servant and felt privileged to obey Him, even though it was inconvenient and she would be misunderstood.

### *Table Talk*

---

I MUST ADMIT that I occasionally feel uncomfortable when I speak to groups of women about submission. I know some women think I sound antiquated at best and ignorant at worst.

## Why Is Submission So Hard?

My husband and I were having dinner with acquaintances recently when someone asked about the topic of the book I was writing. Although I am not ashamed about my subject, I do know it is often misunderstood. So I usually make a joke like, "You really don't want to know." But they do, so I tell them. "I'm writing on how to respect your husband through submission."

When I said this, one of our female dinner companions was visibly angry. Her face grew red and her voice shook as she told me her pastor said, "We don't have to obey our husbands."

I assured her that my understanding of submission was not that simple, and that I had no intention of trying to persuade her to my point of view. I was surprised at her reaction, because I knew her husband was a kind and gentle man.

As we continued to interact, I discovered that her husband had once, many years earlier, asked her to help him in a way that she felt was beneath her dignity. His request was not out of line, but she still did not want any part of it. She ultimately did as he asked, but she had always resented him for it. From then on she determined to never do anything she didn't want to do.

## Dancing with the One You Love

Again, her attitude was surprising. This was a woman who talked often and loudly about her love and obedience to Christ. Yet she could not see any correlation between her service to Christ and her service to her husband.

---

Mary's response to the angel's proclamation was remarkable: "May it be to me as you have said."

Mary's pregnancy would throw her ordinary life into immediate ruin. She had no idea how Joseph or her parents would respond, or if they would even believe her. She could certainly expect the judgment and ridicule of her hometown. Mary knew she would be misunderstood. Yet she chose to trust God anyway.

## What about the Man?

The need to control our husbands began in the garden, and we still struggle with it. The one constant I found in interviewing women for this book was the difficulty in giving up control. Like Eve, we want to make the choices that determine our lives.

A myriad of factors can thwart our desire to cooperate with God and our husbands. The remaining chapters of this book will explore some of these situations. We will look at submission in circumstances of sin, unbelief, poor health, and cultural factors. You may not find yourself in a marriage

## Why Is Submission So Hard?

exactly like the ones you'll read about; however, I'm confident you will learn principles from these godly women that are applicable to any marriage.

Let me share several discoveries I made during my interviews. The women in these chapters are some of the most resourceful, courageous, and determined people I know. The stereotype of a submissive woman is that she is weak, silent, and even downtrodden. I didn't speak with one woman who would fit this stereotype. Every one had great strength of mind and spirit. They were good thinkers, hard workers, and willing partners who chose to trust God even when it was tough.

I've concluded that an act of submission means the most when a woman is strong and confident in her own right. Most husbands understand what it means for their strong-minded wives to follow their leads. Men appreciate this as the ultimate sign of respect.

Additionally, these women took on the role of helpmate *regardless of their husbands' actions*. They chose to honor God by subscribing to the precepts of His Word. None of these women chose submission because they were told to, but because they wanted to. They took deliberate steps to follow their husband's leadership in good and bad circumstances.

Finally, I found that the head/helper relationship is not a carbon copy in each home. Like a private dance, each couple fleshed out their complementarian roles to fit their personal situation.

## Dancing with the One You Love

### *I'm Third*

---

FOR SEVERAL SUMMERS my children attended a sports camp in Pennsylvania. This camp was perfect for my athletic children. They learned, among other things, that a competitive spirit was perfectly acceptable during sporting events. However, that spirit was discouraged off the field. In fact, the camp had a motto that was drilled into my children's brains: God first, others second, I'm third. In short, they were taught to remember, "I'm third." This was not what I expected in the "We're #1" sports world. However, I was delighted by it. I even saw it in action in their attitudes and behavior in their first few weeks home from camp.

This maxim is not the norm in our culture. It reminds me of what happened in the 1976 Special Olympics, held in Spokane, Washington. Nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for a track-and-field event. At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish, and win.

Then one boy stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled, and began to cry. A few of the other athletes stopped their race to go check on their fallen comrade. Then

## Why Is Submission So Hard?

those contestants linked arms and helped the boy get to the finish line together.

This is what Christ calls us to. We need to learn to come alongside our husbands in a way that allows us all to win. I'd rather cross life's finish line third than be first and all alone.

---



Interested in the whole book?  
Select your preferred book seller:

[MOODY PUBLISHERS](#) 

[AMAZON](#) 

[APPLE BOOKS](#) 

[GOOGLE PLAY](#) 

[WALMART](#) 

[BARNES & NOBLE](#) 

[CHRISTIANBOOK.COM](#) 