Ephesians 5:21 …submitting to one another in the fear of God.

I. Mutual Submission?

Egalitarianism asserts: “Paul is teaching here that just as a wife should submit to her husband (v.22), so a husband ought to submit to his own wife. How that works out practically will vary according to circumstances and the unique gifts of the individual husband and wife.”

II. Why we believe Paul is not teaching “mutual submission” here in Ephesians, or anywhere else.

1. The word “hypotasso” always implies a relationship of submission to authority. Its usage in the N.T. always speaks of a submission that is unilateral.

* Believers submitting to God

Heb. 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us,* and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

* The Church submitting to Christ

Eph. 5:24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything.

* Christ being subject to the father

I Cor. 15:28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

* Citizens being subject to civil Government

Rom. 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

* Servants submitting to their masters

Titus 2:9 E*xhort* bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all *things,* not answering back,

1. If Eph. 5:21 is teaching “mutual submission” there is no biblical or logical reason to limit it to the marriage relationship. The required broad application would require parents to submit to children, masters to submit to servants, etc…
2. The Greek term translated “one another” is used in various was in Scripture. Often it expresses the idea of exhaustive reciprocity, “*everyone to everyone*.” (John 13:34, Gal 5:13). The word may also be used to express a limited reciprocity “*some to others.*” (Rev. 6:4, Gal. 6:2, I Cor. 11:33, Matt. 24:10, Luke 12:1).

Given the immediate context of v.21, it is clear that the submission being required is limited (submitting: some to others) and not exhaustive (submitting: everyone to everyone). Thus , submitting: some to others - Wives to husbands, children to parents, servants to masters.

1. If Paul is teaching “mutual submission” in v.21, it is the only place in all of scripture that such a doctrine is taught. If he is teaching mutual submission, he is directly contradicting what he is teaching in v.22, Col. 3:18, and Titus 2:5. He would also be contradicting Peter (1 Peter 3:1-6).