

1 Peter 3:1-7

"Marriage that Commends the Gospel"

Imago Dei Church | 6/28/2020 | Livestream Service | Sunday AM

[1] Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct. [3] Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—[4] but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. [5] For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, [6] as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

[7] Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

INTRODUCTION

Last week we talked about how slaves could endure suffering by placing their faith and sights on Christ.

Great passage that exalts Christ for his faithful endurance.

And then this week, he pivots to the most intimate of all human relationships (marriage), and here he gives

the same basic call that has been the theme of the last several weeks.

The gospel of Jesus Christ creates a new people of God that displays his glory in the world. Christians live in the world in such a way that reflects and speaks to the truth and beauty of the gospel.

Main Idea: Husbands and Wives should commend the gospel in how they relate to one another.

Before I go any further, let me say something to our single folks. Marriage is not the exclusive interest of married people. In the faith community, the health of our marriages is a gospel issue, and that means you have a role to play.

It's in our covenant.

WIVES (vv. 1-6)

Peter spends the majority of his time talking to wives, and from these 6 verses I want to give 5 exhortations to Christians wives for how they can commend the gospel.

The first 2 stem from the initial command in this text for wives to "be subject to" or "submit to" their

husbands. The language of submission is obviously offensive to many in our contemporary context.

Several reasons:

- 1) To submit (in general) is to go against our flesh.
- 2) Language of submission has been used to justify abuse.
- 3) The language of submission has been used to treat women as "less than" men

Because of all of these reasons, the language of submission in our culture and even in many church circles has been tainted as essentially a tool of the patriarchy, which must be discarded.

And yet, despite these and other understandable concerns we might have, the Scriptures relentlessly use the language of submission to describe healthy Christian living.

- Christians are called to "submit ourselves to God" (James 4:7)
- ...to obey their leaders in the church and submit to them (Heb 13:17)

- ...to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21)
- ... “be subject to governing authorities” (Rom 13:1) and “every human institution” (1 Pet 2:13)
- And in Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:18, and in the passage here in 1 Peter wives are called to submit to their husbands.

So though some might initially recoil at the idea, we must press in and see what submission is and is not talking about so we can follow Jesus—who himself cried out to his Father before his crucifixion and said, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39).

First, let’s clarify what submission does NOT mean:

- Peter telling wives to be subject to their husbands does not mean that they must suppress their wills, wants, interests, and gifts to simply serve their husbands. Ladies, your ideas matter, your perspective matters, and your gifts matter in your marriage.

- Submission also does not mean blind obedience. He doesn't mean there is that a wife is simply beholden to every command that her husband gives her. This is especially true if a husband commands a wife to sin. But even in things that are not sin, the wife is not a slave of her husband, nor is she his child. She is not an employee awaiting orders from her boss. She is a wife. A partner.
- Submission also doesn't mean a woman should allow a husband to do just anything he wants to her. Let me be clear—if a husband is beating, harassing, or otherwise abusing his wife, submission does NOT mean she needs to grit her teeth and take it. That husband is not being a husband, but a criminal, and you should call the police. If you are in that situation and need to talk with someone, please talk to one of the pastors. We will help you. Jesus is not calling you to be the punching bag of an abusive husband.

So what DOES Peter mean when he calls wives to be subject to her husband?

1. HONOR YOUR HUSBAND AND HIS LEADERSHIP. (1, 5-6)

"own husbands" (2x in v.1 & v.5)

Sarah (vv.5-6) is said to have submitted to her husband as she "obeyed Abraham, calling him lord."

Cf. Genesis 18:9–12: "[9] They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." [10] The LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. [11] Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. [12] So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" (ESV)

Sarah disagreed with and even scoffed at the conversation Abraham was having, but she continued to show him respect.

The submission that Peter has in mind here is not about obeying a command but honoring him for the position he had.

In Ephesians 5 Paul shares that husbands and wives have different roles in marriage as a way to reflect the mystery of the gospel. Husbands are to look like and act like Jesus to their wives, and wives are to submit to and respect their husbands as the church submits to and respects Christ.

(APP) Very practically, wives, this means that you should not be seeking to tear your husband down or undermine him either inside or outside the home. By God's design, he has a particular role to play, and you can honor that design in the way you build up and honor your husband.

So for a wife to be subject to her husband is to respect his leadership.

(APP) Now, that doesn't mean that women cannot and should not provide any leadership in the home. Many women are excellent leaders, and all women deserve to be heard and appreciated. Following the husband's leadership does not mean he gets to make all the decisions, he gets to call all the shots, etc. It means that he is the one that bears a unique responsibility for leading the home, for recognizing and utilizing everyone's gifts, and ultimately for reflecting the sacrificial love of Jesus. Wives are called to cooperate with and follow that leadership.

Now, a wife might ask, what if my husband is a bad leader? What if I'm a better decision-maker, etc.? Again, leadership does not mean dictatorship. You can honor even as you disagree. You can work with your

husband and follow his leadership even as you help him be a good and Christ-like leader.

But what if my husband isn't even a Christian?...

2. DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL IN YOUR LIFE. (1-2)

This is really an extension of the first point, but it deserves to be made explicit. The Christian wife is called to live as a Christian even if her husband is a bad husband, an unbelieving husband, or even an abusive husband. None of those are justification for NOT acting like a Christian and honoring the role that a husband has and the person himself.

(APP) This means that even if he's an unbeliever, or terrible, or whatever, it cannot be your goal to tear him down, or slander, or whatever to turn other people against him. Again, if you're in an abusive situation, TELL SOMEONE. But even then there is a difference between truth-telling facts about your situation and deception, gossip, belittling, or otherwise dishonoring him.

Why give a husband honor even if he doesn't deserve it or if he isn't a Christ-like leader in the home?

"so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct."

Peter says that wives who show honor towards their husbands will testify in their conduct to the truth of the gospel. Some husbands who don't believe will come to believe as wives confirm the truth of the gospel in their conduct.

"won without a word" ≠ silence about gospel.

It *does* mean that, knowing that the wife is a Christian, the husband has the truth and power of the gospel confirmed and impressed upon them.

So rather than simply repeating the gospel or badgering her husband with a gospel presentation on a daily basis, she can demonstrate the gospel's truth and power by her life.

3. DEMONSTRATE THE BEAUTY OF THE GOSPEL IN YOUR CHARACTER. (3-4)

Peter's 2nd command has to do with internal v. external beauty.

External beauty is marked by accessories and hairstyles and extravagant clothing. He doesn't condemn these

things. He's not saying these things are bad. He's saying these things, truly, don't matter. They indicate NOTHING that matters.

What matters is the internal beauty that the gospel produces in a woman. This beauty is "imperishable" (not fading like physical beauty).

It consists of a "gentle and quiet spirit" = not referring to silence and passivity but to gentleness, restraint, and peacefulness. (APP — women with big personalities can still have a gentle and quiet spirit).

This beauty is hidden from the world, but God sees it! And in his sight it "is very precious."

Cf. 1 Sam. 16:7 — God looks at the heart.

A wife that follows Jesus will confirm the truth of the gospel in her conduct and demonstrate the beauty of the gospel in her character.

4. FEAR GOD RATHER THAN MAN. (5-6)

Just like with the slaves in the previous passage, Peter once again calls on wives to re-orient their point of reference in their marriage away from their circumstances and instead to live "in God's sight."

And then in verse 6, Peter says that Christian wives are the daughters of the ancient matriarchs if they **"do good and do not fear anything that is frightening."**

Remember, these Christian wives are scattered about, and many of them are in marriages and families that do not share their faith. They may have faced persecution or abuse because of their faith. And Peter here encourages them: Don't be afraid of them. They can't harm you.

(APP) Wives, you may be in a difficult position. And especially if your husband does not share your faith. It would be so easy for this to become a wearying and heavy burden. It would be so easy for fear to creep in. But do not be afraid. Instead, look to the Lord and fear him.

HUSBANDS (v. 7)

He turns to the husbands and actually only gives one command, but I'm going to break it up into three parts here.

The husband is likewise called to commend the gospel...

[7] Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

1. APPRECIATE YOUR WIFE AS DIFFERENT

"in an understanding way" = recognizing that she's different from you by God's design. There's even a hint that this "understanding" is directed towards God, not the wife.

IOW, you have to know that she is different and appreciate the fact that she's different and treat her as though she is different.

(APP) She's not one of the guys to be harsh and rough with. She's a woman. And she should be treated as such.

(ILL) Newlyweds make this mistake all the time.

This is one of the things that so insidious about domestic abuse. It takes the differences between man and woman as something to be taken advantage of and used for selfish, prideful gain. As though the wife existed for the man's enjoyment irrespective of her good.

But that's not what Peter is saying. He's saying to live with the understanding that she's different, and act accordingly. Re-orient YOUR behavior so that her uniqueness and distinctness is appreciated and valued.

2. HONOR YOUR WIFE AS PRECIOUS

As you recognize her to be different, honor her.

"weaker vessel" = physically, societally

She's vulnerable. And yes, you can take advantage of that. But instead, honor her.

(ILL) Women are not less than men any more than my eye or my brain, which are incredibly sensitive and vulnerable, are less than my elbow. This is not an issue of worth.

(ILL) Hard hat v. tiara

It is counter-cultural, in many ways, to call women weaker in any sense. And to be sure, this is not meant to say women are weaker in every sense (spiritually, mentally, etc.). But it is meant to look at husbands and say, when you see weakness or vulnerability, you're going to have the temptation to either crush it or take

advantage of it. Instead, honor her. Value her. Uphold her.

(APP) Speak well of your wife. Recognize her virtues and commend them to her and others.

3. WALK WITH YOUR WIFE AS PARTNERS

Peter gives the reasoning—she’s a co-heir with you in the gospel. Men and women together are recipients of grace and are destined for an eternity with Christ.

He’s not saying “You’re gonna have to put up with her for eternity!” He’s saying, “Husbands, treat your wives with honor and dignity and respect, because the same grace that saved you is what saved her, and she’ll receive the same eternal life you will.

In effect, Jesus died for her too. You’re not better than her. So see her as a partner in the gospel rather than a tool for your manipulation.

CONCLUSION

Peter closes this text with the consequences: “so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

Why?

He's telling us that if we cannot manifest the gospel in the most intimate human relationship we have, how can we expect that our prayers will be in accordance with his will.

Cf. v.12

Husbands, if we want to walk with Jesus in this life, the only way we're going to do that is if we walk with our wives in a way that commends the gospel to the her and the watching world.