

# The Pilgrim Marriage

1 Peter 3:1–7

*The Thirteenth Sermon on First Peter*

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As a pilgrim people on the way from the world of Egypt to the Promised Land of eternity, the church of Jesus Christ has always been tempted on its way. One of the areas we are being tempted in right now is the nature of marriage. The *Book of Common Prayer* still offers, in my opinion, the best summary of the biblical teaching on marriage when it says marriage “is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is [between] Christ and his Church; which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee; and is commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men.” It then says God gave marriage for three purposes: for procreation of children, for sanctification of the non-celibate, and “for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.”

As we see this holy institution of God attacked from all sides in our day we come tonight in our exposition of 1 Peter to Peter’s exhortation on marriage. Beginning in 1:12 he has been exhorting us to be holy as our Father in heaven is holy in various ways and in various places in life. In 3:1–7 says wives are to submit to their husbands and husbands are to honor their wives.

1. *The Pilgrim Wife* (vv. 1–6)
2. *The Pilgrim Husband* (v. 7)

## The Pilgrim Wife (vv. 1–6)

Peter first addresses *the pilgrim wife* in verses 1–6. In verses 1–2 he says the pilgrim wife is to be submissive to her husband. When he says **be subject to your own husbands** he does not say that you are to be submissive to every single man. The Bible is not oppressive towards women but liberating. In those days women were treated as property. They were treated as sub-human, as second class citizens. Every single woman was lower than every single man. Thus women dwelt in seclusion in the home only to serve the needs of their husbands and his friends. But Peter says be submissive to **your own husbands**. You now have the freedom in Christ to be loyal, to be faithful, to be submissive to your one and only love—your husband.

And also notice that he opens this section on wives in 3:1 by addressing Christian wives whose husbands are *not* Christians: **so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct**. In ancient Greece and Rome the wife was to adopt the husband's religion. Thus we see the radical nature of Christian faith here as the believer is submissive to God first and foremost.

So what is submission? This submission that wives are to perform is not sitting back and doing nothing. It is not waiting for your husband to tell you what to do before you do anything. And it is not, sort of, sheepishly walking around the house. But instead, submission is active! It is actively being respectful, actively being a helpmate, and actively being obedient to your husband's servant

leadership. Now let me say to everyone what submission isn't. A wife's submission does not mean that only *she* changes the diapers, that only *she* makes the bed, that only *she* folds the laundry, and especially, that only *she* raises the kids.

In verses 3–4 Peter says the pilgrim wife is to be modest: **Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—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** (vv. 3–4). Basically speaking, it's less important to be a woman who spends her time sitting before a beauty parlor mirror than in front of the mirror of God's Word. Does this mean that you are to be unmindful of your looks? No! This is not the purpose of being modest. Being modest means that you are not outwardly to show off to get attention. You are not to show off your expensive clothes or jewelry with arrogance while the woman in the next pew is not as fortunate as you are. You are not to be caught up in catching the eyes of every man with your makeup and flashy hair. Think of it this way. Wives, you are like a filled treasure chest to us your husbands. So do you want your husband's friends to see what is inside your treasure chest? This is a lesson for young girls to save your beauty for your husbands. Don't be so caught up in getting a boyfriend, a fiancée, and a husband that when you do there is nothing left for him to discover in your treasure chest.

In verses 5–6 Peter says the pilgrim wife is to follow the example of Sarah: **For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn**

**themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.** Sarah's submission went to the point of calling her husband, Abraham "**lord.**" She was so caught up in pleasing the Lord as a wife that she called herself the servant of her husband. Now this verse is not commanding wives to call their husbands "**lord.**" It's the attitude of, "I'm here as your wife to help you become even more godly, an even better leader, an even better father, that I'll do whatever I have to do." This is ironically a lesson for young men. When Solomon said in Proverbs 18:22, "he who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD" he was not saying any wife would do. He was saying that this kind of a wife would do. This is what you are to look for in a wife: a woman who will be submissive to your leadership and we will see in a moment, one who is modest before the pagan world. You need to look for a woman who will help you love God and serve him more. And you need to start learning now how to be a godly example and leader now so that your fiancée, your girlfriend, or the woman you will be with can submit to you and fulfill her role.

### **The Pilgrim Husband (v. 7)**

Peter then addresses *the pilgrim husband* in verse 7. "Only one verse? That's misogynistic!" But look at what he says, especially at the end. Husbands, you are to **live with your wives in an understanding way**, or, "according to knowledge." How so? First, **showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel.** Honoring a

wife was a total shock to the culture of the first century. Husbands, this means that you are to love your wives even as Christ loves the church. Our wives are weaker just as the church is. Think about how Christ came to the aid of his church in her weakness. Look at 2:22–25 with me. Our Lord submitted himself by coming to us because of our sinfulness. He came without sin and did not commit sin while here on earth, even when he was cursed on the cross. He came because we were oppressed by the devil. He came because the world had us under its grip of slavery. But He was cursed on the cross for our sins to free us from bondage, so that now we can live for righteousness. And part of our living for righteousness is relating to our spouses in a biblical way.

Second you are to dwell with your wives in understanding by seeing them as **heirs with you of the grace of life**. This is speaking of eternal life. We are co-equals in the eye of the Lord when it comes to our salvation. For as Paul said, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). When it comes to salvation, when it comes to approaching our Father in prayer, when it comes to being children of God, and when it comes to eternal life our wives—husbands—are equal with us.

And notice how he ends: husbands, do this, or else! Or else what? Or else **your prayers [will] be hindered**. How you treat your wife affects how God treats you!