

Instruction for Wives

This morning we continue our study of 1 Peter. Today we will be examining the biblical portrait of a godly wife. Specifically, we will be addressing how wives are to relate to their husbands in a manner that will please and glorify the LORD God. Please turn with me to the book of 1 Peter.

By way of reminder, Peter is writing to encourage his readers to keep their focus on their glorious future. Christians are to live with an eternal perspective. In this world, we are to live as exiles, we are to live as pilgrims, we are to live as those who do not belong to this world. This world is not our home, we're just a passing through. So, in every single area of our lives, we are to set our minds on the things above, where Christ is seated, at the right hand of God. We must look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. The things that are seen are transient, they are temporary, they are fleeting, but the things that are unseen are eternal. In addition to an eternal perspective, Christians are also commanded to be well behaved. Throughout the time of our sojourn, amongst the Gentiles, our behavior is to be honorable, it is to be excellent, it is to be above reproach.

Specifically, we accomplish this by firstly, by walking in submission to our governing authorities. For this is the will of God that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Christians are to live as people who are free, as servants of the living God. We are to honor everyone, we are to love the brotherhood, we are to fear God, and we are to honor the emperor.

Secondly, we accomplish this by walking in submission to our earthly masters, both to those who are good and gentle, and also to those who are unjust. This is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For the Christian Pilgrim, unjust suffering is a gracious thing in the sight of God. And it is to this, unjust suffering, that we have been called.

In all of these things, we must remember the LORD Jesus Christ. We must remember the example set by the LORD Jesus Christ. As those who are navigating through a hostile and difficult world, we must strive to walk in the steps of the LORD Jesus Christ, and we must follow the pattern of his life. In midst of great difficulty and persecution, Jesus Christ committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return, when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. If in the most difficult of circumstances, the LORD Jesus Christ did not sin, then neither should we sin in far easier circumstances. In our unjust suffering, in our mistreatment, in our difficulties and trials, we must strive to be like Christ.

1 Peter 3:1-6, 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, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. 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. 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.

First things first, what is the first word of v1? The term “likewise.” The term, likewise, is a strategic term of conclusion, which introduces a logical result or inference from what immediately precedes. Likewise means, in response to, or as a result of, or in accordance with, or in light of the truth previously mentioned. In other words, in the same way that citizens (v13) are to be subject to every human institution, in the same way that servants (v18) are to be subject to their masters, in the same that the LORD Jesus Christ (vv21-23) was subject to the will of his Father and entrusted himself to him, likewise, in the same way, wives are to be subject to their own husbands.

What does it mean to be subject? What does it mean for wives to be subject to their own husbands? The Greek word translated “subject” is *hypotasso* (who,pa,toss-o), which literally means to arrange under. It means to place under in an orderly fashion. This term was often used by the military to describe troops falling into rank and ordering themselves into proper battle formation, attentive and subordinate to the will of the commanding officer. In other words, to be subject means that you will voluntarily and willingly place yourself under the authority of another. This is not something that is forced, this not something that is coerced, but rather, to be subject is a volitional act. It is a volitional act that recognizes that the LORD God has an ordered design which must be followed. Citizens are to be subject to their governing authorities. Servants are to be subject to their masters. The LORD Jesus Christ was subject to the will of the Father. And wives are to be subject to their husbands. A great passage that discusses this order of authority is found in the book of 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 11:3, But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

The head refers to authority. The head rules over and gives direction to the body. Thus, the authority that God has placed over woman is man. The authority that God has placed over man is Christ. And the authority over Christ is God. You see, just as the LORD Jesus Christ was submissive to his headship (God the Father), man is to be submissive to his headship (God the Son), and women are to be submissive to their headship (man). This concept is in direct opposition to the philosophy of the world is it not? I do not think there is a sitcom, or movie, or a book that presents, in a positive light, true biblical submission. The world sees submission as something that is outdated. The world sees submission as something that is chauvinistic and barbaric. But biblical submission is not barbaric, it is not chauvinistic, nor is it outdated. Biblical submission is not meant to take the joy out of your life. It is not meant to afflict you or to oppress you. It is not meant keep you down. Submission does not mean that wives are inferior to husbands, not in any way, shape or form. Peter is not speaking about personal worth, or abilities, or intellect, or spirituality. Some women are far superior to men in all of these areas. But, the LORD God has established the principle of male authority and female subordination for the purpose of order and complementation. This order has to do with the specific roles and specific order that the LORD God has deemed appropriate.

Submission is the command of an all-knowing, all-powerful, all sovereign, ever-present, just, good, and loving God. A God who knows what is best for his children. A woman who seeks to

please and glorify the LORD God will arrange herself under, or line up under, the headship of her own husband. A man who seeks to please and glorify the LORD God will arrange himself under, or line up under, the headship of Christ. If a man rejects the headship of Christ, then he is rejecting the authority that the LORD God has placed over him. If a woman rejects the headship of her husband, she too is rejecting the authority that the LORD God has placed over her. There is a line of authority; God the Father, God the Son, man, and woman. To break with your headship, to step outside from under your headship, will break the entire line. You cannot reject one part without rejecting all the others.

Regarding this principle, some common questions that I have often heard: What if my husband is not a believer, do I still need to submit to him? What if my husband clearly demonstrates that he is not worthy of my submission? What if my husband continually abuses his headship? What is my husband treatment of me is unloving and unjust? What if my husband is a selfish tyrant who only cares for himself, and repeatedly hurts our family by his destructive words and behavior? These are all very relevant and difficult questions, but the answer is the same.

1 Peter 3:1, 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,

According to the Scriptures, wives are to be subject to their husbands, even if their husbands are disobedient to the word. This includes unbelieving husbands, unworthy husbands, harsh husbands, selfish husbands, unwise husbands, critical husbands, foolish husbands, angry husbands, and every other type of sinful husband that exists. I know this is hard command. I know, because some of the most difficult conversations in my ministry have been these types of questions, questions about living with difficult and sinful spouses. But let me just remind you about an extremely important and relevant truth –the LORD God knows everything there is to know about your spouse, and about your present circumstances. God knows all of your husband’s actions. God knows all of his words. God knows every single one of his thoughts and all of his motives. The LORD God is not in the dark. The LORD God is all-knowing. The LORD God is omniscient. The LORD God is faithful. The question then becomes, do you trust the LORD God? Do you trust your Father God? Do you trust his faithfulness? Do you trust his goodness? Do you trust in his providential hand? The LORD God knows more about your current situation, than either you or your husband. And the LORD God is ordaining your present marital difficulties to happen in your life for your good and for his glory. None of your marital difficulties, none of your husband’s sinful actions, none of his sinful words, occur outside of the immediate control of the LORD God. Our Father God is over all things, he is sovereign.

Romans 8:28-29, And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

According to these verses, God’s overarching purpose for believers, for those who love God, is to conform them to the image of his beloved Son, the LORD Jesus Christ. All things work together for good. But what is the good? Is it your happiness? Is it your financial stability? Is it you good health? The good of v28 is defined in v29, which is conformity to the image of his Son. The good is your sanctification. The LORD God is more concerned with your character, than he is with

your comfort. The LORD God wants us to die to sin and live to righteousness. And many times the LORD God will use your great difficulties and your great suffering, such as a disobedient spouse (husband or wife) to accomplish this end. This can be a hard truth to swallow, but it is most assuredly the truth. In the midst of broken relationships, great hostility, frustration, and grief, the LORD God has a plan for you, your conformity to the image of his beloved Son. In difficult marriages, you must learn to trust the LORD God. Trusting God is not a matter of what you are feeling, it a matter of your will. The LORD God will carry out his plan, and his purpose, and they will not, nor cannot, be thwarted. Every situation, every event, and every action that happens in your life, that happens in your marriage, is under the LORD God's immediate sovereign control. So even if your husband is grossly disobedient to the word of God, the command of the LORD still stands firm –wives, be subject to your own husbands.

Now it is important that I clarify a couple of things. Being subject to your own husband does not mean that you should follow your husband into sin and disobedience. If your husband is misusing and violating his authority over you, by commanding you to do something that the LORD God has forbidden, or by forbidding you from doing something that the LORD God has commanded, then your responsibility, your duty is to follow and obey the LORD God.

Actually, this is the principle that follows every line of submission. As believers we are submit to our authorities right up to the point, where obedience to human authority would involve disobedience to the LORD God, and at that point we must refuse. In the book of Acts, Peter and the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. This teaching greatly annoyed the powers that be, and they were arrested. The high priest and the Sadducee's charged them to no longer speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. Peter and John answered them, Acts 4:19, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard. In the Acts 5, the apostles were again arrested and put in a public prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord appeared to them and opened the prison doors, and brought them out. The angel of the Lord said to them, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." So, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Again, the apostles were arrested, but not by force. They were brought to the high priest and they were questioned.

Acts 5:28-32, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

There will probably be a time in your marriage when you need to tell your husband, no. There may come a time when you, with an attitude of humility and gentleness, must proclaim, "I must obey God rather than men." There may come a time when you need to tell your husband, "It grieves me when you head down a sinful path, and encourage me to go down it with you. I cannot do that. I flourish most when I follow your lead, but I cannot follow you into sin, I will not follow you into sin. I love you, and I will respect you, but I must follow the LORD Jesus Christ because he is my King."

A second point of clarification, being subject to your own husband does not mean that you are not allowed to open your mouth, or that you will never give your opinion, or that you will never give your advice. There will be times, when even the most humble and submissive wife, should hesitate at her husband's decisions. You may need to tell your husband, "You know I have thought a lot about this decision, and while I love it when you take the initiative and plan for our family, I do not have peace about this decision. I think you are making a mistake. Can we talk and pray about this further?"

Husbands, if you have a wife that communicates to you like this, then you have a tremendous blessing from LORD God. It is not good for man to be alone. It is not good for a married man to make decisions without receiving any input from his wife. Husbands, the LORD God has given you your wife, as a helper. Our wives are our extra set of eyes, our extra set of hands, our extra help as we navigate through the rough waters of this life. Your wife's role is to assist you, to help you, to encourage you, to sharpen you, as you seek to love and lead her. Your wife's role is to come along side you and help you, especially in the areas where you may be deficient.

I am deficient in a lot of areas, and my wife is a tremendous help to me. She encourages me in my walk with God. She helps me see things from a different perspective. She give me fresh insight into how I should relate and respond to my children. She often picks up on things that go straight over my head. In difficult situations, she gives me her counsel, which has proven to be extremely valuable to me. I would not be where I am today, I would not be who I am today, without the help and assistance of my wife.

Proverbs 18:22, He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.

Husbands do not stifle your wife's voice. Do not stifle your wife's opinions, or her suggestions, or her counsel. Listen to your wife. The LORD God may be using her to give you direction. The LORD God may be using her to keep you from making an unwise decision, or even a massive mistake. As a Christian Pilgrim, your wife is your traveling partner, she is a gift from the LORD God to you, to help you in your pilgrimage, to help you reach your final destination.

Wives, what should you do, if you share your opinions, and your concerns with your husband, you respectfully talk about the decision, you pray about it, and you still disagree with one another? What happens then? In a situation such as this, providing your husband is not pressuring you to violate the word of God, you should defer to your husbands judgment. He is your head. He is your authority. He has been given headship over you by your Father God. Thus, be subject to your own husband.

A submissive response to your husband, in a situation where there is disagreement, where the two of you are at odds, can actually accomplish a lot of good. Through the submission of the wife, through her attitude and her conduct, it is possible that even the most difficult and unbelieving husband, may be won, without a word.

1 Peter 3:1, 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,

Do you want to know the best way to win your husband, even if he is disobedient to the word of God? The Scriptures say: do not leave him, do not badger him; do not nag him. Do not separate for a time, so that you can both work on your own issues. Do not preach at him. Do not call the elders to drop by for a sneak attack when he is unsuspecting. Do not demand your rights and draw a line in the sand and force him to submit to you. What do the Scriptures say? If you want to win your husband to the LORD God, if you want to get the best bang for your buck, and make the greatest impact on the life of your husband, then be a submissive wife. Do not demand your rights. Do not give him an ultimatum. Do not complain, gripe, or pout, but be the model of Proverbs 31. Be the model of Titus 2. Be the model of righteousness and godliness. Follow in the footsteps of the LORD Jesus Christ –who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return, when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

If in the most difficult of circumstances, the LORD Jesus Christ did not sin, then neither should we sin in far easier circumstances. In our unjust suffering, in our mistreatment, in our difficulties and trials, we must strive to be like Christ. Can you imagine the transformation of our marriages if we were to follow the example and pattern of the LORD Jesus Christ? Can you imagine the impact this would have on our unbelieving spouses? Can you imagine the impact this would have on our children? Can you imagine the impact this would have on the world? Husbands and wives, who commit no sin against one another. Husbands and wives who speak the truth, with no deceit found in their mouths. Husbands and wives who when being reviled, do not revile in return, when suffering, they utter no threats, but keep entrusting themselves to him who judges justly.

Many churches today have allowed worldly and feminist philosophies to creep into the body of Christ. These philosophies are destroying marriages, they are destroying families, they are hindering our witness before a watching world, and this is greatly dishonoring and displeasing to the LORD God. True believing wives, will take the Scriptures at face value. The LORD God is sovereign, and the marriage in which you find yourself, while it may not be ideal, while it may not even be pleasant, it is the marriage that the LORD God has ordained for you. You are not free to pick up and leave. You must persevere. Like the LORD Jesus Christ in 1 Peter 2:22, entrust yourself to your Heavenly Father. Entrust your marriage, your husband, your children, your needs, your wants, your everything, into the hands of him who judges justly.

Peter gives further instruction to wives. Not only are wives to be subject to their own husbands, but they must also be respectful and pure.

1 Peter 3:1-2, 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, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

Wives, your conduct should be characterized by respect and purity. If someone were to ask your husband about your conduct, would your husband say that you are respectful? Would he say that you are pure?

The term respectful literally means to fear. In this context, Peter's point was that the respectful and pure conduct of wives, should stem from their relationship with the LORD God. Your

conduct should stem from your fear of LORD God. If you are fearing the LORD God, then you should be respectful of your husband.

Ephesians 5:33, However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The Amplified Bible uses the following terms to describe a wife's respect for her husband. She should give deference to, being devoted to, revering him, honoring him, esteeming him, appreciating him, prizing him, and in a human sense, adoring him, that is to admire, to praise, to deeply love, and to enjoy your husband.

Pure conduct refers to conduct that is free from any sort of defilement or impurity. This term often describes that which is morally undefiled, describing something that has been cleansed, and brought into the presence of the LORD God, to be used in his service. The conduct of wives must be pure, it must be irreproachable, it must be fit to be used in the presence of the LORD.

How do we practically flush this out? The remaining four verses of this passage spell out the exact meaning of these words.

1 Peter 3:3-6, 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. 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.

Wives who are respectful and pure, will primarily direct their energy and attention on their internal adornment, rather than their external adornment. I would venture to say that there are many women, and many men for that matter, who have an unhealthy preoccupation with their external adornment, or their external appearance. This is a problem that certainly exists in the world, but I think it is equally evident in the body of Christ as well. The culture in which we live places a very high value and importance on external beauty and youthful perfection. The emphasis of the world today is placed predominantly on our looks, on our appearance –our culture is consumed with external beauty. There is nothing wrong with external beauty. Peter is not condemning all external adornment, but listen to what he says in v4, “but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart.”

True beauty has nothing to do with your external appearance. Beauty is not about how you look. Beauty is not about what is visible on the outside. It is not about what you are wearing; it is not about how you are decorated. True beauty, beauty that is precious in the sight of the LORD God is the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit. The most beautiful women are not the ones who have adorned themselves with the fanciest hair, makeup, clothes, and jewelry. The most beautiful women are not the ones who have the fittest bodies, the brightest smiles, and the shiniest hair. The most beautiful women are those who are gentle, meek, peaceful, calm, with a quiet disposition. The most beautiful women are those who are preoccupied with their inner person, their character, their virtue, the hidden person of the heart –not their external adornment.

Young women, this is especially important for you to understand. Do not let this world dictate to you what is beautiful. Do not let social media dictate to you what is beautiful. Do not follow the trends of this world. Do not be conformed to the fashion patterns of this world –the world is passing away. Rather, direct your attention, direct all your energy, and your time, on the inner person of the heart. Place strong emphasis on the internal, because this is what makes you truly attractive. This is what makes you truly beautiful. This is what is very precious in the sight of the LORD God. True beauty is internal, it is a heart that reflects the heart of the LORD Jesus Christ.

Peter further illustrates this truth in vv5-6.

1 Peter 3:5-6, 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.

How does Peter describe holy women? Holy women put their hope in the LORD God, and adorn themselves with submission. Proverbs 31 describes an excellent wife as being clothed with strength and dignity, and it says, “She smiles at the future.” Why does she smile at the future? It is because her hope is in the promises of God –her hope is in the LORD God. One author made this remark, “She looks away from the troubles and miseries and obstacles of life that seem to make the future bleak, and she focuses her attention on the sovereign power and love of God who rules in heaven and does on earth whatever he pleases. She knows her Bible, and she knows her theology of the sovereignty of God, and she knows his promise that he will be with her and help strengthen her no matter what. This is the deep, unshakable root of Christian womanhood.”

These are the types of women whose lives you should be modeling. These holy women of God, who in great difficulty, and great persecution, placed their hope and their trust in the LORD God. These are the women that you should be emulating in your lives. Do not strive to be like the women you see on social media or in movies, their lives are not real. Do not be deceived by their appearance. Their beauty is external. Their beauty is fading, and without the LORD God, these women have no hope. Instead, go to the Scriptures and find the holy women, women who hoped in the LORD God, women who submitted to their own husbands, women who adorned themselves with the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, and follow their example. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Women who hope in the LORD God will not be frightened by any fear. I understand that there are fears in submitting to your husband. I understand that there are fears if you have never fully submitted to your husband, you may be fearful of where your submission will lead you, you may be fearful about your future.

Do not be fearful. Do not be fearful of your husband. Do not be fearful of your future. Recognize and live in the reality of the presence of a good, faithful, loving, gracious, merciful, sovereign, and Almighty God. He will drive out all of your anxieties. He will drive out all of your fearfulness. Trust in the LORD God and walk in obedience to him.

How do the Scriptures portray godly women? And how they are to relate to their husbands, in a manner that will please and glorify God? Godly women will be subject to their own husbands.

Godly women will be respectful and pure. Godly women will be preoccupied with the hidden person of the heart (their character, their virtue, and their relationship with the LORD God).

As aliens and strangers in this world, following the LORD Jesus Christ will mean suffering, and that suffering may be your marriage. So keep your focus on the eternal, keep your focus on your inheritance that is waiting for you, which is protected by God. Keep your behavior excellent. Submit to your governing authorities, submit to you masters, and submit to your husbands. Do not hope in your circumstances, do not hope in your husband, and do not hope in your appearance, hope in the LORD God, for it is he who judges justly.

1 Peter 4:19, Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Our God is a faithful Creator. Our God is sovereign, and he is worthy of all praise, glory, and honor, even in the midst of suffering. I would like to close with a story that I ran across in one of Spurgeon's sermons.

A husband was a very loose, depraved man of the world, but he had a wife who for many years bore with his ridicule and unkindness, praying for him night and day. One night, being at a drunken feast with a number of his companions, he boasted that his wife would do anything he wished; she was as submissive as a lamb. "Now," he said, "she has gone to bed hours ago, but if I take you all to my house at once, she will get up and entertain you and make no complaint." The matter ended in a bet, and away they went.

In a few minutes she was up and remarked that she was glad that she had two chickens ready, and if they would wait she would soon have a supper spread for them. The table was spread, and she took her place at it, acting the part of hostess with cheerfulness. One of the company exclaimed, "Madam, I am at a loss to understand how it is you receive us so cheerfully, for being a religious person you cannot approve of our conduct."

Her reply was, "I and my husband were both formerly unconverted, but by the grace of God I am now a believer in the Lord Jesus. I have daily prayed for my husband and done all I can to bring him to a better mind. But as I see no change in him, I fear he will be lost forever. And I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can while he is here."

They went away, and her husband said, "Do you really think I shall be unhappy forever?"

"I fear so," said she. "I would to God, you would repent and seek forgiveness." That night patience accomplished her desire. He was soon found with her on the way to heaven.

Do not be discouraged if your spouse is unbelieving. Perhaps very shortly the LORD God may give you the desire of your heart, and answer your prayer for him. In the meantime, strive to live an honorable life, strive to be respectable and pure, strive to be modest and submissive. Follow the LORD Jesus Christ and entrust it all to him who judges justly.

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, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.