

## Beautiful Marriage

- 1 Peter 3:1-7
- We have talked a lot about submission in the last few weeks. Now Peter turns his attention to the relationship between a husband and wife, and again this section should be viewed through the lens we are given in verse 13: “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution.” Be subject. Come under. Be submissive. This book is about breaking the back of Mark Fox’s rebellion. You can substitute your name there as well. Why should we be subject? Peter told us in verse 15: By doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. The institution of marriage, like the institution of the state, is a human institution but more than that, it is glorious creation of God. Our best hope as people of God is to follow *his* plan and purpose for all human institutions that he created and he has ordained for our flourishing: marriage, family, state, and church. Peter has instructed servants to be subject to their masters, and now he calls on wives to submit to their husbands. He also calls the husbands to submit to a command he gives them that has critical implications. Let’s look at this passage under three main points: the heart of a godly wife, the beauty of a godly wife, and the heart of a godly husband.
- **The heart of a godly wife (verses 1-2)**
- Peter says the heart of a godly wife is marked by loving submission to her husband. This is true for every woman, as he says she is to submit to her husband “even if some do not obey the word.” Some husbands *were* also followers of Jesus. Probably most men then, just as most men in the world now, did not believe. But remember the culture to which he was writing. It was almost unthinkable for a woman to follow a different religion than her husband. A woman who came to Christ in the Roman Empire who was married to an unbelieving husband would have wondered, “Do I leave my husband because he is not following Christ?” Or, “Am I above my husband now because Christ is in me and not in him?” Peter clearly teaches that a wife’s submission to her husband is not a reward for his good behavior. It is the calling on her life and her fundamental position as one who respects her husband. It is not just a feeling one tries to work up, but a position one takes. The word was used in the military to mean “to order under.” To order my life under the authority of another. In this case, to her own husband, not to all men in a general sense. Male headship is clearly taught in Scripture with regard to marriage and the church, but not in society or government at large.
- May I remind you again, and you know this, that submission has nothing to do with being inferior to or worth less than the one to whom you are submitting. A husband and wife are totally equal in dignity, importance, and honor. In the same way, is Jesus inferior to the Father because he submitted to the Father’s will and went to the cross? For that matter, was Jesus inferior to Mary and Joseph because he “went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them”? (Luke 2:51) Not at all. We are called to submit to those whom God has given authority over us, unless those in authority, no matter who they are, asks us to sin. Peter said to the governing authorities that when it came to their command not to preach Christ, “We must obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)
- So godly wives submit to their husbands whether they are believers or not. But Peter calls on godly wives to submit also so that an unbelieving husband “may be won without a word.” They *may* be, Peter says, not “they *will* be.” Who can win an unbelieving husband to faith? Only God can. But he calls on godly wives to join him in that battle with respectful and pure conduct. That leads us to...
- **The beauty of a godly wife (verses 3-6)**
- We have to be careful to avoid a wooden interpretation of verse 3. Peter is no more forbidding any hair braiding or gold jewelry than he is forbidding the wearing of clothing! William Barclay, a trusted biblical scholar when it comes to historical and cultural information but not so much with doctrine, said the women of Peter’s day were fanatical about their hair. They spent lots of time and money to get it dyed or braided just right, and flashy jewelry was a required fashion statement of the upper class.

Peter doesn't tell them that is wrong, rather that the time and the attention should go to the adornment of a godly heart. And look at this truth from the Word that applies to both genders: "the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit...in God's sight is very precious." Jesus said of himself that he is gentle and lowly. And the word for quiet does not mean silent or wordless. It means tranquil. Peaceful. I would say that the Prince of Peace is our model for that as well.

- David Guzik says the real question to ask is, "What do you depend on to make yourself beautiful?" There is nothing wrong with makeup and jewelry and beautiful clothing and stylish haircuts, but they are not the source of true beauty. And the beauty of the flesh fades while the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit just gets better with age.
- Finally, Peter appeals to Sarah's relationship with Abraham as an example because she obeyed her husband and called him lord. Again, this is not a command from Scripture that wives call their husbands lord. Sarah only said that to herself when she heard the angel tell Abraham that she would have a son, even though she was way past childbearing years. Sarah laughed to herself and said, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" But Peter points out two things about Sarah's heart that are worthy of imitation: she did good and she was fearless. In other words, her submission to Abraham was made possible by her trust in God. She did not fear harm coming to her if she obeyed Abraham *because* she obeyed God.
- Before we move to verse 7, I have to share this from John Piper. I read an article he wrote about these first 6 verses, and he said this passage is the best place to go to help husbands and wives learn what submission is *not*. 1. It does not mean agreeing on everything. (This will be true in every marriage and much more so if one of the two is not a believer). The husband says, "In this house, we will worship Allah." She will have to disagree. 2. It does not mean you leave your brain at the altar. (Piper wrote, Any man who says, "I do the thinking in this family," is sick and has a sick view of his authority. I dealt with a couple one time. The wife said he demanded that she get permission *to go to the bathroom*. That really happened. I just looked at him and said, "You're not well. You have an unbelievably distorted view of this fellow heir of the grace of life. You don't understand the Bible. You're taking a word like 'authority' or 'leadership' or 'submission,' and then you're stepping away from the Bible and filling those words up with stuff you want to do." 3. It does not mean you don't try to change him. The whole point of verse 1 is to win him. But words stacked on words stacked on arguments and heavy sighs will not do it. But you still want a husband or wife who is living in unbelief to change and you are working and waiting with hope for that to happen. 4. It is not putting the will of the husband ahead of Christ. Christ is her Lord now, and wherever she has to choose between the two, she chooses Christ. She would say it not with a haughty or arrogant attitude, but rather with a winsome, submissive, longing one. 5. It does not mean getting all her spiritual strength through her husband. She's going to church on Sunday morning before he gets up, getting her strength elsewhere, getting her worldview elsewhere. 6. It does not mean living or acting in fear. Piper closes the article with this: *Submission is the defined calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband's leadership, and so help to carry it through according to her gifts.* That leads us to...
- **The heart of a godly husband (verse 7)**
- "Likewise, husbands." This is my instruction for you, Peter says to the husbands who would read this letter because they believe. This is what a godly husband does. The wife is called to submit to her husband and the husband is called to honor his wife. How does he do that?
- First, he lives with his wife, he doesn't just share a house like a roommate might. He lives with a woman who is an heir herself of the grace of life. She is chosen by Jesus and precious to him. He lives with her in an understanding way, or, "with knowledge." I have joked before that the good news is that men do not have to understand women. They just have to understand one. But that is a lifelong pursuit, men. We are great sometimes at pursuing our wives before marriage but lousy at pursuing her after marriage. I am in my 42<sup>nd</sup> year and still have a lot to learn!

- Second, the husband recognizes that his wife is the weaker vessel, and he knows what that means. It does not mean she is inferior to her husband. She is a living stone. She is a co-heir with Christ, just as we are. She is filled with the same Holy Spirit, endowed with spiritual gifts, called by Christ to serve the Lord and lay down her life for him. She may be weaker in physical strength, but as Edmund Clowney says, “her role in the gift of physical life (giving birth) is certainly not less!” The wise husband acknowledges the emotional and physical differences in his wife, rather than despising them or taking advantage of them in any way.
- Third, he gives her the honor that is due. **Honor.** This is even more powerful than respect. To give honor means to see the preciousness of something or someone. Paul said in Ephesians 5 that husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies, which they nourish and cherish. We are called by God to give honor to our wives, and that means we nourish and cherish them. They are precious and honorable. They must know that other than Christ, there is nothing or no one who is more important than they are. This was radical teaching in that culture, where a man had absolute control over his wife. She had virtually no rights in marriage. Christ changed all that. If we fail to live with our wives with understanding, Peter says there are serious consequences.
- Our prayers will be hindered. Peter may have in mind the prayers that we have together with our wives here, but the meaning is simple. They will lack power, they will be blocked or hindered. He quotes Psalm 34 again in chapter three, where he writes, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” The Lord counts disregarding and dishonoring our wives as evil. And our prayers will not make it past the ceiling. Until the prayer of true repentance is spoken from the heart.
- I will summarize this passage this way: If the emotional and physical intimacy between husband and wife are unhealthy, the spiritual intimacy they have will be affected as well, and vice versa. And the Gospel is at stake in that. How? This is the one human relationship God has chosen to put on display the divine relationship that Christ has with his church. The way Jesus loves the church is the way men are to love their wives. The way the church loves Jesus is the way women are to love their husbands. And praise God, he has given us grace to do just that. Do you need help to be a better husband, a better wife? You’re sitting with people all around you who need that same help. You are not alone. Even more than that, you are not without the most powerful Helper in the universe. Let’s go to the one who can make our marriages better.
- Prayer
- Greet One Another