

Ministry of Grace Church

1 Peter 3:1-7 - Speaker Notes

Introduction

Chapter 2 ended with the idea that we, as workers, are to submit ourselves to our bosses, whether they are good or crooked. Peter starts this chapter now talking to wives who are to submit to their husbands. One of the blessings from this submission is that unsaved husbands may become believers when they see how Christianity affects the behavior of their wives. Wives are to adorn themselves, not with fancy clothing and jewelry, but with a gentle and quiet spirit. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is given as an example for all women.

Peter then exhorts husbands to treat their wives with understanding, giving them special honor as a physically weaker person. Together they are joint heirs and improper treatment of a wife by a husband can result in God not listening to their prayers.

1 Peter 3:1-2

In the same way, you wives, be subject to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, as they observe your pure conduct with fear.

The first thing we need to do is to find out what Peter is referring to in his saying, “In the same way.” This is translated from the Greek word *homoios*, meaning “exactly the same as.” Notice that in the immediately preceding verses Peter gave us a number of commands including:

Be subject for the sake of the Lord to every human institution.

Honor all people, love the brethren, fear God, honor the king.

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are crooked.

We should endure it patiently when we do good and suffer for it.

He then reminded us that Jesus suffered unjustly for us, so that we could be righteous in God’s eyes. He didn’t deserve the anguish he went through, but He did, and we should follow His example. He did what the Father wanted Him to do instead of doing what He wanted to do. In the same way, ladies, submit to your own husbands, not because you want to, but because God the Father wants you to.

The word “husbands” is from *anēr*, meaning “a man” or “a husband.” And the words “your own” are a translation of the Greek word *idiois*, meaning “that which is specifically one’s own.” Hence, wives are to be submitted to their own husband, not to any man.

This idea of being submissive, as we’ve just seen, applies to all Christians, and it appears in James’ letter to the church where we are instructed to submit ourselves to God (**James 4:7**).

Be subject therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

This notion of submission is a key in our battle against our enemy, the Devil. In each use of this word in this passage, it refers to an act of our will, allowing our own wishes and desires to be subordinated to those of the one to whom we are submitting. This is contrary to our sin nature which wants to promote self. And, seeing self as number one is encouraged today through the messages being proclaimed by the word system, such as, “Do your own thing”, or “After all, I’m worth it”, or “Be you; do what you want to do.”

For a woman married to a godly man who is himself submitted to God, it may be easier to submit, though not always easy. For a woman married to an unsaved man or to a saved man who is not in submission to Christ, it is certainly much more difficult. However, Peter does not make an exception in these cases. He simply says that the conduct of a submissive woman may be the thing that God uses to reach her husband.

Lest men think that this makes them any more important than their wives, let me remind you men that we are to be the spiritual leaders, able to answer doctrinal questions from our wives (1 [Corinthians 14:35](#)). We are to treat our wives as having great value (1 [Peter 3:7](#)). Twice we are commanded to love our wives with a self-sacrificing love ([Ephesians 5:25](#) and [Colossians 3:19](#)) even to the point of dying for them, just as Christ died for the church. Incidentally, wives are never commanded to love their husbands in this manner. Men, this means that when you and your wife have an argument, it is up to you to sacrifice your own ego and apologize to her for your inappropriate behavior, expecting nothing in return from her.

The phrase, “[when they observe](#)” comes from the Greek word *epopteuō*, which is a compound of *epi*, meaning “on” or “upon” and a form of *optomai*, which means “to gaze.” There are a number of words in Greek that are used for different types of looking, words that mean to see, to look at, to look closely at, to stare at, to be a spectator of, and to spy on. These are all distinctly different than this word which, according to Strong’s concordance, means “to gaze upon (that is, with wide open eyes, as at something remarkable).” The particular form of this verb could be translated as “[they having observed ...](#)”

When a Christian woman is totally committed to God and living a submitted life (to God and to her husband), even an unsaved husband will look at her with wonder. The thing which causes such amazement in her husband, according to Peter, is her “chaste behavior.”

This pure lifestyle is the most effective witness to an unsaved husband. Unfortunately, some women married to unsaved men feel like they need to preach at their husbands or badger them into going to church on Sunday. Instead, Peter says that a woman in this situation is to live a life totally devoted to God and submitted to her husband. That doesn’t mean that the woman has to do whatever her husband wants if what he wants is contrary to the teaching of Scripture. Her top priorities have to be obedience to God and a pure lifestyle. But Peter does teach us (from the previous verse) that “they (unsaved husbands), without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives.”

Let me say that a pure lifestyle and a submissive spirit, coupled with a solid faith and reverential fear of the Lord, are exactly the qualities which caused me to first gaze at and admire the young woman who eventually became my wife almost fifty years ago. Qualities that I still find remarkable even today!

1 Peter 3:3-6

Your adornment must not be merely external-braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on garments; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible quality of a lowly and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being subject to their own husbands, just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children if you do good, not fearing any intimidation.

The word translated “adornment” is the Greek word *kosmos*. This is the same word that in some places is translated “world” or “world system.” In its root meaning it refers to an orderly arrangement of things. It is from this word that we get our English word “cosmetic.”

Note that Peter is not condemning adornment, or ornamentation. In fact, in the following verses he talks about the preferable type of adornment for women. The apostle Paul says a similar thing:

Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, with modesty and self-restraint, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly clothing, (1 Timothy 2:9)

Neither Peter nor Paul say that it is wrong to adorn. In fact, in the 1 Timothy passage just quoted, Paul says that women should adorn themselves in “decent,” “modest,” or “proper” clothing (depending on which translation you are reading). This word is from the Greek word *kosmios*, which has the same root as *kosmos* meaning, “an orderly arrangement.” Paul says that women should be adorned in “orderly” apparel.

What both of these writers say is that it is wrong to focus solely on the outward adornment. The things which Peter refers to in today’s verse as well as the things that Paul refers to in the passage in 1 Timothy all have to do with expensive adornment. In the first century, only the wealthy women could afford to have their hair put up in fancy braids. The Roman women of that day were known for ridiculous extravagance in the adornment of their hair. This included dying the hair, elaborate braiding or arranging with costly pins and nets of gold thread. It even included the use of false hair additions and blond wigs. It was common for these women to also braid flowers, jewelry, and other attention-grabbing items into the hair.

Why do you suppose they did this? Here’s what it says in 1 Samuel 16:7:

For man looks at the outward appearance, but Jehovah looks at the heart.

These women wanted others to be attracted to them, to their outward appearance and to their wealth. God would rather have people notice our lifestyle, a reflection of what is in our heart.

We Christians should all be careful to present a neat and orderly appearance since we are representatives of (and children of) the Great King and Lord of the universe. But we should represent Him, not ourselves. People who see us should not be wowed by our clothing or jewelry. Instead, they should notice our attitude and behavior, the outward manifestations of our faith in God.

Instead of this outward, attention-grabbing appearance, Peter says, “let it be the hidden person of the heart.” This expression is one that I find particularly interesting. The word translated “person” (“man” in some translations) is *anthropos*, which literally means “man faced.” It is derived from the Greek expression *ana trepon opa* meaning “turning the face upward.” It refers specifically to human-kind and is used with various descriptors to portray different aspects of our being. Some of these descriptors include “the inner man” in Romans 7:22 (the soul), “the outer man” in 2

Corinthians 4:16 (the body), “the new man” in **Ephesians 2:15** (regenerate or “saved” man), “the old man” in **Romans 6:6** (unregenerate or “sinful” man), and “the hidden man” here in **1 Peter 3:4**. Some Greek scholars believe that “the hidden man” refers, like “the inner man,” to our soul. I think of it, rather, as the real man, our character, that is, who and what we are when we think no one is watching. It is what others who know us will see in us when the acting, the psychological make-up, the pretense, the façade, and the phoniness are all stripped away. It is who we really are on the inside. According to the latter part of this verse, it is the seat of our spirit.

Peter tells us that the thing which is most adorning in wives is the inward quality of a gentle and quiet spirit. It sounds like someone who is at peace with God, doesn't it? Someone who has such a solid faith in God, even in the midst of the tumultuous storms of life, that she can rest peacefully in the hands of “the One who judges rightly.” Peter says that God considers this type of spirit as being of great value.

And... ladies, there isn't a husband in his right mind who wouldn't want a wife like this. Unfortunately, finding a man who is in his right mind, who is focused on God instead of himself is a rare commodity indeed. Particularly an unsaved one like the one Peter is talking about in these verses. Therefore, Peter does not make the behavior of wives conditional. He says, in essence, “Wives, instead of focusing your attention on outward adornment, focus on spiritual development, on being who and what God wants you to be because this witness may be the very message that God uses to speak to your husband.” I personally cannot count the times that God has spoken to me about my own spiritual walk and my sin nature through just such a witnessing spirit in my own wife.

Peter here refers to “**holy women**.” This is from the Greek word *hagiai*. It is the feminine plural form of *hagios*, which we have studied in the past, meaning “holy” or “pure.” It carries with it the idea of being separated from the things of the world and from sin. It is also the word that is translated “**saint**” throughout the New Testament. These women in the Old Testament are those wives who had set themselves apart **from** the things of the world **to** the things of God.

Peter now makes a reference which sounds like a grandfather talking to his grandson, “Why, I remember in the old days wives used to ...” Actually, Peter's reference is to the times of the patriarchs, which we know because he uses Sarah as an example in the next verse. What was it about these women, and Sarah particularly, that interests Peter? First of all, they were holy. They did not succumb to the temptations of their day to assert themselves as something special, independent of their husbands. They were not swayed by the fads and trends of those around them. Instead, they were committed, first to God, then to their husbands.

Secondly, these women “hoped in God.” They fully expected that God would be pleased with them because of their obedience to Him and because of their submission to their husbands. Today we would say that they were women of faith. Not only did they believe in God, but they also had such a confident expectation that God would take care of them that peace ruled in their lives no matter what happened.

These holy women of faith used to adorn themselves with a humble and quiet spirit, being subordinate to their husbands, according to Peter. These were not women who were interested in glorifying themselves, they were interested in glorifying God. They were not subordinate to their husbands because they were forced to, but because they knew that it was God's will for them.

Previously, Peter talked about wives voluntarily ranking themselves under their husbands, specifically unsaved husbands, with the view in mind of being a witness that may result in the salvation of their husbands. The whole purpose is to minister for the glory of God.

Peter then gets very specific about the type of outward adornment that is appropriate for the wife, which is itself less important than the inner adornment of a humble and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

He then uses the women of ancient time as an example of this inner adornment and now cites Sarah as the supreme example of this type of spirit in her adornment and submission to God through her submission to Abraham.

Remember that Peter started this particular treatise in chapter 2 with instruction on how to be built up as a spiritual house. How we behave with respect to government, our own bosses, and even how we conduct ourselves within our own family are all indications of how we are allowing ourselves to be used in the construction of this spiritual building.

He finishes this section on the behavior of wives with a word of encouragement that by behaving in this manner, you wives are demonstrating that you are the spiritual daughters of Sarah. He caps it off by saying that wives who behave in this manner are doing well if it is done in fear without alarm.

But ladies, if your husband is treating you in such a way as to cause you to fear him, whether he claims to be saved or not, then this verse is **not** addressed to you. You are **not** commanded to be his doormat and certainly not expected to take abuse from your husband, either physical or emotional.

1 Peter 3:7

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Okay, men, this is where Peter drops the other shoe, and it falls squarely on our toes. Earlier he started off this third chapter with “**In the same way,**” as he talked to wives, and he now starts off with the same exact connective as he talks to husbands. He is not connecting this with what he said to wives; rather he is connecting this back to his previous message on how to humbly live within society as a witness of God’s grace.

Peter tells us to dwell together with our wives knowingly, in an understanding way. We are to put effort into understanding their feelings and emotions and living in such a way as to take these things into account. Our responsibility in the marriage relationship is actually much greater than that of our wives. They are to voluntarily place themselves under our authority, but we are to be ever mindful of them. We are to give them special honor and we are to recognize that they are physically weaker, treating them as precious because of it. Also, the Apostle Paul says we are to love them and to do so in the same manner that Christ loves us:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, (Ephesians 5:25)

This word for “love” here is *agapaō*, the self-sacrificing, unconditional consideration for another, having more concern for their welfare than our own. If we don’t treat our wives with proper respect and loving care, Peter tells us that our prayers may become ineffective.

Christianity is the only major religion that places women in a position of equality with men with respect to the promises and blessings of God. We husbands are to model that to our wives, and to the world.

So What?

In God's church, the body of Christ, men and women have different roles. Neither is better than the other. Neither is superior to the other. In a marriage, wives are to be submitted to their husbands who are to love their wives. Both of these actions are commanded and neither one depends on the other.

Ladies, do you want your husband to gaze at you in wonder, as he looks at something remarkable? That, according to Peter, comes from your clean lifestyle and submission to your husband. Not as a patsy or a doormat, but as a life partner who has a solid, abiding faith in God.

We Christians should all be careful to present a neat and orderly appearance since we are representatives of (and children of) the Great King and Lord of the universe. But we should represent Him, not ourselves. People who see us should not be wowed by our clothing or jewelry. Instead, they should notice our attitude and behavior, the outward manifestations of our faith in God.

Let's all remember this when we get dressed tomorrow.

Ladies, there is nothing wrong with attractive clothing and other outward cosmetic means of looking nice. That is, as long as your real effort to be attractive is applied to being a godly woman with a humble and quiet spirit.

Ladies, let me say once again that it is not wrong to arrange your appearance in an orderly, attractive manner (adorn yourselves). A Christian woman should present herself as set-apart for God's use. Not by means of elaborate clothing and jewelry, and not by means of plain, drab clothing, long straight hair, and no make-up. Her outward appearance is to be modest, and the attitude of her heart, her submission to God and to her husband, is what makes her attractive to others.

Western society today does not like this message. The message of the world is to stand up for yourself and do your own thing. If your "thing" is to be faithful to God and to be obedient to Him, then you women are to place yourselves under your husband's authority. But ... if you're more focused on yourself than on God, you can ignore Peter's message. It's up to you. Just be prepared for the consequences. I'm just sayin'.

Finally, let me ask you men, does it sometimes feel like God is not listening to your prayers? Could it be the result of your not treating your wife the way God expects you to?

Let's pray.