

AS YOU EXPERIENCE A BIT OF NORMAL THIS WEEK...

you will have one eye on the future. What will the virus do next? One thing is a great investment no matter what the future holds. It is our marriages and families.

As we are being taught in our study of 1 Peter we are learning about submission. Now there is a unhealthy kind of submission. But it is impossible to live well if we altogether refuse it. The passage Kyle dealt with Sunday drops submission squarely into the laps of both husbands and wives. It's a long shot for marriage to work without both husband and wife embracing submission.

God lays down some of His advice for making marriage work among fallen people in a fallen world. If we ponder it and seek to live it out in our times we are on page with our Creator. If we dismiss it, we make the decision to be our own master. Wise people are asking themselves these days this question; how well it working out for us in our world to decide for ourselves what is good and bad? In particular they are asking how well are our marriages and families doing now that we have freed ourselves from God?

So looking forward to normalcy in our culture, these verses are really, really timely! There is nothing we want to do better than keep our homes on God's course. There is great reward for husbands and wives that determine together to pursue God first and foremost as their master.

Work through these questions 1 Peter 3:1-7 raises.

(Pastor Kyle's sermon and Pastor Bob's commentary below will help you.)

1. Would you say you have gotten good at dealing with the voice of your own mind that reads something in the Bible and says, "I don't agree"? What makes a person good at this skill of submitting themselves to God?
2. Peter speaks of the power in a home of respectful and pure conduct by wives. How does a wife show honor and respect today? What does it take to develop and sustain this conduct?
3. Peter also speaks of the power in a home of a man that shows understanding and honor towards His wife. How should a man in the 21st century demonstrate he understands his wife? What are ways to honor her? What things do you have to renounce to become this kind of man?

4. If you are married, talk with your spouse about how the two of you have let these verses shape your home and how you have chosen to set them aside.

5. There has been much needful conversation about boundaries in marriage. The risky side of that conversation is that we can stray into focusing on building boundaries rather than on loving more sacrificially. Do you think you have become more sacrificial as a spouse or less?

A HIGH-YIELDING, BONUS ACTIVITY

Submission is a life skill. Peter had to learn it. He had come to realize how life-changing it was. It had bestowed great dignity on him. He wanted that for us.

Submission begins with reverence and respect for God above all others. It is a refusal to live by what comes natural. It is a quest to live as God wishes us to live. There is a ton of counsel on what submission to Yahweh looks like in the book of Proverbs. This week take time to think through Proverbs 3:1-12.

These verses talk about the great reward those who choose to submit to God in real-life lay hold of. They also tell us HOW to do that. Identify in these verses the kinds of quests you need to submit your lives to and what they will gain for you. Identify the kinds of quests you instinctively fall into instead and what the consequences of those are. Verses 11-12 talk about submitting to the Lord's discipline when it comes. How is He disciplining you these days?

Submitting to God in the moments of each day takes diligence on your part. It is not natural. A great place to go from time to time as you try to master this skill is Proverbs. It will give you reams of advice in short sentences. The Holy Spirit will speak to you powerfully. Every so often in your life read a chapter of Proverbs a day for a month. It is a great Bible-reading habit!

1 PETER COMMENTARY

3:1—In the same way, you wives be submissive 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 behavior of their wives.

The verse begins with the words, “In the same way.” This shows that it is a continuation of the thought given in the previous chapter. In the same way that we are to submit to government, in the same way that servants were to submit to their masters, in the same way that Christ carried out His role with submission, wives are to behave with submission to their own husbands. Submission is both appropriate and Christ-like in Christ centered relationships.

Just as the words addressed to the servants can now in western culture be adapted to fit the role of the employee so we can allow that times have changed in the husband/wife relationship. A wife’s submission may be expressed differently today, but it cannot be discarded.

This charge given to wives is greatly contested today in Christian circles and the practice of obeying this command could disappear. It will continue to be presence in the Scriptures. Such submission, whether to God, to government, to employers, or to husbands acquires cultural trappings in terms of how it is expressed. Those vary. But it is the order of God for homes, and it is cast aside at great peril. God’s order for the home, though twisted by society and in particular by disobedient men, is not to be entirely discarded. It is to be affirmed though with an entirely different spirit.

There is practical purpose attached to Peter’s words. It is that such behavior will impact disobedient husbands. In this case actions do speak louder than words, so loud in fact, that words will be unnecessary. So this is a command with an end of actually restoring the marriages of fallen people. It is one that also addresses the concern of 1:12 that had to do with fears among the gentiles that Christianity would bring about a kind of political and social anarchy.

This submission can be construed to imply a number of different behaviors, but the next verse will reveal the two primary areas in which submission to husband’s should be evidenced by wives.

3:2—“as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.”

A wife’s submission has, over the course of the centuries, been expressed in a number of different ways. A number of different expectations have been raised by men as they in their fleshliness seek to gain some selfish advantage through this teaching. On the other hand, women in their own fleshliness have sought all manners of ways to jettison this command from the teaching of the Church.

Submission, when embraced in the proper spirit by both the husband and the wife does not result in subservience and indignity. It results in what this verse teaches. It is expressed by chaste behavior in the wife. Submissive means she is a one-man-woman, and that is to be clearly seen by all. She has no inappropriate conduct toward other men. This chastity eliminates not only physical acts but all the emotional games that can be played between men and women to gratify the flesh and meet various emotional needs. A woman who submits to her husband casts these aside.

Submission also means respectfulness, a quality that is not unique to the wife in a marriage. By respectful it is meant that her husband's feelings, his personal rights, and his dignity are important to her. She does not behave in a way that violates these. This does not mean she does not disagree, or that she does not press him to act in harmony with the way of God's leading. It has reference to the tone she exhibits in carrying out her role in the relationship. She sees him as head of the home, even if he is not a believer. She does not demean his lack of faith or his disobedience or his incomplete sanctification.

The implication of these verses is that there is something in the authority of the husband in the home that is ordained of God, just as there is in other authority figures in society (see 2:13-14). We set aside this idea of a divine "anointing" at great peril. So in this case, even if a husband is not a godly man, there is still in his authority that which is to be respected.

3:3—"And let not your adornment be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;"

The word "merely" has been inserted by the translators and captures the meaning of this command by Peter. Without understanding the idea inherent in Peter's thinking that is conveyed by that word, various movements have arisen that do not allow women to wear jewelry, or to style their hair. The problem is that if that logic was to be followed consistently with all that is mentioned here by Peter, women would not be allowed to put on clothes either!

The word "merely" helps us capture the intended impact of Peter's words. Peter did not want Christian women to work merely on their appearance. He did not want the value of physical beauty to prevail in Christian culture. The next verse will delineate the importance of them cultivating Christ-like character. Society has always tended to emphasize outward beauty and this is especially true of females. Peter is breaking with this norm. He is not prohibiting the things mentioned. He is reacting to culture's emphasis of these things at the expense of the more complex and important issues of personal character.

3:4—"but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God."

This is the main point of Peter's statement on women adorning themselves. They are to expend effort on developing who they really are, not just on the outer trappings. That was a radical position in that day and in that culture. We can only imagine how such an idea might have sounded to the men of that day, who viewed wives as property.

Scripture consistently teaches that both male and female are created in God's image and that their real beauty is found in how they are able to reflect Him in their attitudes and actions. That which was marred by Adam's fall is restored to them and that is their value as human beings. As their inner being is engaged intimately with God, it is changed. There is peace that comes over their own spirits. That brings an inner beauty that works its way outward. It is unmistakable and it leads to a life lived as it was meant to be lived. These words then are a clear mandate that women are to travel the road to spiritual maturity with men, not as baggage, but as those through whom He wishes to touch the world.

Now, what is a gentle and quiet spirit? That is an important question, because developing it is the force of this whole series of commands given to women by Peter. Whatever it is, it is of great value to God. That much comes through loud and clear in the words of the text.

A “gently and quiet spirit” has been spoken of in various ways over the years, at times accurately and wisely and at times with seemingly little wisdom. It would seem that we should avoid describing it in terms of the things associated with personality. If introversion or soft-spokenness, or passivity, or any such things that are innate personality traits were in mind, then we would be faced with the problem of God liking something other than that which He had designed and woven into the fabric of a person’s being.

This quality of a gentle and quiet spirit seems to be more a matter of the part of our beings we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, shape and control. We can and must control our personality’s expression and its extremes. The Spirit is to shape our behavior. Our behavior is not simply to be a product of our personalities with their various excesses and weaknesses due to sin.

The word gentle is the rendering of *praewus*. This word refers to temperateness, living in the “golden mean” instead of being given to extremes. The word rendered quiet is *hsciuo*. This word means “sedentary” in the plain literal sense. It came to be used in the figuratively literal sense of being composed. So a gentle and quiet spirit refers to an inner being that is mastered and under control.

Integrating these words with our theology of sanctification, a meek and quiet spirit develops in one whose will is submitted to the control of the Holy Spirit. It describes an inner refusal to simply blurt out reactive words or act out of one’s instincts. It is the moment by moment subjection of thoughts and attitudes to the truth. It is not a quality that is to be unique in God’s mind to women, though the command is worded in this text only to them. The witness of all of Scripture is of God desiring this in men as well. But here it is an appropriate word to women whose behavior must be “chaste and respectful.”

Flirtatious, promiscuous, and disrespectful behavior and any other kind of self-serving or reactive behavior is not orchestrated by the Holy Spirit. It is fleshly and earthy in either male or female. It comes when one’s personality is simply allowed to drift into instinct and excess. These and all excesses must be ruled and they are so ruled in the being of one whose spirit is subjected to the Holy Spirit.

A gentle and quiet spirit is precious in the sight of God because it is the result of a mature faith and trust in Him. Trusting Him absolutely is what makes chaste and respectful behavior possible. It is an inner activity that causes the glory of God to be demonstrated through all the various personality types.

3:5—“For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.”

Our instincts revolt against any rule that would force particular roles on us. This is true of both male and female. As Peter thinks about the broader subject of convincing those outside the faith that Christianity was not a threat to social order, he cites Christian history. Before citing a specific person he speaks in general terms in this verse of holy women in former times. He speaks of holy women who hoped in God, that is women who had faith and lived by faith. That is what it means to hope in God. In stating this he again links the inner submission of one’s spirit to the outward act of submission to one’s husband. The one accompanies the other in his mind and always has.

In the case of these women Peter was pointing to, their adorning was not merely outward. Their goal was not merely external beauty. They were concerned that they display a certain spirit, the essence of their holiness that was their submission to God. They did that by submitting to their husbands. It was as obvious to observers as the clothes they wore. It was, as their lives were viewed historically, what made their lives notable and was such that it came through in the record of history.

3:6—“Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.”

The verse ends with the words that literally could be rendered “not fearing any terror.” Though our current understanding of the word terror may be slightly different, it is not altogether distinct from what is being conveyed here. Quite often the thing which has shaped the behavior of individuals is their fears and their desire to preserve themselves. This is especially true when it comes to obedience to the way of life prescribed by God. It is uncanny how we fear humans and somehow cast aside fear of the Almighty. So common is this reflex in human behavior that we need to constantly ask ourselves what we are fearing by the course of behavior we are choosing (Luke 12:4-12).

In this verse Peter moves from the general to the specific, from the tradition of women of faith in submitting to their husbands, to a specific example. He chooses Sarah, the wife of the one who is consistently pictured in Scripture as the “father” of the faithful. It is not that he was the first to exercise faith (See Heb. 12). It is that His faith marked a distinguishable beginning of a particular family who would be entrusted with truth and revelation, who would experience a special covenant relationship with God, and through whom the redeemer and sin-bearer would come into the world, the designated ruler of God’s creation.

So Sarah was the mother of the “first family” or royal family. In a sense her and her husband modeled the faith. In them the faith was present, though not in its fully developed form, but in its essential form. Peter appeals to Sarah’s example as authoritative in this matter. This shows that we should exercise great care in dismissing this command to wives as “cultural.” A great deal had changed culturally from the nomadic lifestyle of Sarah and Abraham, to the greater sophistication of Roman and Greek culture, but God’s order was the same.

The example Peter gives is from Genesis 18:12 and it is not an occasion when Sarah was at her best, nor is it a quote of public or formal address. It is, in fact, a record of her words to herself, perhaps not even audible and with sarcastic questioning of God in view. Her respect for Abraham was genuine and authentic not contrived or put on.

The respect God is calling for here is not to be one of mere formality. It is to be rooted in the reality of what a husband is in God’s eyes in a home, even an unbelieving husband. There is an anointing of sorts that goes with all authority established by God that must be humbly acknowledged. It is set aside at great peril in matters of civil government, of the Church, and of the home.

God help us in western culture! We have become those whose fears have led us to question authority in so many matters and view it as virtuous. With respect to God we have come to continually ask, “What will happen to me if I obey these commands? What will it cost me? What will I lose?” Instead we should ponder what failure to obey has cost us and what it will ultimately cost us when we stand in His presence.

3:7—“You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

The husband’s behavior is to be submissive as well. The word “likewise” is *omoiws* and is the same word that prefaced the instruction to wives in verse 1. There it linked their behavior back to the example of Christ, perhaps even back to the command to servants and to the overall concern that a submissive kind of behavior was essential to give credibility to the Christian message (see 2:12). The grammatical construction of this verse further points to this interpretation.

The word rendered “live” in the NASB is *anastrophn*, a participle. The verb “grant” further down in the verse is also a participle. There is not a main verb supplied. It is supplied by the context and dictated by the adverb *omoiws*, in like manner. In most such cases the main verb is to be understood as simply “be.” So what Christ did is what husbands are to be, that is submissive to the will of God. This spirit will be further clarified in verses 8-10 where various behaviors will be associated with it. “Be living in like manner” is the idea behind this construction.

The principles of Christianity are to be applied in our varying roles so that we will always be found to be imitators of Christ. The instructions to Christian citizens (2:12-17), to Christian servants (2:18-20), to Christian wives (3:1-6), and now to Christian husbands all have this in common. They all involve submission and they all are aimed at making credible the Christian message.

A husband’s role as head of the home is not mentioned here. It is perhaps because Peter wants to emphasize the spirit in which the man is to carry out that role. It is not to be done in an authoritarian way or in a heavy-handed manner. Instead the husband is to lead in an “understanding” way. The word implies empathetic. Christ rules us in an empathetic way, mindful of our weakness. Peter is calling on men to be ruled by empathy and understanding in relating to their wives, and this was certainly “against the grain” in terms of the cultural norm.

Here Peter reminds the men that their wives are “weaker vessels.” By this term he means that they are weaker in terms of physical strength. The term “vessel” refers to the physical body, it being the “container” for the spirit which is what God Himself provides to give a body life. In a time when life made so many physical demands, Peter reminds men not to have expectations that demanded of their wives the physical strength they themselves had. The idea of “weaker vessel” can only refer to the physical body, and this is not to say every woman is weaker physically than every man, nor is it to say they are inferior so as to be more susceptible to disease, or any other of the various things that might be read into this phrase.

Husbands were to take their cue from Christ, from the example of servants, from the example of citizens submitting to their king, and submit themselves to a certain tone in leading their homes. They were to grant a certain honor, or dignity to their wives. Their tone, because wives are generally weaker in terms of physical strength, could easily become a condescending, domineering one. They were not to allow this but were to rule themselves well in this matter and hold their wives in high regard, as their equals in terms of what Peter calls “the grace of life.”

This phrase, “the grace of life,” seems to be one that is intended to refer to all the graces supplied in Christ to humanity for their well being in this life. It refers to all those things that sustain physical health and spiritual health along with special capacities to understand, apply, and implement the truth in the practical matters of life. A wife is to be regarded as an asset and an equal in this matter, her words and concerns carefully sought out, listened to, and pondered. It is a wise man who does so, but it is also the mark of an obedient man who is himself listening to God. The man who believes his physical strength and the role conferred on him by God as leader of the home means that his wife is inferior in some way in her spiritual power has lost sight of truth and is on dangerous ground. He has become a law unto himself and this will hinder his prayers.

Peter speaks of this and does not give further explanation. The word rendered hinder is literally “cut into.” We know that prayers that lack faith and that are out of harmony with God’s will are not answered (James 1:5-8; Matthew 7:7, 21:22; Mark 11:24). It must therefore be that our wives are “help-mates” (Genesis 2:18), in this important matter of understanding God’s will and His leading in the practical matters of life. They are an aid to our faith. They help us believe and keep believing and help us “stay the course.” They help us pray rightly. If we are not honoring them, viewing them as having in their possession the “grace of life,” we rob ourselves of one of the very things that equip us to be effective leaders. The man who persists in this fleshliness will likely still rule, but by threats and intimidation and all that is sordid. It will be a harsh rule and will so bring the full impact of the curse to rest on his most important work, his home.

God’s word to husbands here is short. One should not be fooled by the more lengthy instruction given to the wife. These words to the husband are of profound depth. Heeding them establishes the very core of the chemistry that makes a successful home. They are words that will help keep us from a fleshly backlash, such as that which has arisen in the extreme forms of the women’s movement. That movement is itself likely a reaction to men’s failure to implement this teaching. A man who understands he is to be the leader of the home has come to understand just a portion of the picture. A man who lives by this verse, knowing and respecting his wife’s ability, will be equipped to lead.