



1 Peter 3:1-7

Heirs of Grace

November 7, 2021

Let's start by reading today's whole passage in 1 Peter 3- and for those of you who are new with us, this is a continuation of a study through the book of 1 Peter where we work through every passage of this book in order to hear what is being said in what we believe to be God's 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, 2 when they see your respectful and pure conduct. 3 Do not let your adorning be external--the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear-- 4 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. 5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. 7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Cody was kind enough to leave this passage for me to preach today as we continue through 1 Peter.

This is probably the section of this book that is the most offensive to our modern ears when we first hear it. And just about all seven of these verses have ideas that could easily be misconstrued and rub us the wrong way, or construed just fine and still rub us the wrong way.

In verse 1 it could seem that wives are to submit silently to all demands of their husbands, verse 3 could be read as a prohibition against jewelry, verse 4 could sounds like women are to be seen and not heard, in verse 6 Sarah called her husband "lord" and that practice is commended to us, and in verse 7 women are called the weaker vessel. And the Christians here believe this is God's word - so what are we to do with all of this?

And, it will come as no surprise to you that many of the worst quote-unquote Christian marriages that I've seen have been marriages where husbands have quoted this passage against their wives (verses 1 through 6, they somehow usually miss most of verse 7). There is a lot of misuse of this passage in our circles.

Last week Cody walked us through a text that was misused in American history to justify the evils of chattel slavery. And today's text is misused still today to justify abuse and mistreatment in marriage.

But the fact that biblical texts can be interpreted and used the wrong way doesn't mean that there is no right interpretation and no right use. It doesn't mean that those texts, rightly applied, won't be good for us.

In fact, the fact that people use a text the wrong way to do damage should make us all the more concerned that we know the right use. This is why we teach our kids to swim - because we want them to be able to be safe around water as young as possible - we want to teach them the right way to handle that dangerous thing.

And so while there is all kind of pressure to just skip over hard texts like this, we don't serve anyone well by avoiding them. We don't serve non-Christians well who have heard people misuse these texts, we don't serve Christians well who might be tempted to misuse these texts, and we don't serve husbands and wives well to avoid this text because the Holy Spirit of God inspired it for our good and the good of our marriages.

Now I will try as much as I can to call out and diffuse the wrong uses of this text. But we also shouldn't assume that if we're getting the text's meaning right that everybody in our culture will like it. We should certainly all be appalled at the misuse of a text to abuse.

And we should also expect that if this is God's word, and it is, that it won't fit perfectly with the sensibilities of any culture even when it is interpreted and used the right way. It will challenge us and refine us and change us for the better. I grow the most when I come to a text that I don't like and find ways to confess and change my life accordingly.

And most of us are Christians here today, meaning that we have received the matchless gift of faith in Jesus. And we were born again because of the message of God's word in the Bible. So we believe the word of God is good, it is good for us, it is life-giving. And while the worst marriages I've ever seen are characterized by an abuse of this text, the best marriages I've ever seen make right use of the principles here.

So the goal today will be to still as closely to what this text says as possible, so if it does make you mad, you are mad at the text and not at something I added to it. And I don't want to be afraid of this text, but instead mine it for what it is saying and the good that it has for all of us. So let's work verse-by-verse through this passage:

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,

So Peter starts with the word "likewise" here, meaning that he is continuing a thought from the previous passages.

Remember, from verse 1 of this book, Peter has been writing to people he calls the elect exiles. They are chosen by God, Christians, but not at home in the world. So how are we as God's children that don't fit here supposed to interact with society, with the institutions in the world? And so he said in 2:12:

1 Peter 2:12 "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."

He is saying that when we around those who don't believe (the people he calls Gentiles here,) we are to conduct ourselves honorably and be full of good deeds so that even if they say we are crazy, they will have to give God glory when they see the real evidence of the good works in our lives - at least when everyone has to be honest on judgment day.

And then he goes on to apply that principle of doing good to non-Christians. He applies it to Christians under non-Christian government, and he says:

1 Peter 2:13-15 "13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people."

So he says if you are under a government that isn't Christian, a government that you probably can't change anyways, honorable conduct there looks like submission to the government, honor to the emperor, recognizing that God invented government for our

good even though people who don't know him are in charge. So the application of 2:12 (keep your conduct honorable, do good) is to submit even to pagan government.

Then he goes on and talks to slaves who are in situations they can't change and have non-Christian masters. (Again, Cody unpacked this last week - it was a very different institution than American slavery and nothing in the Bible gives the slightest justification for what happened here.) But in their society, under the different institution of Roman slavery, he says:

1 Peter 2:18 “Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.”

Again, he says to keep your conduct good under an unjust master, respect them, it is God's will that you do good. (Again, with the qualification that Paul tells slaves to get their freedom if they at all can.) But when they can't, do good.

And now we get to 1 Peter 3:1 again and he says:

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,

So by saying “likewise,” he is continuing that train of thought - how Christians live toward non-Christian government or government that is falling short of what it could be, how Christian slaves live toward non-Christian masters who are falling short, and now how Christian wives live toward non-Christian husbands or husbands who are falling short of what they could be.

We know that is what he is talking about because these are husbands, many of whom “do not obey the word.” And back in chapter 2, verse 8, those who “do not obey the word” are the unbelievers.

So in this passage, the situation in view is a wife comes to faith in Jesus, but her husband doesn't. This is a unique challenge. Everyone who comes to believe in Jesus is out of place in society in many ways, is out of place at work or school. But many of us are out of place out there, but then retreat to a home where our spouses believe. But what about those who are out of place in her own home?

So what does she do? (By the way, the Bible does prohibit a Christian marrying a non-Christian for this reason - for both spouses to have different gods, different “ultimates,” is not the recipe for an easy marriage. So 2 Corinthians 6:14 says not to be yoked together with an unbeliever - he calls them darkness and light - to worship different gods is a significant difference.)

But what happens when that ship has sailed and you’re in that situation? Either you got into the marriage sinfully, or you were married and then one comes to believe?

And it was even more difficult on the wife, especially in Rome, because the husband decided the family religion. He decided who they worshipped and how they worshipped, he decided what they would raise the kids believing.

And now his wife has come to know the Lord. She can’t worship his god anymore. She wants to follow his leadership, but on the most important thing, she can’t.

Which, by the way, does tell us something about the nature of the submission he is calling for. When he says to be subject to your own husbands, it isn’t absolute - she can’t and shouldn’t submit on the most important thing. So biblical submission is not doing absolutely everything he wants, it isn’t not having your own brain. This is a woman who has her own mind and is commanded by God not to go along with her husband’s desire to worship another god. So being subject is not totally absolute.

And also note that he says to be subject to *your own husband*. Some misinterpret these passages to say that women in general must submit to men in general, that women should do what the men say. But submission is limited to her husband - there is one she submits to. And it is limited - it is to one man, not to men in general. I’ve known guys who have a hard time submitting to a female boss at work because this passage says she should submit to him - but it doesn’t say that. Submit to your boss! Do what she says. She has rightful authority over you and you have none over her on the basis of your gender.

So what is it? It must mean something. The fact that biblical submission doesn’t look like “Handmaid’s Tale” or all of the worst caricatures of it doesn’t mean that it means nothing.

It seems that the biblical teaching on this is something like this if I were to sum it up like this (this is actually adapted from the statement on this from the Acts 29 network we are part of):

Men and women are created in the image of God and are therefore equal before God as people. They have equal access to God through Christ, and they both have the same moral dignity and value. Husbands and wives are both responsible to God for spiritual nurture and vitality in the home, and God has given to the man special responsibility to lead his wife and family in accordance with the servant leadership and sacrificial love characterized by Jesus Christ.

This principle of a husband's headship should not be confused with, nor give any hint of, domineering control. Rather, it is to be the loving, tender, and nurturing care of a godly man who is himself under the kind and gentle authority of Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:21-33 is a great passage for further reference.)

And when this is practiced in a grace-filled Christian marriage by two humble people, it is beautiful and good. It paints a picture of the love Jesus has for his church and that model is nothing to apologize for, but one to celebrate, to embrace, and to strive to live out.

Ephesians 5:22-33 says that when this is done right it paints a beautiful picture of the love Jesus has for his church:

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Two lies of our day, both embraced, but mutually contradictory: one lie is that men and women are the same, and the other lie is that men and women must always be at odds with one another. Somehow our culture holds on to both of those as truth claims.

But scripture holds out the (used to be obvious) truth that men and women are created unique, but equal in value and dignity, both made in God's image, both sinful and fallen, both in need of Jesus, but made with tremendous potential for cooperation and complementarity, particularly when both have been redeemed by Jesus and are striving to love and serve one another in response to the gospel they believe.

Our culture says "men and women are the same," and "men and women are at war with one another." The Bible acknowledges that we can corrupt the design and it can look like that, but if we live according to the design men and women are distinct and unique and in marriage can live with a beautiful and dignity-affirming cooperation as they complement one another.

But Peter is dealing with a different situation. The wife believes but the husband doesn't. So what does she do?

Does she leave him now that they are so different? They have different gods, and that's the most important thing about you.

Should they expect to not cooperate in life anymore?

She has talked to him about the gospel that she believes, but he won't have it. So, since wives in Rome didn't determine the household religion, should she even try? Could she ever persuade him to believe? What should her strategy be?

Notice again though that she wants to win him. That wasn't done in their day - he decided on the household religion. But Peter has the assumption here that a godly wife is a force in that house and can win her husband to faith in Christ. The power of the gospel in a godly wife is a force to be reckoned with.

It would be unheard of in Rome for a wife to try to change her husband's religious beliefs - it would have been considered to be unimaginable that that would ever happen. Because they had a wrong view of women that the bible came along and corrected.

She has so much potential that she can win him "without a word." Now this doesn't mean he doesn't need to hear the truth of the Gospel to be saved. He certainly does. In 1 Peter 1:23 he said we are born again through the word, so we do need the message of Jesus to become Christians.

But once he has heard it and it's clear to him, he probably doesn't need more words. And for any of us there can be a temptation to just keep repeating ourselves to say more to try to reach someone, to try to manipulate with words, to be overbearing in our excitement. Peter isn't saying don't talk to him about Jesus.

But Peter says if he will be won, he will be won when he sees the conduct of his wife.

And then he unpacks the kind of conduct he is talking about:

2 when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

So she doesn't lose respect for her husband. She still treats him with respect. And she stays loyal. (He has to be wondering - she won't worship my god? This is unheard of - she must really be against me.) But she is for him. She is respectful, she goes as far as she can without denying Christ to show him that she is for him, she's with him, she isn't going to disrespect him or speak ill of him.

Also she is pure, she isn't looking for another guy, the Christian guys at church that actually love Jesus are not luring her in. And her respect and loyalty are so strong that he sees it - she still has his confidence.

What other aspects of her conduct are in view here?

3 Do not let your adorning be external--the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear--

Starting with what this verse is not saying: it isn't saying it's a sin to braid your hair or wear jewelry or makeup or to dress fashionably. Because notice all that he says: don't let your adorning be external - braiding hair, wearing gold, or clothing. If this verse prohibits jewelry and nice hairstyles, it also prohibits wearing clothing.

He isn't prohibiting jewelry or dressing beautifully at all. It isn't wrong to put some effort (for men or women) into physical beauty and outward appearance - that's fine.

But he is prohibiting being enslaved to the whims of the culture, having to have the latest and newest fashions to make you feel confident. He is prohibiting thinking that the way to win him first and foremost will be with your physical beauty. Remember Peter's formula for winning those that don't believe that are in authority over you back in 2:12:

1 Peter 2:12 “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

The thing that is going to win him is going to be the thing that is unexplainable without God:

4 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.

Now again, this verse can be misused to silence women, or to say that the only acceptable female personality is very mousy and shy and she she shouldn't be heard.

But he says she is to have a gentle and quiet spirit, and neither one of those words is used only to describe women in the Bible, and the word “gentle” is used to describe Jesus who spoke, who was bold, who was intelligent, who was no pushover. In fact, in Matthew 21:5, when Jesus is riding into Jerusalem on a donkey in His triumphal entry, being adored by the crowds, it says:

Matthew 21:5 ““Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'”

That word for “humble” there is the same word translated as gentle in 1 Peter 3:4. It's translated “meek” in Matthew 5:5 where it says the meek shall inherit the earth. Jesus calls himself gentle in Matthew 11:29.

It seems to mean those who rely on God fully rather than their own strength and trust God to arrange the details of their lives.

So that's gentle. And quiet can be translated as “tranquil.” Paul tells Timothy, for example, to pray that the authorities would allow all of us to lead quiet or tranquil lives.

This isn't silent - it's still like still waters, steady. It's a strong dignity, even in the face of adversity and trial.

And Peter says, “Want to have a chance at winning your husband? Relentlessly trust God so that he steadies you, makes you tranquil, so you can live with a joy-filled and quiet

resolve and not in a panicked or anxious way like you may be tempted to live with such a huge difficulty in your home.

And to give a little more weight to this interpretation:

5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

So Sarah called her husband “lord” and he holds her out as an example for wives today.

Now we have in this room many good Christian marriages. And it is a safe bet that none of the wives here call their husbands “lord.” If I only had a nickel for every time Debbie called me lord, I wouldn’t have any nickels at all.

We hear “lord” and we think it means “god.” But it is really just a title of respect that can be applied to God, but can also be applied to anyone you respect. This isn’t saying any more than that Sarah respected her husband, she followed his leadership, and that was her adorning.

And Abraham and Sarah were no perfect couple, and he was certainly not a perfect husband. But when Abraham led their family, she respected him enough to follow. She had an innate respect for him. More than that, she trusted in the God who gave her her husband. And so she followed on some crazy adventures - leaving their homeland when he was a hundred, receiving a promise that she’d have a baby when she was elderly, living as strangers in a strange land.

Notice that another part of her conduct is not fearing anything. She is courageous.

And a lot of years now of pastoral ministry make me want to make sure I point out that this is not calling anyone to just fearlessly receive abuse from an abusive husband or anyone else - remove yourself from those situations and call for help from church or police if that’s your situation.

It’s a calling to venture into life by her normal husband’s side, even if he doesn’t yet believe, being like Sarah who trusts in God’s sovereignty over her marriage so much that she ventures out, willing to take risks, follow God’s sovereign leadership, and not be afraid because you’re building something good for the future.

We don't have time to go through Sara and Abraham's story in Genesis, but God called them from his father's house in Ur to a land where his people had never lived, where he didn't speak the language, where he didn't fit (he was a foreigner in a foreign land,) he didn't worship the god of the people, he didn't follow their customs, but he went to live in the land with a crazy promise that his barren wife who is pushing a century is gonna have a baby. And Sara, laughed as anyone would when she heard that promise, but then took God at his word and said, "I'm up for it. I trust God - I'm not afraid of this life ahead of us."

He says, "And you might win your husband." Look at the power and force of a dignified, courageous, God-fearing woman who is strong enough to follow his leadership, trusting the Lord.

7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way,

Some translations say live with her "according to knowledge."

He is calling on husbands to know their wives - their particular wives, and to live with her according to that knowledge.

What does that mean?

It means acknowledging the uniqueness of your wife - as a woman, and among women. Women are not the same as men, and women are not all the same as each other.

Sometimes our marriage books can be so generalized that they present a cookie-cutter way of relating to wives as if they're all the same in every regard.

But Peter calls husbands to "know *your* wife." Know her - what makes her feel loved and supported? What refreshes her? What does she need to thrive spiritually? What does she like to do? What are her strengths that you can allow to thrive in the environment you lead? What are her weaknesses that you can help her with?

Peter calls to a huge level of attention from husbands to wives, again something that was totally not the norm in Rome. He gives husbands the responsibility to give ourselves to understanding our own wives as the unique women God made them to be, and to create an environment at home where she in particular thrives.

One of the indications that masculine leadership is being carried out the right way is that

she is thriving. And often, if she is wilting, it is an indicator that something is going wrong in our leadership. So understand her.

7 showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel,

The word for weaker there is usually applied to physical strength when it is used elsewhere. So this passage is not calling women morally weaker (he just got done reminding us of the courage and resolve of Sarah, the power of a woman to win her husband - it wouldn't make sense that he would then call her weaker in some way that made her morally inferior - that's not the meaning.)

He's just referring to the obvious general rule that in general men have bigger and stronger physical frames than women. (I know there are exceptions to that - he is speaking in general here. But it's probably true that in an arm-wrestling match, I could beat 19 out of 20 women here. And it isn't because I'm the buff, athletic, workout fanatic that most of you probably think I am. I'm not - it's just that guys are generally physically bigger and stronger.)

Now sometimes when guys interact with guys, they get really competitive, and exploit weaknesses. Today the Bills are going to play the Jacksonville Jaguars. And the Jaguars have one of the worst defenses against the pass in the league. So it could be a fun game to watch because the Bills can throw the ball, and they are likely to try to exploit that weakness. Or if they discover a weak defensive player, they are gonna run the ball at that guy all day.

Peter here says that the relative physical weakness of the average woman vs the average guy is not the kind of thing that should ever be exploited. But the kind of thing that should be honored. The word for "honor" can be translated "precious," and Christian husbands are to make their wives feel precious and honored and never ever afraid of him because of the relative physical weakness.

The physical weakness is not to be exploited, but a cause for protection, for chivalry, for honor, for provision for her, for protection and physically defending from danger (particularly from bad guys who would exploit weakness.)

It means yelling at her, intimidating her, in any way threatening her, speaking to her like she is your employee or your child, is out of line. We honor, we don't intimidate, because that's maybe how a man treats an opponent, but never how he treats his treasured wife.

This word for “honor” can be translated, “cherish her.” There is a God-ordained place for biblical chivalry.

(And here’s where I go beyond the text, but I’m right - holding doors, paying for the date, giving her your coat when she’s cold or your umbrella when it’s raining, your spot on the lifeboat when the cruise ship is sinking - all-around preferring her above yourself is called for in all kinds of ways - learn the things that show honor to a woman in our culture, learn the things that make her in particular feel honored, and do those things.)

Because she is not your employee, she is not your child, she is not your opponent, Peter says next:

7 since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

In Rome, the wife might very well have been looked at as the highest of all the household servants, the chief servant perhaps. But Peter comes along and says, “No, she is right by her husband’s side as a co-heir of the grace of life.”

And Peter is again probably pulling some language from the commonly told story about Abraham...

Hebrews 11:9 “By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.”

So Hebrews looks back at these great fathers of the faith - Abraham, and his co-heirs Isaac and Jacob.

And Peter comes along and tells husbands that their wives are co-heirs.

It’s almost like he’s balancing the previous statement: dwell with them in an understanding way, as weaker vessels...and just in case you think “weaker vessels” means they are less important than you, less connected to Jesus than you, that they can only connect to God through you, let me make it abundantly clear that that’s not what I mean. Because they are co-heirs with you.

Weaker in frame, but right by your side before God in access. Different in some of the roles they play out at home, but not less than you, ever.

And he says to honor her so that your prayers would not be hindered.
What does that mean? Prayers would not be hindered.

One key to interpreting Peter is knowing that he often repeats himself but in slightly different ways so we can get the meaning.

In 1 Peter 3:12 “12 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.”

So those who actively do evil can expect God to be against them, and the righteous can expect an answer to prayers.

Taken together with verse 7, this tells us that:

- 1) Those of us who are married are not living holy Christian lives if we are mistreating our spouses.
- 2) Those of us who are married are not living healthy Christian lives if we are not doing our part to cultivate healthy marriages.
- 3) Our prayers are hindered (at best) and God is against us at worst if we aren't cultivating the marriages he gave us.

We can be very tempted to be outward crusaders for a Christian issue out there but then give ourselves a pass for being cruel to our wives and not honoring them. But Peter says, “The prayers aren't working right if you're not honoring your wife.” Sometimes holiness doesn't require another night out evangelizing or picketing something (those things both have important places,) but it might be far more holy to go get a date or give your wife a night without the kids or whatever she in particular might need.

“If a man doesn't treat his wife right, I don't want to hear him talk about Christianity.” - D.L. Moody.

In fact it makes no sense to try to tell people about Jesus but not give attention to your marriage, because a marriage exists first and foremost to tell the story of Jesus:

Ephesians 5:32 “32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

The biggest reason for marriage and the vital task in a Christian marriage is to tell the truth about Jesus with it. This union shows what Jesus’s love for His people is like.

A marriage that becomes cold or stuffy or joyless doesn’t say the right thing about God. It portrays God as the one who would steal our joy through religion rather than give us joy in the Gospel.

A marriage that is inattentive doesn’t say the right thing about God. In Ephesians 5, we read that God looks at his bride and works to: sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

He pays great attention to his church.

So to tell the truth about Him with your marriage, you are called to pay great attention to each other. To help each other when you’re weak, to notice when one is distant, to work to reconcile quickly, confess sins honestly, and never let the sun go down on your anger, Ephesians tells us.

A marriage that is less than fully committed doesn’t preach the truth about the Gospel.

Jesus gave his life for the church. There wasn’t a limit to His love or forgiveness. There was nothing tentative about His commitment. When Jesus said, “Till death do us part,” he meant it, and He died for the church.

And in being fully committed to one another, you preach the good news about Jesus.

Jesus is a God who loved his people so much that He gave his life to cleanse them, was committed to them until death, and pays full attention to them, even now, hearing every prayer. And He does the whole thing not just out of duty, but out of delight.

And we are called in scripture to love and honor and respect each other with a love that looks like that.

Father, who measures up to this?

You have called us to love like your son loves, and we all fall short. Desperately short.

We haven't painted the right picture with our love and honor, with our submission and respect, with our courage and tranquility. We feel the weight of our failure as married people. Our singles feel that they also have failed to love as you have loved, to defer to others, to submit to rightful but flawed authority. It would be hard to believe our prayers aren't hindered.

So we all have a lot to confess and repent of. And we pray that now in our seats in the silence that we would do so.

So I'd urge you to take the next minute or so to quietly confess your sins to God. And with that, commit to do what's necessary to walk out repentance - to ask forgiveness from a spouse, to redouble efforts at home, or as singles to be actively looking for ways to serve others in sacrificial, others-preferring love.

...

As we confess sins like these, they are so serious that we have one hope.

And that's that Jesus has borne them fully upon the cross.

And those of us who have become Christians here, who have confessed all of our known sins, celebrate that hope as we take the Lord's Supper.

The bread in the cup represents the body of Christ that was shed for you to take the punishment for sins you deserve.

The cup represents His blood that was shed to bring you into a new covenant, something like a marriage with God, where he has cleansed you and forgiven you and now calls you part of his bride.

So during the next song, and again this is just for Christians who have confessed and renounced all of our known sins and who trust only in what Jesus did to make us right with God, we can take this supper.

And when we eat this bread and drink this cup, we are showing the Lord's death until he returns. So this is a powerful observance - not because of innate power in bread or wine. But because this little piece of bread represents the greatest feast for the soul there is. Because even this little, cheesy covid peel-off sip of wine, becomes the finest wine in the world as it represents the great hope we have because of the spilled blood of Christ.

So if you are clinging to Jesus alone, you have confessed your sin, take this and eat and drink in joy for that Gospel.

Sermon Discussion Questions

- 1. Read 1 Peter 3:1-7 and Ephesians 5:22-32. What are the common elements in both passages? How are they different (though not contradictory)? How are the situations they speak to slightly different?**
- 2. Why is Sarah a great example of what Peter is calling for here? How did she exhibit the qualities he wants wives to have?**
- 3. What does it mean for husbands to dwell with their wives in an understanding way?**
- 4. How might single people apply today's passage to their lives?**
- 5. What do you suppose the "grace of life" is?**
- 6. How can marriage paint a picture of the Gospel?**