

Series: **Living Under Pressure** – week 11

CDOBC – beginning on 2/7/16

Today's Title: **"The Power of Submitting in Marriage"**

May 1, 2016 ~ 1 Peter 3:1-7

OBJECTIVE: To help believers know and apply God's pattern for marriage.

In America in 2016, the statement of *'wife, submit to your husband'* is a lightning rod attracting strong opinions – usually strong protests.

The unbelieving world – and surprisingly, even a segment of the Christian world, view the Bible as a collection of writings which are wonderful, but dated and stuck in the customs and practices of ancient times.

Therefore, they selectively discard certain passages which run contrary to their modern sensitivities, and embrace passages which agree with them ("do not judge" – **Matt. 7:1**).

However, the truth is that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness..." – **2 Timothy 3:16, ESV**

"For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." – **2 Peter 1:21, ESV**

What we read in the Bible is inspired by the Spirit of God, and it's not made up, embellished or overshadowed by the personal views and opinions of the writers.

So, when we come to a passage like the one we're at today, we need to realize what we read is a Word from God Himself.

Turn to 1 Peter 3:1-7 – “The Power of Submitting in Marriage”

Opening Prayer

The Apostle Peter is the author, and he wrote this letter in the first century, in the time of the Roman Empire and Greco-Roman culture.

He wrote this letter to believers who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire – specifically the region which is now modern-day Turkey.

The cultural realities of 1st century Greco-Roman culture is often the launching pad for the criticism of this passage and others like it. Critics will say, “Of course Peter tells wives, ‘*Submit to your husbands*’ because that was what everyone did in the culture!” “He only wrote that because of the misogynistic culture he lived in. He couldn't help it, he was just like the culture, so this is what he wrote.”

However, the critics fail to understand Peter and the Christian faith is a radical and counter-cultural faith. Christian truth does not cozy-up and snuggle with the culture, it destroys the cultural assumptions and turns the culture upside down!

Peter and the other biblical writers are pro-women – and pro-men. They are revolutionaries who bring a message of true freedom which liberates people from their bondage to sin and the shackles of the culture’s expectations.

Do not make the mistake of seeing Peter or any of the other Biblical writers recording their own thoughts and opinions, or simply mimicking the cultural trends of their day.

They were moved along and inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down the everlasting, true Word of God – which we desperately need to hear and apply in our life!

“In the Greco-Roman culture of the 1st century, women received little or no respect. If they lived in their father’s house, their father had life and death authority over them. Husbands had a similar kind of legal authority over their wives. Society regarded women as mere servants who were to stay at home and obey their husband. If a woman decided to obey the gospel, that decision to change religions on her own could result in severe abuse from her unsaved husband.”

Peter writes much more to wives than to the husbands (6-1). The reason is not because Peter was unbalanced and didn’t like women, but in the 1st century, “...when a wife became a Christian, the potential for difficulty was much greater than it was if the husband first became a believer. In that society when women, who were viewed as inferior to men, became

Christians without their husbands also becoming saved, the likelihood of his being embarrassed and shamed by what was viewed as an act of defiance by his wife, was predictable, as was the conflict subsequently generated.”

(The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Peter, p. 176)

So, when Peter writes in **1 Peter 3:1** “wives, be subject to your own husbands”, he is not doing so because he hates women or believes women are inferior to men. He is doing so because of **God’s design** for the family, **God’s desire** to protect women from harm, and **God’s desire** for the husband to be saved.

The powerful testimony of submission vs. 1-2

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.”

In our passage today, the husband is most likely an unbeliever – possibly even hostile to hearing about Jesus and the Gospel. In the 1st century Greco-Roman culture, by itself this presented an element of danger for the wife’s physical well-being.

But there was also a great evangelistic danger of a believing wife who has an unbelieving husband (*this is also true for a believing husband and unbelieving wife*) always sharing what she has learned with her unbelieving spouse

hoping that something she says would hit the ‘bullseye’ of his heart. Every dinner, every walk, every car ride is an opportunity for the wife to talk with her husband about Jesus, and eventually this can be a tremendous turn-off – incessant Gospel-nagging – and it may cause the unbelieving husband to reject the claims of Christ more strongly!

This is why Peter says, *‘submit to your husband and win him – not by preaching to him, but by your conduct.’*

If you protest the instruction on submission, you will miss the reason why submission is so important.

Submission is important because God has given certain roles in life – and God has called believers to live with great humility and a love which is eager to serve the other.

Submission and love is not exclusively for women – it’s for all believers, and even within the Godhead we see submission.

Eph. 5:21 – mutual submission between all believers

“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

1 Corinthians 15:28 – submission within the Godhead

“When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under Him, that God may be all in all.”

Luke 22:42 – Jesus submitting to the Father’s will

“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.”

1 John 4:10 – The Father sent the Son...implying submission of the Son to the Father
“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Likewise, in the family, God has designed the family with defined roles for husband and wife. The husband is the leader / head / responsible for the family, and the wife is called to submit to her husband’s leading.

Eph. 5:22 – a wife’s submission to her husband

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.”

But what about **Galatians 3:28**?

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Doesn’t this passage teach equality between all people – thereby canceling out a wife’s submission to her husband?

No. This passage does not dismiss or overturn the God-ordained roles and leadership in civic society, at work, at church or in the home. Galatians 3 teaches there is ‘oneness’ and equal standing before God for all believers, so that each person on their own can approach God through Jesus Christ. They don’t need anyone to act as a mediator on their behalf. They are on equal ground regarding their spiritual citizenship and spiritual access in Christ. A wife does not need her husband to pray to God for her or to call her up to heaven.

However, her submission and respect along with her “pure conduct” will be an example to her husband which has the potential to be a powerful testimony to him of the truth of the Gospel.

Her greatest evangelistic power may not be in talking about Jesus – but in living her new life in Christ.

A transformed life is a powerful testimony!

“...what...submission does not mean for Christian wives.

It does not mean if your husband asks you to abandon your faith in Christ, you should do so.

It does not mean if your husband asks you to sin, you should do so.

If does not mean you must always agree with him and never present a differing view.

It does not mean if he is unfaithful to you, you are left without Biblical recourse.

It does not mean if he abuses you physically or through incessant verbal humiliation, you must remain quietly in the home and accept the daily cruelty...”

(Preaching the Word series, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude, Sharing Christ’s Sufferings, by David R. Helm, p. 102)

Allow me to add:

It does not mean the wife is inferior to the husband.

It does not mean the wife is to mindlessly say ‘yes’ to every decision and every request of her husband.

It does mean you honor and obey God and His design for the family.

It does mean you honor and respect your husband...and if he is an unbeliever, your submission and respect may be the living Gospel which opens his heart to Christ.

Ladies – pursue true and lasting beauty vs. 3-6

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.”

What is more respectful and healthy for women:

The world’s view of beauty...

Or the Bible’s view of beauty?

The world’s view says you should fit into a size 4, and have the curves of a size 20!

The world says you must have the latest style of clothes and jewelry, not to mention your make-up and hairstyle.

The world says if you don't have these things and meet this impossible photo-shopped ideal, then you don't measure up.

The Bible says your true beauty is not external, but internal.

Some have misunderstood, misinterpreted and misapplied these verses to say women shouldn't wear any nice clothes, any jewelry or a modern hair-style.

("curb appeal")

This is not what Peter is saying – he's simply saying don't make the outer adornment the center of your life – the obsession of your life – the determining factor of your worth or your joy.

Ladies...there is a place for outer beauty, but outer beauty is not / should not be the focus and pursuit of your life. Things change – over time, they change position. We get weaker with age and we can't hold up what we used to hold up! Wrinkles and gray hair will arrive and gain more force no matter how you try and fight them!

Instead, he says to work on the inner-person – and allow God to transform your inner person into the beautiful person He created you to be.

You want timeless beauty? Here it is!

“imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.”

This is true and lasting beauty.

This is beauty which is pleasing and “precious” to God.

This is part of the problem isn't it...this beauty is precious to God but not very precious to your husband.

Husband...take note! You must cherish the beauty of your wife's character and spirit more than her physical appearance!

(See also John 6:27 – same principle at work)

A “gentle and quiet spirit” is not a personality type. This doesn't mean you must become an introvert or keep your mouth shut in order to please God.

This has to do with a humility and purity of spirit. A calmness of your inner spirit because of the truth and promises of Christ. A spirit which is meek. This is a strong woman who is under control.

Sarah is the example Peter gives.

Sarah was a Cover Girl!

At age 75 she had captivating beauty! **(Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18)**

Sarah was not a subservient woman.

Sarah was a strong, intelligent and attractive woman.

Sarah was a woman who believed in God and dedicated her life to following after God.

Sarah also loved her husband – and when she called Abraham ‘lord’, it was not a term of servitude or worship, but an expression of honor and love. She called him ‘lord’ under her breath as God was promising the birth of their son the next year.

Genesis 18:12

“So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?”

Ladies...what’s the fear all about in vs. 6b?

It’s about the fear of what others will say about your submission.

It’s about the fear that your husband will take advantage of your submission.

It’s about the fear that you will lose your personal worth or value when you submit.

Because we don’t trust the husband.

Because the husband has been passive, selfish and irresponsible.

Because the husbands past sins frighten the wife.

Husband’s – honor your wife vs. 7

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.”

“Likewise” (“in the same way”) – same word (*homoiós*) as Peter used in vs. 1 – which points back to the example of Jesus at the end of chapter 2. This brings to mind the teaching of Paul in **Ephesians 5:25** “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her...” Husbands – your role as husband – your role as the leader and responsible head of the home – does not mean you are to lead in a way that serves your interests, needs and desires. You are to serve your wife as Jesus serves the church. You are to sacrifice everything for her benefit.

The Greek word which is translated “live with your wife” means *‘to dwell with’* and is often used to describe the marital relationship – specifically sexual intercourse between a husband and a wife.

This is a very important piece of information – and it has a lot to do with the wife’s fear mentioned in vs. 6. Peter tells us as husbands to live with our wife – to dwell with her – “in an understanding way”.

Other translations:

“be considerate as you live with your wife” **NIV**

“dwell with them according to knowledge” **KJV**

The KJV is helpful because it’s a literal translation of the Greek (*kata gnōsin*).

When you put this all together, the sense is for the husband to serve and sacrifice for his wife as Jesus does for the church, and part of that is to make sure you don't take advantage of her submission and pressure her to sexual practices she is uncomfortable with.

Understand the vulnerable place your wife is in when she submits to your leadership – and don't abuse her willingness to submit.

Understand the cultural waters she must swim against in order to submit to you.

Know her place in the family of God – she is an “heir with you of the grace of of life”.

Know she is equal to you in the eyes of God.

Know she is gifted by God to serve the Body of Christ.

Know she is a sinner – just like you – saved by God's grace.

Know she is treasured by God as one of His own.

Know she is physically weaker – and when she submits this can create fear if her husband is not emulating Christ in his character and heart.

Know she is not weaker morally, intellectually or spiritually – so don't treat her as such.

With all this in mind – show her “honor”.

Honor her.

You are not her boss...you are her husband called to serve her and sacrifice for her.

Honor her by treating her with dignity.

Honor her by doing nice things for her she likes.

Honor her by praising her.

Honor her by loving her.

Honor her by telling her how blessed you are to be her husband.

Honor her by helping her with the household chores.

Honor her by taking her out to dinner.

Honor her by getting her a nice, romantic card.

Honor her by giving her hugs...no strings attached.

Honor her by talking with her.

Honor her by listening to her and asking her questions about her thoughts and opinions.

Honor her by leading your family in faith.

Honor her by growing in your faith.

Honor her by praying with her and for her.

Which brings us to the final point – a warning for the husband.

Listen carefully men...if you don't love and serve your wife – if you don't give her honor – if you take advantage of her submission - then heaven will be closed-off to your prayers.

Improper treatment of your wife will hinder...damage your spiritual life.

“...so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

Taking advantage of your wife’s submission will cause God to turn away from your voice.

Apply it...

Obey God and submit to your husband

Ladies... if you are experiencing difficult times in your marriage – and this teaching frightens you and makes you very concerned about how your husband might abuse your submission, then get help and counsel from a trusted lady here in the church who can help you work through these challenging issues.

Focus on internal beauty (Both men and women – vanity is not gender specific!)

This is beauty which is “imperishable” – fountain of youth kind of beauty!

Men...cherish your wife’s inner-beauty – not only her external beauty.

Vanity is a losing battle – age and gravity will win!
Care for your body – be healthy – look attractive – but don’t put your value and self-worth in your looks.

Prov. 31:29

“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.”

Men...honor and serve your wife

Praise your wife and daughter for their inner-beauty.

Serve the women in your family.

Sacrifice for the women in your family.

Get serious about your commitment to Christ and grow in your faith – so your wife will not be afraid of submitting.

Commit each day to Christ so her submission will be a joy for her – because she not only loves her husband, but she knows your leadership will be filled with wisdom and safety.

Close in prayer