

LIVING HOPE | Hope at Home

1 Peter 3:1-7

Big Idea: The gospel transforms our closest relationships.

INTRODUCTION | DON'T TELL ME HOW TO DRESS

The people closest to us often get the least edited version of us.

About thirteen years ago, my mom lovingly tried to help me with something that, looking back, she was probably right about. It was the era of very tight jeans, and apparently, I had interpreted "slim fit" as more of a challenge than a suggestion.

My mom said something like, "Mijo, I just don't think those clothes look very good on you."

Now, she wasn't trying to embarrass me. She wasn't criticizing me. She was doing what loving mothers have done for generations—trying to save their sons from themselves.

But instead of receiving it with humility, I got defensive.

I snapped back, "I never tell you what to wear, so who are you to tell me what to wear?"

It was not one of my finer moments.

Thank God I am not the same man I was thirteen years ago.

But in that moment, my mother didn't get the Jesus-version of Joel. She got the impatient version. The defensive version. The version that looked a whole lot less like Jesus than I wanted to admit.

Because the people closest to us often get the least edited version of us. Our neighbors get our best moments. Our coworkers get our professional selves. Our church family gets the Sunday version.

But our families see: our impatience, our defensiveness, our selfishness, our exhaustion, and sometimes even the old self that Jesus is still teaching us to put to death.

And that raises an important question:

- What does resurrection hope look like where nobody is impressed by your résumé?
- What does following Jesus look like in the places where people know us best?
- What does the gospel look like at home?

As we walk through this passage today, I want you to keep one person in mind. One person who gets the least edited version of you. We're going to come back to them at the end.

Because before your family hears your theology, they experience your character. And Peter says something incredibly important in our passage today: **How we live will often preach louder than what we say.** Let's read it.

1 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

HOUSEHOLD CODE | Before we go further, we need to understand the world Peter was writing into. Otherwise, all husbands will think during this sermon is, “finally, a sermon on submission, my wife needs to hear!”

In the Roman Empire, everyone knew what were called the household codes—rules for how homes were supposed to function.

The husband ruled the home. The wife, children, and servants were expected to follow his lead. The family was seen as a miniature version of the empire itself. A stable empire required stable households, and stable households required clear authority structures.

So if a wife adopted a new religion apart from her husband, it wasn't viewed merely as a private spiritual decision. It could be viewed as a rebellion against the household and a disruption of the social order.

That's the world Peter is writing into. Women were converting in large numbers, but their husbands weren't. **And here's what is remarkable:**

Peter doesn't write to husbands and tell them how to govern their wives. He writes directly to wives as disciples of Jesus and people capable of choosing faithfulness for themselves.

And then he tells husbands not to rule, but to honor. For a first-century Roman audience, that was shocking. *Peter isn't simply preserving Roman culture; he's planting gospel values that begin transforming it from the inside out.*

1. LET YOUR LIFE PREACH THE GOSPEL AT HOME (vv.1–2)

When we read carefully, we can see that Peter's concern is not authority. His concern is witness. Peter is envisioning Christian wives married to unbelieving husbands in a culture where wives were expected to adopt the religion of their husbands. A wife becoming a Christian independently could be viewed as rebellion against the household itself.

Peter's question is:

How do you faithfully follow Jesus without unnecessarily destroying your opportunity to influence your husband for Christ?

His answer: Through Christlike conduct in the home.

So what does submission mean here? The word means to voluntarily place oneself under or align oneself under another. **Importantly**, Peter does not mean: Inferiority, silence, passivity, unquestioning obedience, tolerating abuse, or accepting sin.

So what does it look like positively? In Christian marriage, **submission is the voluntary choice to use your strength, freedom, and influence for the good of another person rather than simply insisting on your own way.**

Sometimes it means listening before reacting, laying down the need to win every argument, or supporting a decision you would not have made because unity matters more than preference.

Submission is not about losing your voice. It is about using your freedom in a Christlike way. **Jesus himself submits to the Father** while remaining equal with the Father. Submission in Scripture is about posture, not value. **And Peter uses submission language broadly.** In this section, he calls:

- citizens to submit to governing authorities (2:13),
- servants to submit to masters (2:18),
- wives to submit to husbands (3:1).

The common thread isn't hierarchy. It's this: *How do followers of Jesus use their freedom in a way that reflects Christ?* **And the larger New Testament picture in relationships is mutual submission.**

In Ephesians 5:21, before Paul ever says: "Wives, submit to your husbands..." he says: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Christian marriage is not one person having all the submitting and the other having all the authority.

Christian marriage is two disciples asking: **"How can I use my strength for your good?"** The wife expresses that through *willing respect*. The husband expresses that through *sacrificial love*.

Both are forms of self-giving. Both require dying to self. Both imitate Jesus. **Which means the real issue underneath submission is TRUST.**

The question is not: "Who gets their way in marriage?" The question is: "Will I trust God enough to put the flourishing of another person ahead of myself?" That is what Jesus did for us.

And Peter believes that people in our closest relationships can often see the gospel before they believe the gospel.

They see it in **patience**. They see it in **gentleness**. They see it in **sacrificial love**. They see it in a **husband** who **honors** his wife and a **wife** who willingly **respects** her husband. They see it in ordinary faithfulness lived out over time.

Which is exactly why Peter's vision for Christian households can be summarized like this: **relationships marked by willing respect and sacrificial love.**

2. LET CHRIST SHAPE WHO YOU ARE, NOT JUST HOW YOU APPEAR (vv.3–6)

Peter's world was infatuated with status, wealth, and family honor displayed through elaborate hairstyles, expensive garments, and jewelry.

And when Peter says elaborate hairstyles, don't picture a quick stop at the salon before church. Some Roman hairstyles could take hours to create and often required servants to braid, weave, pin, and build them into elaborate displays of wealth and status.

So what Peter writes about hairstyles, jewelry, and clothing, it should be read through that cultural lens...

If we took this as an absolute prohibition against hairstyles, jewelry, or nice clothes, most churches would not be practicing the biblical command very consistently.

Peter's concern is this: What kind of beauty has become your center of gravity? Has your value, identity, and influence become rooted primarily in outward appearance? Or in the kind of person Christ is making you into?

Our world says attractiveness matters, status matters, image matters. **Scripture says** character matters.

And men shouldn't tune out here either. We have our own versions of outward adornment: success, achievement, titles, income, and reputation. The temptation is universal: to build our identity around what people see rather than who we are becoming.

Peter isn't saying outward beauty is bad. He's asking a deeper question: What kind of beauty survives aging, illness, disappointment, hardship, and suffering? Peter calls it: "the unfading beauty..." Everything external eventually fades. The body changes. Fashion changes. Careers change. Status changes. But Christlike character ages remarkably well.

Peter says, "**the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit**". Now we hear that language and often assume Peter means female weakness. Passive. Timid. Silent. But that's not what these words mean. In fact, Jesus describes Himself in nearly identical language: "I am gentle and humble in heart."

Peter isn't describing weakness. He's describing Christlikeness: strength under control, humility that doesn't need recognition, and security that doesn't need to dominate the room.

Friends, when you wake up on Sunday morning to get ready for church, perhaps the first question shouldn't be: "How do I dress to impress people today?" Perhaps the deeper question is: "Lord Jesus, is the person I am bringing into this room marked by gentleness and humility of heart?"

SARAH | And then Peter gives us an example of what this inner beauty looked like in the Old Testament. **He points us to Sarah.**

This is where modern readers often get nervous because Peter says Sarah obeyed Abraham and even called him "lord."

Before any husbands go home expecting a title change this afternoon, notice that Sarah wasn't saying this to Abraham or using it as a formal marital title. In Genesis 18, she says it quietly to herself while overhearing God's promise that she would bear a son in her old age.

Peter isn't creating Christian vocabulary for marriage. He's pointing to something deeper: respect, confidence in God, and faithfulness in uncertainty.

And notice where Peter lands: "You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Peter doesn't end with authority. He ends with courage. Sarah becomes an example not merely of respect for her husband but of trust in God—a woman whose hope in God gave her courage rather than fear.

Peter's point is not, "Dress differently," or even, "Act differently." His point is, "Become a different kind of person." A person whose security comes from God rather than appearance, whose beauty comes from Christlikeness rather than image, and whose hope in God produces courage rather than fear.

That is the kind of beauty Peter says never fades.

So let Christ shape who you are, not just how you appear.

3. BUILD A HOME MARKED BY HONOR AND SPIRITUAL UNITY (v.7)

At first glance, Peter's instructions to husbands almost feel underwhelming. We read them and think, "*That's it? Just honor your wife?*"

Honor is not a category we think about very often anymore. We know about military **honors** ceremonies and **honor** roll students, and we know the Bible says to **honor** our father and mother. But do we really understand honor?

Because Peter doesn't tell husbands to rule their wives. He doesn't even begin with love, as Paul does in Ephesians. Instead, he says: "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect..."

The NIV translates the word as *respect*, but Peter's idea is actually richer than our modern understanding of that word. Respect sounds polite. Respect sounds like good manners. Peter's word is closer to honor. **HONOR carries the idea of assigning value to someone, treating another person as precious, recognizing their God-given dignity and worth.**

This week I got corrected by a three-year-old theologian in my own house. We've been teaching Leo not to interrupt people when they're talking. We tell him, "Wait your turn to speak, let them finish."

Well, Jenese was telling a story and, if I'm honest, I thought I could tell it better. So I jumped in and started talking over her. Suddenly I hear this little voice:

"Poppa, poppa, poppa, that's not nice. Momma was talking first." And there I was, getting disciplined by a toddler. The embarrassing part is that he was absolutely right.

Because honor isn't only about grand ceremonies. Sometimes honor sounds like:

- *"Your voice matters enough for me to listen."*
- *"Your thoughts matter enough for me not to interrupt."*
- *"Your dignity matters enough for me not to talk over you."*

Peter says, "Honor her." And maybe honor begins in moments much smaller than we imagine.

While Peter instructs husbands to honor, honor is actually a Christian virtue for every relationship. Paul tells believers in Romans 12:10 to **"outdo one another in showing honor."** What if we became just as skilled at encouragement as we are at sarcasm and criticism?

Imagine walking into church and hearing:

"Pastor Isai, your passion in worship is so contagious it makes me want to love Jesus more."

"Pastor Daniel, your wisdom has saved me from at least five bad decisions this year."

"Pastor Sean, every time you preach, I leave wanting to follow Jesus more seriously."

Honestly, some of us would be more uncomfortable receiving that than being roasted. Peter simply says husbands should lead the way in creating a culture of honor in the home.

What makes this command so remarkable is that in Peter's world, honor flowed upward, not downward. Children honored their fathers. Servants honored masters. Wives honored husbands. The head of the household received honor; he was not expected to give it away. And then Peter says to husbands: **Honor her.**

For a first-century Roman husband, that would have sounded deeply countercultural. In one sentence, Peter gives husbands three instructions that would have surprised his culture: understand her, honor her, and recognize her spiritual equality.

First, husbands are to be *considerate* as they live with their wives. The phrase literally means to live with her "according to knowledge." In other words, know her well.

She is an individual created in the image of God with strengths and weaknesses, hopes and fears, dreams and disappointments.

Peter is calling husbands to study their wives with the same intentionality that they often give to careers, hobbies, World Cup brackets, or investments. **What brings her joy?** What drains her energy? **What makes her feel loved?** What dreams has God placed in her heart? Christian husbands are called to become students of their wives.

Second, Peter says to honor her. Assign value to her. Speak well of her. Protect her dignity both publicly and privately. Use whatever strength, influence, or authority you possess not to elevate yourself but to help her flourish.

And then Peter says something that may be the most radical statement in the entire passage: "As heirs with you of the gracious gift of life."

To appreciate how revolutionary this was, listen to the assumptions of Peter's culture.

Greek historian Plutarch, writing around the same time as Peter, advised that "a wife should not acquire her own friends, but should make her husband's friends her own." He went even further, saying that it was proper for a wife to recognize only those gods whom her husband worshipped.

Do you hear the assumption underneath that? Her friendships became his friendships. Her social world became his social world. Even her spiritual identity was expected to disappear into his. Peter says something entirely different. Your wife is not an extension of you. She is not your property. She is not your accessory. *She is your fellow heir.*

The same Christ who died for you died for her. The same Spirit who lives in you lives in her. The same inheritance awaiting you awaits her.

Third, Peter ends with a warning that is just as surprising as everything else he has said. Notice who received the warning. *Not the wife. The husband.* Peter says to honor your wife and live with understanding toward her, "so that nothing will hinder your prayers." In other words, you cannot mistreat your wife and expect your relationship with God to remain unaffected.

God cares about how loudly you sing in worship, but He also cares about how you speak in your kitchen. He cares about your public prayers, but He also cares about how you treat the person lying beside you at night.

Husbands, treat your wives as women for whom Christ died and with whom you will one day stand before the throne of God.

Not beneath you. Not behind you. Beside you. As fellow heirs of grace.

CLOSING

Church, the people who live with us see us exhausted. They see us anxious. They see us disappointed. They see us impatient. They see us when nobody else is watching.

And Peter's question is not: "Are you impressive in public?" His question is: "Has the gospel made you different at home?"

Because eventually every podcast ends. Every sermon ends. Every ministry role ends. But the people sitting around the dinner table experience your discipleship every day.

Earlier I asked you to think about one person. One person who gets the least edited version of you. One person who sees your stress. Your impatience. Your exhaustion. Your disappointments.

And maybe as we've walked through Peter's words today, the Spirit has already brought someone to mind.

- Maybe your spouse.
- Maybe your parent.
- Maybe your roommate.
- Maybe your children.
- Maybe a coworker.
- Maybe a neighbor.

And ask God one question: "Lord Jesus, what would it look like for the gospel to become more visible in this relationship?"

Invite the pastors to bless the audience with me.

Invite newer guests to "Meet the Pastors".

Pray for help from God and bless.