



1 Peter 3:1-7 Submission in Marriage Part 2

Summary: God gives specific instruction on how wives and husbands should live because our present relationships can have an eternal impact.

Last week we spoke extensively about the call to Biblical submission in marriage – and if you did not catch that, you need to go back on the podcast or the website and review it – because this week we’re going to work out some specific applications of the general subject.

As we do, I want to draw your attention to issue a warning. You’re likely to get tripped up by the things this passage says to do or not to do, you’re likely to get distracted by what this passage says your life should look like, but I want to make sure you can see *through* all of that to the ultimate outcome. I want you to ask: *why* are these specific actions and attitudes either commanded or discouraged?

I’ll give you the answer up front because I want to make sure you can see it for yourselves, and then we’ll come back to it at the end of our time together. The reason for all this instruction about submission in marriage is to help us achieve spiritual goals through our present relationships.

If you come to this passage, and you’re most concerned about yourself, we’re going to waste our time talking about it because you’ll just be arguing internally the whole time about how this is ridiculous or doesn’t apply to your present situation. You’ll be too busy thinking about your rights and what you deserve or all the ways you’ve been wronged or why this won’t work in your life today, and you won’t let the living instructions of Almighty God seep in, penetrate your heart, soul, and mind, and change the way you live. And because you won’t let God transform you, He won’t be able to use you to reach others.

This passage of Scripture is about you, but it’s also about God and it’s about your spouse – the one you have or the one you hope to have one day – and how each of you will look in light of eternity.

Keep that in mind, and read with me now:

1 Peter 3:1 Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, **that** even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, **may be won by the conduct of their wives**, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear (reverence/respect). 3 Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— 4 rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy

women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror (actual fear – no reason to live in fear).

7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and **as *being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.***

God tells wives to submit to their husbands – because the beauty of their surrendered heart, their gentle and quiet spirit, and their chaste conduct as they submit to Jesus will arouse a man's soul and change him forever – ladies, there are men here in this room because of you – you've drawn them closer to God, not by the clothes you wear, or the curves you've got, but with your Christlike character.

Meanwhile, God tells husbands to be thoughtful, considerate of their wives, because they are joint heirs of the grace of life. Men, you may be called to leadership, but you're both going in the same direction, *she's going to receive the same eternal inheritance*, so value her, be interested in her – or, notice this: God may not be as interested in you – your prayers may be hindered.

Well, there's a lot to take in this morning, so let's dig in and make some painful, but practical, applications.

Now, we already said this last week, but I'll say it again, ladies, you have to note that *all* of this applies to you, even if you don't think your husband is worth it. Peter is addressing women married to Christians and non-Christians. But remember: God never gives you a command you cannot obey - He just expects you to lean even more on Him for the ability to do it.

And what He commands you to do is to respect, support, and follow your husband.

And to do it with honor and gentleness, without sighing, or complaining, or grumbling, without cutting sarcasm or icy cold shoulders or withholding intimacy – God is calling you to behave in such a way that your husband can see your conduct and be compelled toward Christ. And again, as we said last week – there's no way you can do that on your own, you need the Word of God to guide you, you need the Spirit of God to strengthen you, and you need the Son of God to forgive you when you fail – because you will.

If you read this passage correctly, it should drive you to prayer in utter despondency casting yourself at the feet of a tremendous God who has given you an impossible task in order that you might invite Him further into your life.

Because, the kind of behavior called for by this passage, is the kind of behavior God promises to produce in you as you abide in Him. Scripture says these character traits can become your natural reaction as God produces the fruit of the Spirit in you.

Notice how consistent that is. If you're trying to achieve eternal, spiritual results – like the salvation or sanctification of a human soul, then you will value eternal, spiritual methods – like the evidence of transformation in your own life. But if you're trying to achieve immediate, earth-bound goals, then it is natural for you to use temporary, physical tools like appearance, apparel, and accessories.

Beauty was a thing in the ancient world. When Peter says don't let your adornment be outward, the word adornment is the Greek word *kosmos*, from which we get our word about space, the cosmos – the ordered universe, the opposite of chaos; and also our word for cosmetics – all the ways you try to arrange your appearance to enhance physical beauty.

And the ancient Greeks and Romans had lots of ways to do that. They knew how to dye their hair and set it in waves; they even had blonde wigs made of hair imported from Germany. And if you had money, well then, you could afford all kinds of stuff to go with your hair do.

Women of the Roman Empire had fancy headbands, pins and combs made of ivory, boxwood and tortoiseshell. They used gold and gems like diamonds, emeralds, opals and topaz, as well as pearls to make fancy jewelry and accessories. They imported silk from India and loved a special color of purple fabric - garments in this color could cost the equivalent of 2-3 years of wages for a laborer.

Isn't interesting how the colors, the fabrics, the cuts, and styles may change as time goes by, but thousands of years later we're still focused on our appearance, our apparel, and our accessories?

That's true regardless of gender – both men and women care about their grooming or their garments. A man might not care at all about the style of his shirt, but he's proud of his beard. Or he knows he's been packing on some pounds, but have you seen his new watch?

It's true regardless of age – you can find a 55-year-old woman who spends as much time on her makeup and appearance as a 15-year-old. One has more money to spend, but they're both doing the same thing and spending just as long doing it.

It's true regardless of style – you can spend time, money, and energy trying to follow the latest fashion trends, or looking like you're too sporty or disinterested to care. You can drop hundreds of dollars on handmade Italian leather business shoes, or sneakers that are too nice to ever actually play basketball in, or some cute new boots that you just saw on Instagram.

The fact of the matter is, we all spend some amount time thinking about the way our appearance and our possessions send a message about who we are, what we're doing, and why we matter. And when we want to turn that message up, we often try to highlight some part of body that can be seen or we turn to external accessories we can add onto our lives.

But friends, I tell you this in love: your youth won't last. Your beauty or your physique, your strength or your curves, won't last. External, physical, beauty won't last. The fashion trend you're following won't last. The thing you bought that seems so cool, won't last.

Every teenager wants to have an iPhone 11, *with a data plan*, until the 12 comes out and then you're stuck with this stupid thing while you envy someone else.

So let me ask: where do *you* look to determine your value and worth? Are you asking the people around you to tell you how beautiful you are, or how much you're loved, how cool you are, how accepted and admired you are on the basis of external things and temporary appearance, or are you able to rest in the knowledge that you are accepted by God and that your character and conduct are **incorruptible, imperishable, unfading** and **very precious in His sight**?

I know what I hope you would say, but I also know how much you struggle with the other side. Because, let's be honest in church, this isn't easy. It isn't easy to choose character and conduct over appearance, apparel, and accessories.

But here's something that will help – ask yourself: what's the problem I'm trying to solve? Am I trying to gain acceptance for myself, or have I found that in Christ? Am I focused on today all by itself, or am I living today in light of eternity?

Now, I want to be clear, I'm not trying to condemn anyone. We don't want to create a legalistic ban on fashion, accessories, or toys – the father of the prodigal son welcomed him home by putting the best robe on him and giving him a ring!

But we all have to ask ourselves: do we value the things God values? And do we esteem those things in others? There is a kind of beauty that is external and evident, but it decreases over time, and then there is a kind of beauty that is internal and incorruptible and continues to develop and grow so that a person becomes increasingly attractive as the years go by. Which one are you pursuing? And, which one do you value in others?

Remember life is more about the condition of your soul than it is about your appearance, apparel, and accessories. Remember that about yourself, and the people around you. Let us value each other for the right things and find the right things attractive. Men, reinforce these things with your wives, your daughters and your sisters. Singles, look for the right things in a mate – don't just swipe through the apps forming judgments on appearance – train yourself to see and to value conduct and character, like Christ and you will build a solid foundation for your marriage.

Now let me take a moment and speak about this example Peter mentions of Sarah before we move on and say a word to the men.

Ladies, if you grew up in church you know all about Titus 2 the encouragement for older women to reach out to younger women for mentoring and encouragement. We all need that. We all need the power of example. We need to hear truth and see it lived out; we need

a model we can follow. So, I want to continue to encourage you to find ways to get connected to each other – men with men, women with women, couples with couples. Have a mentor, be a mentor, have friends and peers – be connected. And, read Scripture and Christian biography, God gives you examples to follow, and we need them.

Specifically, Peter mentions Sarah who was actually known for her beauty, but also had faith. She called her husband “lord.” Now, don’t make too much of that, it’s like our modern equivalent of calling him sir or mister. But don’t make too little of it either, because she did. She showed her husband respect, and he was a knucklehead at times. He led them into things he should not have, and he went along with some of her suggestions that he should have said no to. They had a real marriage, with ups and downs and she stuck through it all with him.

Today Jews, Christians, and Muslims esteem Abraham because God chose him and he followed by faith, but Sarah went with him. She saw, and experienced first-hand, the miracles of God. Abraham became the father of the faith and Sarah gave birth to Isaac. God used her to make Abraham what He wanted the man to become.

So take note of this (vs 5) Sarah and the other godly women of old [trust\[ed\] in God](#) and followed their husbands. Ladies, the order there is important - when you submit to your husband, you’re not just trusting the man, you’re trusting your God. And if you are willing to follow God by faith, you have no idea what He might do with you or the impact it could have on your husband or anyone else.

Remember, you’re not called to follow him into sin. But in matters of preference and opinion you are called to exercise derivative submission fueled by defiant faith – you submit to your husband because you’re the bride of Christ, and He tells you to. So, you look at the situation, you know what you want to happen, you know how you want it to turn out – but you defy all those feelings and choose to walk by faith instead – choosing submission over subversion, choosing faith over another fight, believing that God can either bring out a better result, or give you the strength to endure whatever happens.

Well, let’s shift our focus now and talk about husbands. And the very first thing we need to say is [7 Husbands, likewise](#). This is the conduct that is expected of Christian husbands under all circumstances, whether your wife is saved or not, whether she’s acting like it or not, by God’s grace and with His strength, this is how He wants you to love her. “The path of Christian living is no different for the husband than for the wife. Both are called to follow Christ in humble and compassionate love.”¹

The command to dwell with her with understanding means you are actively engaged, you understand her views, what she feels are the needs of the family financially, materially, emotionally, socially, spiritually, you recognize her thoughts and feelings *and you value them*.

¹ Clowney, 133

But that's not normal. Typically, men think we've done enough if we can provide – if we can bring in some money, take care of the financial needs, maybe fix things are broken or find someone who can, we're doing well. But meanwhile, she says, "I wish you were home more," or "I just want to be with you." She wants to be heard and to have you respond. She wants you to live with her [with understanding](#).

A lady is like the thermometer of the home – she'll let you know the temperature, but men, you're supposed to be the thermostat that works to change the temperature when it needs adjusting.

Show her that you value her, prioritize her, and that she is part of your combined life together. Watch out for the way life tends to pull you apart – men will often bury themselves in their work, where they feel like they're doing things that are valued, that give them a sense of identity, and provide for the family, and women will find other friends or busy themselves with the kids, throw themselves into their own career. That's normal life. But it's not the Christian life. The Christian life requires us to prioritize relationships, first with God, then with our spouse, and then with others in our lives.

So, men, do you understand your wife? Do you know her needs and interests? Do you know what catches her eye or what she's worried about? Are you leading her and loving her or just living with her? The Bible says when you become married the two become one flesh. She's part of your life, your combined life, you're more than just roommates, though I fear that is what some of you become if you're not intentional about living with understanding.

And, notice the command to [give her honor](#). Treat her with respect.

What is the evidence that you value her more than any other woman in your life – including your mom, your friend, your co-worker, or some woman you like to look at online on watch in some show? Does your wife hold the highest position of honor, affection, and attention in your life? She shows you submission; you must show her consideration while you both submit to Christ.

What makes her feel honored? Do you know? And when, where, and how do you show it? How long has it been since the last time you did?

Do your kids know how much your honor, value, and respect her? Does your family? When she shows up and your co-workers meet her, do they say how many good things they've heard about her? Do her friends wish their husbands treated them like you treat her?

The fact that you're married says something about her, but it also says something about you – this is the woman who caught your eye, this is the woman you pursued, there was something about this woman that you valued at some point – is it still there? Is she still valuable to you, and does she know it?

Peter says you should treat her as [the weaker vessel](#). It's a reference to physical weakness, or lack of strength. And we know this is true, there are exceptions, but in general, men excel over women in physical strength.

But delicacy does not automatically diminish value – to the contrary, the small parts can be the most essential and valuable. The idea here is more that you, as the leader, would honor, cherish, value, and protect her like that small important part you don't want to lose – let your eye and your attention be on her because you need her – you were not good enough on your own, that's why God brought her to you.

Together, you will be, as Peter notes in vs 7 [heirs... of the grace of life](#).

Church, Scripture is absolutely unrelenting in two messages: We have separate roles in marriage, but equality in status and importance.

We may have different roles, different offices, different responsibilities on earth, men are called to leadership in the home and in the church, but we're headed for the same eternal destiny. Which reminds us where we started this morning – noting that we're given these instructions for life on earth because they affect us forever.

Marriage is supposed to create a common life, a common pursuit, two becoming one. She calls him lord, showing respect. He seeks to know, understand, honor, value, and esteem her, because they are they are heirs together, receiving grace from God.

[7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and **as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.**](#)

Look I don't know exactly what to make of this – I don't know how to disarm it. I don't know how to tell you, “oh don't worry about that God won't answer your prayers thing.” I just have to leave it sitting there for us, but I can tell you it's probably meant to get our attention.

John Piper and Wayne Grudem wrote: “No Christian husband should presume to think that any spiritual good will be accomplished by his life without an effective ministry of prayer. And no husband may expect an effective prayer life unless he lives with his wife “in an understanding way, bestowing honor' on her.”²

Do you see the reciprocal power of relationships? That your relationship with people affects your relationship with God and your relationship with God affects your relationship with people? It's all meant to work together. Sometimes the best thing you can do for your marriage is work on your relationship with God and sometimes the best thing you can do for your relationship with God is to work on your marriage.

² RBMW, 208.

So, what do we do with all of this? I've got two quick points and then four practical steps.

The first point: brothers, don't ever joke about her wearing the pants in the family. It says something bad about you because you've surrendered your leadership role and it makes her look domineering. You should be in this together – it's a two-seater cockpit, pilot and co-pilot flying the same mission with God Almighty directing the flight path.

Second, men this is not optional. You must be involved in providing loving leadership to your family. But that takes time, and you don't have much of it, so you have to keep assessing: what is life all about? Where should you really be investing your energy, attention and resources?

Look, it's easier to pick up your phone than to pick up your kids. It's easier, and probably even seems more pressing to check your email than to check in with God through prayer. But she can't submit to you and your kids can't be obedient to you if you're not providing thoughtful, prayerful, considerate leadership; they can't follow if you're not blazing the path.

So, let me give you four practical steps to help you find the path and stay on it so that you can become the man God wants you to be and the man your family needs you to be:

1. Get into Scripture – see the example of Jesus and His sacrificial love and leadership and then check out books like Proverbs which is full of wisdom from a father to his son
2. Pray – tell God you can't do this on your own, ask for forgiveness when you fail, declare your weakness, ask for strength, and ask God to bless your family through you
3. Get into community – ask other men – how do you do this, how do you pray with your wife, how do you talk to you son, how do you lead your home – you ask other men about all kinds of things, start asking them about being a godly man too
4. Read good books: it's a chance to hear from men you haven't met – we recommend two in particular Meaning of Marriage, Disciplines of a Godly Man

Christians, this is the life God calls us to lead – it doesn't look like the life that is being recommended by the world around you – it's not natural to live this way. But it's better. It's better because it follows the instructions of the God who made us all – and ultimately, we have to choose: are we going to follow Him, or our feelings and our friends?

When we believe the right things about God and eternity, we'll begin to believe the right things about ourselves, and ultimately we'll begin to believe the right things about others and our relationships with them.

Let's pray.



Application and Discussion Questions

1 Peter 3:1-7 Submission in Marriage Part 2

Appearance, Apparel, and Accessories

- When you feel the need to be more attractive or accepted, what do you turn to? What do you think you need to add to yourself or do to yourself?
- By the same token, when you say you're ugly, or unaccepted, what is the basis for that? What is the reason you say that?
- How much time do you spend on beauty and appearance, how long does it take you get ready to go out? And how long do you spend in the Word and prayer? How long does it take you to get ready spiritually to go out and face the day?
- How much money do you spend on issues related to appearance and acceptance, how much money do you spend on accessories and toys, and how much do you give or spend on others?
- Beauty and status are relative. What are the sources influencing your life when it comes to style and fashion? And, what do they say?
- List specific things you can do or say this week that will prioritize behavior and attitude over appearance, accessories, and apparel
- Am I trying to gain acceptance for myself, or have I found that in Christ, and now I'm trying to know God and enjoy Him forever? Am I more concerned about what others think of me or what God thinks of them?

If you are physically beautiful, you'll have to remind yourself it's all going to fade, and this is not what life is about; you'll also have to beware that people are going to treat you a certain way because of your attractiveness and you know it, and you can be tempted to use it for your own purposes; fight that temptation.

If you are not physically beautiful, you also have to guard your heart and remind yourself of what is true – remind yourself of what has real value – what is [incorruptible](#), [imperishable](#), [unfading](#) and [very precious in the sight of God](#).

All of us, whether we think, or we've been told we're beautiful and accepted or not, need to remember, that while it may be nice to catch someone else's eye, God has said:

Ps 33:18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,
On those who hope in His mercy,
19 To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.

Developing a gentle and quiet spirit

- What are some specific ways that a gentle and quiet spirit can be manifest? Instead of _____ by God's grace and with His strength, I will _____
- What do you do that causes conflict in your home?

Honoring your wife

- Discuss what giving honor to a wife looks like.
- Discuss what dwelling with understanding looks like
- What do you think of John Piper and Wayne Grudem's statement:
*"No Christian husband should presume to think that any spiritual good will be accomplished by his life without an effective ministry of prayer. And no husband may expect an effective prayer life unless he lives with his wife "in an understanding way, bestowing honor' on her."*³

Heirs together

- Are we partners, competitors, or housemates?
- Are we listening to each other's ideas and feelings, taking each other for granted, or too busy to communicate?
- Are we helping each other grow spiritually?
- Are we praying together? And, are we seeing answers to our prayers?

Going Deeper:

Read **Isaiah 3:16-24** where Isaiah denounces beauty aids while proclaiming God's judgment on the idle luxury of women in Jerusalem who are ignoring the poor and needy

Read **1 Samuel 16:6-7** describing the search for the next king of Israel (hint: the found David) and notice what God has to say about looking at external appearances

Read **Matthew 23:25-26** and notice what Jesus has to say as He condemns the Pharisees for the obsession with external religious appearances.

³ *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 208.