

“Godly Marriage in a World of Disunity...”

1 Peter 3:1-7

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1 Peter 3:1-7 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. 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. 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.

The constant and enduring battle to find our way through this life marches on continuously and unmercifully, and the journey is so often inflamed by our stubborn insistence on finding the way through under our own steam. Most often we still believe...albeit often secretly, that the world has the answers, even though in the next breath we acknowledge that that same world is terminally screwed up! One of the ways this occurs is in our purchase of books that profess to have the answers: Women Who Love Too Much; Men Like Women Who Like Themselves; Smart Women, Foolish Choices; Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them; He's Just Not That Into You. In the US...for 2021, sales of self-help books jumped nearly 25% to over 17 million units. This, of course, is a classic display of the blind leading the blind.

It's been said that “culture eats strategy for lunch.” So it should not surprise us that Satan is moving to simply corrupt the culture rather than overtly attempting a frontal assault to break the backs of faith and Christianity. Satan has for years been subtly but continually picking away at the underpinnings of the Christian world order, every foundational element of our faith is being challenged in a “dripping faucet” method. Many have acquiesced and bowed to the push of the world, and others....? Well, some will not be so moved.

Our world loathes to admit the truth that we have desperately lost our way. Many confessed believers know that God and faith has a plan, but still tend to reject ‘out-of-hand’ the biblical premises concerning marriage. This because we deem the whole biblical handling of such as demeaning to women, overtly sexist, and male dominated as a whole. While I would agree that there are elements of a biblical marriage relationship that are challenging (what part of scripture fails in that respect?), I would contend that to reject the Christian model on

such a pretense would only reflect the fact that one has not considered the entirety of the scriptural instruction on this subject and is merely ‘knee-jerking’ because it ruffles our fragile ...albeit worldly ...sensibilities!

In the latter half of chapter 2 of 1 Peter we began this issue of submission and authority. I mentioned at that time how these issues are not considered so much spiritual debates as they are hot-button social issues. Today, we are coming out of decades of at least perceived abuses in racism, police brutality, international military conflicts, governmental overreach, and corporate corruption. In response to it all, a new awareness of the individual and one’s self-determination has arisen.

Yet by any measure, we have overshot the finish line and have now wandered into the quicksand of ramped narcissism, self-entitlement, gender fluidity, sexual non-binary and the multiplicity of self-identities. Historical and biblical roles are more than simply abandoned; they are vehemently ridiculed and publicly rejected by those who still claim to be God’s church. By any measure, Satan is currently winning that battle even while eventually losing the war.

The trouble doesn’t lie in the fact that marriage is broken, but rather that WE are broken. Humanity is broken. Thus we tend to come into the dance already out of rhythm. We have lost the race before we even get off the blocks. Any time one attempts to embrace any aspect of faith lifestyle while continuing to place himself or herself in the first position in life ...or worse, the **controlling** position, ...we are beaten before we even get “out of the gate.” This because Christianity is firstly and uniquely an other-centered lifestyle. When I cannot submit myself to others...when I cannot humble myself, I will either reject Christianity immediately or I will eventually fail to follow-through in such a walk and will in time depart from the faith because of one over-riding element: **me**.

Every individual that once graced the pews of this fellowship and yet ultimately rejected it... often even rejecting God Himself, did so with that little word on their lips! The great “I, me, and mine.” *“I don’t have to take that!” “He said this about **me**!” “He wouldn’t support **me**.” “They criticized **me**.” “They hurt **my** feelings.”* All of which ignores the fundamental cornerstone of Christianity that says to walk in faith means I must die to self. It means as a true redeemed Christian, the “me” is dead. Matthew 16:24-25 says *“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.’”* We need to remember the warning in James 3:16 *“For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.”*

Sadly, a lot of churches have all but surrendered to this aspect of humanity and even have gone so far as to even feed that monster... the “me” aspect of our flesh, wherein the greatest part of their resources and their ministry are now coddling the ‘me’ instead of seeking to grow the flock in the other-centered and ultimately the Christ-centric aspects of Christendom. Peter had already begun to deal with this difficult aspect of a faith walk. Despite the persecution the readers were under and the difficulty of life in that day, Peter was still not budging from the innate principles of God in this matter. No one could accuse Peter of promoting a “seeker-friendly” or “Jesus-lite” church life!

Peter goes on now in chapter 3 to call upon wives to submit to their husbands. Again, we tend to bristle at the very idea of such, because it flies in the face of our modern culture. Yet this is the same culture that bought the 17 million self-help books because frankly they are drowning and they at least privately know it. When we allow the culture to dictate the parameters of our faith, we essentially seek to circumvent the life that Jesus died to give us and negate the Spirit’s leading, not to mention the rejection of the headship of Christ which is the very heart of our living faith. Peter gives a clear and simple direction here on this matter of marriage, whether

we wish to find a way to dance around it or not: “*Women be submissive to your husbands.*” Please note that there are no added exemptions. It is simple, clear and emphatic.

God has designed the family with the man as the spiritual head, and that’s a fact whether we agree with the principle or not. Furthermore, He has not changed His mind, because He made it abundantly clear that He “changes not.” (Mal 3:6) Why this familial setup? Because the family is to serve as a miniature picture of Christ’s relationship with His church. In the church, God is the head to whom we submit all aspects of our living. And in the family, the man is to be the picture of Christ and serve as the head. It is a daunting call upon us as men, and can be a difficult call upon women. Worldly perceptions present that arrangement as being wholly one-sided in favor of the man, but I’m just not seeing it. Why would we men naturally want that responsibility?

A lot of men frankly do *not* want it and just ‘bow-out’ and pass the position to their wives. By doing so they feed into the curse of Eden, where after the fall of mankind God said that women would thereafter be cursed with the desire to usurp authority of their men. And when that kind of marriage becomes entrenched, what you inevitably have is a train wreck. Men think that surrender in this matter will bring peace in the house, but it doesn’t, and eventually the woman loses all respect for the man because he effectively isn’t one, and it’s really hard to love what you do not respect. Even the modern premise of a 50/50 marriage is a farce, an impossibility, and is ultimately a feeble attempt to reenvision the laws of God. Furthermore, it never works, and is frankly an embarrassing and shameful picture of Christ and His church.

Throughout the discussion of this issue, we are obliged to clarify a couple of things: *one*, this is not a call for all women to submit to all men. That’s not what it says nor what it means. This does not refer to the work place or ‘out on the street.’ This is dealing strictly to the marriage union, and it can be wholly avoided and personally rejected by simply not getting married. But we don’t think that way, do we? We want our cake and eat it too, right? We want marriage and still not set down our selfishness and self-centeredness. Just like we want to go to the church of our choosing and hold it to the same selfish priorities. In essence, we are saying we want all the blessings of God and yet still reject His instruction and parameters of order.

And *two*, submission has nothing to do with worth and value. It’s hard for us to not see it that way, because mankind in our fallen state is quite sensitive to any insinuation that I’m not the ‘master of my own domain.’ It is instead about order, peace, and workability. It doesn’t even mean that the man can do a better job of leading than the woman! It means that the man is to lead the wife and God is the head over the man, because God has an agenda. And make no mistake...that arrangement is no picnic for the man, I assure you. That means that the husband has to answer before God for how he leads his family as a husband and a father. We will literally be judged for how we led! It would be swell to step off from that responsibility, and many will do just that. But just because we pass the buck doesn’t mean God will fail to follow through with the judgment part, because He won’t.

One of issues that can play out in this matter is the testimony a wife can have before her children as well as a husband who perhaps is not a believer. There are many Christians today that for various reasons have found themselves in a marriage with one person being a non-believer. Remorse, regret, and the search for a marital exemption must be set aside, and the believer must focus on the Godly lifestyle that can affect the unbeliever’s view of Christ and faith. Such will never occur through yelling, complaining, crying, and overt “in-your-face” combat-mode evangelism...

A long-term loving submission will only happen by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. And that is a power beyond anything you can muster in and unto yourself. Patience is crucial and continuity is a must. I must

also clarify that doing such does not mean you are to allow the unsaved partner to stand between you and Christ, nor your love and obedience to Him. It can never mean spiritual acquiesce. Meaning, I cannot bow out of my Godly responsibilities because my unsaved partner doesn't like it. When I do that, I'm effectively saying to the unsaved partner that Jesus really isn't all that important, so therefore He doesn't need to be to *him or her* either! Jesus must be first, even if that means a marital 'throw-down.' It also doesn't mean that I can avoid, surrender or usurp my overall marital participation and mutual responsibilities because I am spending every night at church. It does mean that Jesus is first.

All of this, ironically, is often seen as demeaning toward women, while in fact what Peter was teaching was revolutionary and even radical for women in his time. Because in that day, in that culture, women had no rights at all and were essentially on the level of a slave. So what Peter was teaching was pushing the cultural limits for his day, and still is in ours. God doesn't care in either situation.

Verse 2 calls upon you ladies to practice a "*chaste conduct accompanied with fear.*" "Chaste" means "pure, modest, and reverent," while "conduct" speaks of one's lifestyle. The "fear" that is referred to here is that of "respect and reverence." Such means in practice toward God no doubt, but it can easily be seen as meaning that respect and reverence which should occur between a wife and husband. Gentlemen, you can try to demand that... or, *you can earn it.*

Peter goes on to instruct women to seek a beauty that transcends one's make up, jewelry, or clothes. A real man...a Godly one, does not need instruction on this matter. For while he may appreciate the physical beauty of a woman, he clearly recognizes that there is so much more to be sought after than that. In fact, a woman who tries too hard to lure in a man with an outward façade can be a real turn off for men who are seeking for more. I guess it just depends on what kind of man you want.

It is a difficult rejection for women today to say no to a culture that overwhelmingly pushes an overt sexuality. It becomes a competition and a 'hunt.' What I am saying is not meant to be a prohibition against makeup, a nice dress and a comb. But if you buy a man with outward beauty, what happens when you don't have it anymore? Or do you think you always will? I appreciate physical beauty also, but I am easily revolted by a woman who tries too hard. Peter says that "the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, ...is very precious in the sight of God." Well, it's precious in the sight of a lot of men too ladies.

Such a heart and spirit is not new to the modern church. Sarah lived in submission to Abraham, exemplified the Spirit of God before her husband, and apparently was pretty hot too. However...I doubt if we can resurrect this practice of wives calling their husbands 'lord' though, as she did!

Peter's direction to men is shorter, although I doubt if that is because we need less instruction. I would guess it was because too much information would likely get lost in the simplicity of our minds! He tells us men to "*dwelling with our wives with knowledge.*" Such simple instruction has miles of impact. And make no mistake...such a task requires investment, time, and commitment.

Men, do you even know what makes your wife tick? Do you truly know her? Her wants, desires, and passions? The things she dislikes, the things that upset her, the things that make her fearful? Neil Young says a 'man needs a maid.' Well, a real man...a godly one, needs more than that. Please note I choose my vernacular with care and purpose. We generally do need a wife, and one of Godly character, strength, and wisdom.

Peter goes on to call upon us to "honor our wives." Honor is more than respect, and even more than love. Honor is a "reverence due to position." A position that both you and her Creator has given her. It is not negotiable, nor is it optional. It is a command...a holy directive...an absolute. She is your wife. To deny her the honor that is due

her is nothing less than a sin against her as well as God Himself. She is the “weaker vessel” and yours to support, carry, encompass, and protect. Don’t want to do that? Then don’t get married. Because in the providence of God, marriage is a ‘package deal.’ Doing marriage badly is slap against the street cred of Christ Himself.

Peter calls your wife your “joint heir.” Together you have inherited the blessing of marriage, unity of path, and the gifts He has given you both. You are “one flesh” before God. If we fail in these directives, this passage tells us our “prayers will be hindered.” This comes from more than God’s refusal due to disobedience on our part. It seems that the very stubborn and un-loving heart within us serves as a damn in the spiritual river of prayer, preventing our spiritual communion with God. (Eph 5:25)

I realize that many folks today are suffering through the ramifications of marriage issues. Unsaved partners. Abusive relationships. Lousy interaction and dysfunctional communication. Things are difficult, and decisions concerning your marriage may be precarious and potentially disastrous. But you are not alone. God has got your back, and so do we.

There *is* a time to separate. I’m not saying divorce, although God placed even that at your disposal in certain situations. But no one gets an ‘out’ on these things herein prescribed because it’s just too hard in your house. Remember, Peter’s readers were really under incredible pressure when he wrote these words. Yet *they* and *we* are still held accountable for how we live and how we love, and that includes...*it must include*, how we live and love Jesus ...*and our spouses*, through the times when it is the hardest. We all must answer that critical question: How big is your God?
