

Studies in 1 Peter-11 1 Peter 3:1-7

by Dwight Pentecost

The sermon emphasizes the importance of submission in the Christian life, particularly in marriage, and provides examples of how a wife can win her unbelieving husband through her behavior and submission to her husband.

Duration: 41:05

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:1

Topics: "Marriage And Submission", "Faith And Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, Peter teaches that an unsaved wife can win her husband to the Lord by being a model wife in every aspect of her life. She should keep her mouth shut and demonstrate such a change in her behavior that her husband will be impressed and desire what has changed her life. Peter emphasizes the importance of submission to authority, using the example of Christ's submission to God. He explains that salvation comes through faith in the word of God and that preaching is God's chosen method to reach people. Peter encourages women to focus on their conduct and respect for their husbands, as this transformation will open their husbands' hearts to the gospel.

Transcript

Would you please turn with me to 1 Peter 3, we will read verses 1-7. 1 Peter 3, 1-7. In the same manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that, if any of them do not the word, they also may without the word be won by the behavior of the wives, while they behold your chaste conduct, coupled with fear.

Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of braiding hair, and of wearing gold, or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a neat and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price. For after this manner in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands. Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any tariff.

In like manner, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." The message of the gospel is a message that liberates, and the glory of the gospel is the freedom that is given to us through it. Men are by nature lawless and rebels. We hate to be controlled.

In this we have followed our father Adam, who followed Satan in his rebellion against God. It is so difficult to learn submission and subjection to authority, the apostle Peter, in writing to those who have newly come under the message of the liberty of the gospel, in order to instruct them concerning the areas which they are obligated to be in submission or subjection. Lest those who have experienced the liberty and freedom there is in Christ should feel that now they can throw off all restraint, the apostle reminds them that God has instituted authority to curb the lawlessness of the natural man.

Peter commands us, as he writes in the second chapter, to be in submission to government. He has commanded us to be in submission in the business world. He has commanded us to be in subjection in the religious realm to constituted authority, and subject in the home as well.

The great example of this submission is the example of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, for at the close of chapter two, Peter reminds us that Christ has left us an example of submission to authority. He takes his readers back to the experience of Jesus Christ at his trial, when he stood first of all before religious authority, and he stood silent and speechless in the face of their accusations because he recognized that God had instituted authority in a religious realm, and men were expected to be in subjection to that authority. When he was transferred from religious authority to the governmental authorities, and was there accused again of a capital crime, Christ stood silent before his accusers and before his judges so that the judges marveled.

He stood silent not because he had no defense, but because he recognized that God had instituted authority in the governmental realm, and men were expected to be in subjection to authority. Christ left such an example of submission to authority that Peter can tell us that as Christ was subject to authority, so are we to be subject to authority because he left us an example of submission. In carrying on his theme of subjection to authority, as we come into 1 Peter 3 verses 1 to 7 which occupy our attention this morning, the apostle applies this truth of the submission of Christ to authority to the area of the home, and he says, "...in the same manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." I'm impressed with the first word in verse 1 of this chapter, "...in the same manner." That is, in the same manner, in the same way that Jesus Christ was subject to the authority that had been imposed upon him, so wives are to be subject to the authority imposed upon them.

Just as Christ left us an example of submission to the authority of his Father, in like manner, to the same degree, the wife is to be in subjection to her own husband. The New Testament gives us a number of reasons why the wife is to be in subjection to her husband. When we turn to 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 11 to 14, the apostle says that the woman as woman is to be in subjection to man as man.

This is a generic relationship, and the woman is to be in subjection to man. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection, I permit not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, that is, over man as a man, but to be in silence. The reason given is found, first of all, in verse 13.

The woman as woman is to be in subjection to man as man, for Adam was first formed, then Eve. This was God's law of creation. Man as man was formed before woman as woman was formed from man, and because of the priority of creation, woman is in subjection to man.

The second reason given for the submission of woman to man is found in verse 14. Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in transgression. Paul points out that the woman as woman is more subject to deception than man.

The reason is that woman, by creation, is governed by her heart. Man is governed by his mind, responds to mind. One ruled by the heart rather than by reason is more subject to emotional responses, and it was this characteristic to which Eve was tempted, and which Satan appealed when he appeared to deceive Eve.

The Apostle Paul, recognizing the fundamental difference between a masculine and feminine personality trait, says that the woman is more subject, that is, because she is ruled primarily by emotion. Therefore, the woman should be in subjection to man, so that reason rather than emotion may prevail. Now, in this the wisdom of God is seen, because if only reason prevailed or operated, there would be imbalance.

Therefore, God in his provision brings man and woman together so that man may provide the reason and woman the emotion, so the reason should be balanced by emotion and emotion should be controlled by reason. But the Apostle points out then two reasons why woman is to be in subjection to man as man, the order of creation, and the emotional character of woman. Then when we turn to the epistles to the Ephesians, in Ephesians chapter 5, we find there is a second category of submission.

In Ephesians 5 verse 22, wives submit yourselves unto your own husband as unto the Lord, and this command is given not to woman as woman, but to woman as a wife. This is a second category of subjection. The woman is to be subject to her husband as a wife.

Now, the Apostle again gives an explanation as to why the wife is to be in subjection to her husband. Marriage was designed to be an example to the world of the relationship which exists between a believer and Christ, and the Apostle explains this in this passage which we do not take time to read this morning, which I'm sure is familiar to you, to point out that just as Christ is head of the body of believers, the church, so the husband is the head of the wife. And as the church has the responsibility of being in submission or subjection to the authority of Christ, so the wife is in submission or subjection to the authority of her husband, so that the relationship between husband and wife in that home may be an object lesson to the world of the right relationship existing between Christ and a believer.

Then, when we turn to the passage that occupies our attention this morning, 1 Peter 3, verses 1-7, we find a third area, or a third reason, given to us why the wife is to be in subjection to her husband, and that is in order that an unbelieving husband may be won to the Lord by the conduct of the wife. And it is this aspect that Peter deals with. He does not speak of the area of submission of woman to man, nor is he primarily concerned with the object lesson inherent in the submission of the wife to her husband.

He is telling wives how to win unsaved husbands. Now, if some of you single girls looked at the bulletin this morning, how to win a husband, you thought I was going to give you some practical advice on how to get married, you are doomed to disappointment. The apostle is talking to those women who already have husbands.

We find, as we go through the book of Acts, that frequently the women were the first ones in the family reached with the gospel, the first ones who responded to the love of Christ that was presented in the gospel and trusted Christ for salvation. You see, salvation is a matter of a heart, not the matter of the mind, and women, because they respond according to the dictates of the heart, are often the first ones to receive the love of God as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. And as Paul came to proclaim, as he did in 2 Corinthians 5, the love of Christ to those unsaved Philippians, he found that the women were the first ones to respond to it.

And often the husbands are more difficult to reach for Christ because they move in the realm of the mind, and salvation is not mental assent to certain truths that can be given with the mind. Salvation is a response of trust of the heart to the fact that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures. And so, the apostle Peter saw many women who, in response to the love of Christ, had received Christ as a personal Savior, and now are concerned that their husbands have not come to know Christ personally.

Here is a home that spiritually is a divided home, the one partner in the light and the other partner in the darkness, all where there can be no communication because that which binds them together is lacking. So Peter, in a very practical way, applies this principle of submission to the authority of the husband so that the unsaved husband might be won. Now, since men respond to rational presentation, it might be concluded that the best way for a wife to win her husband is to begin to teach him or to argue with him, since he is a rational creature, appeal to his mind and argue with him.

That is humiliating to any man to have to argue with a woman, especially if he loses the argument. And the apostle says, wives, you will never win your husbands by trying to outsmart them and out-argue them by your logic, by your work. So, the apostle recognizes that there must be some other way to reach the husband, and he tells us in verse 1 of chapter 3, "...be in subjection to your own husband, that if any obey not the word, they also may without a spoken word on your part be won by the behavior of the wife." Now, Peter recognizes that a man is because he believes the word.

Peter has made that very clear, for he has told us in the opening portion of his epistle that we were not redeemed with corruptible things, 118, from your vain manner of life received by tradition from your fathers, but with a precious blood of Christ, of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Peter has also told us in chapter 2 that we were born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. Peter recognizes that salvation is the response of faith in the revelation given to us in the word of God.

We also recognize that God's method of reaching man is through the foolishness of preaching. That is God's method of reaching man. It is not the preaching of foolishness, but preaching seems to be a foolish method of reaching the world for Christ.

With all the means of mass communication that we have, it would seem that we can improve on God's method, but the word says you can't improve on God's method. God's method is to preach. Now, since a man is saved by the word, and since God has ordained that the word should be preached so that men can be saved, what would the women conclude? That they should become preachers.

Isn't that simple? And the wife who gets hold of this truth, I was saved by the preaching of the word, therefore I must preach to my husband, and so morning, noon, and night, every time the poor fellow came home, he got another sermon. Peter says, shut up, and Peter's advice to wives was to keep their mouths shut. He told them to do the hardest thing possible.

Now, Peter is not saying that the wives can win their husbands without the word of God. No, not at all. We recognize, as Paul did and as Peter did, that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, but how is that word to be communicated? Two ways.

One is by the lips, and the second is by the life. And Peter is not, for a moment, minimizing the effect of communicating the word by the lips, but he says, why be in subjection to your own husbands that if any obey not the word, they also may without a spoken word from you be won. How are they going to be won?

By the beating here of the wife.

Now, what does Peter mean? That if you are saved, your husband recognizes an appetite on your part, and he sees your desire to go to church Sunday morning and Sunday night and Wednesday night and leave him home, he's going to wonder what gave you such an appetite. Then he sees you want to go to a Bible class Tuesday morning and Wednesday night and Friday night and leave him at home. He's going to be impressed by your appetite for the word.

He's going to see your diligence and study in devotions, and he'll forget that he got a TV dinner at night because you were so busy in your Bible study in the day that you didn't have time to fix him a meal. He'll overlook the dust in the furniture because you were busy in Bible class and so on, and your very diligence for the Lord is going to impress him. No, that's not what Peter's talking about at all.

When he talks about the behavior of the wives, he's talking about the submission of the wife to her husband. You see, the husband, as well as anybody, knows the lawlessness and rebelliousness of his own wife. He knows how difficult she is to control, to keep in line.

He's been trying to do it all the time. She was unfazed and never succeeded in doing it, and here is this lovely rebel to whom he is married who suddenly has become a subject wife, a wife in complete subjection to the authority of her husband, and for the first time he's going to prick up his ears and open his eyes and say, "'What changed that girl?' And Peter says, "'Wise, if you want to win an unfaithful husband, you become what Scripture demands of a wife in relationship to her husband,' and that transformation is going to open up his ears to the gospel as no amount of preaching on your part could ever do. "'They will behold,' verse 2, "'your chaste conduct coupled with fear,' and fear there has to do with respect for authority.

When the wife who used to greet her husband's command with "'Why?' suddenly responds by saying, "'Yes, sir.'" He's going to want to know why, and that reverential respect for the authority of the husband will move that husband to the Lord. Why? It will be evidence that the wife is subject to the husband because she is subject to the Lord first, and submission to the Lord will produce submission in every God-ordained area of life. Hmm? Some people don't think Peter had a wife in spite of the fact that our Lord healed Peter's mother-in-law.

They they find some explanation so as to perpetuate the doctrine of celibacy for the priesthood. Peter didn't learn what he did about women just by observation. This came by experience.

How does a wife get her husband to do what she wants to do? How does the wife persuade him of what was in her mind so that he thinks that it was his idea all the time? It's by making herself physically attractive to her husband. It was all she had to go on. It was the only way she could operate.

Fix herself up, and when her husband came home and saw this beautiful vision in the living room when he went in, he made a suggestion. He just said, "'Yes, dear.'" They had no authority to order. They had no separate checking accounts or credit cards to go and buy what they wanted.

You see, they were totally dependent, so they had to have a way of getting the husband to do what they wanted them to do, and they depended on physical charge. And Peter said, verse 3, "'If you want to win your husband to the Lord, don't depend on what you are. Who's adorning? Let it not be that outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel.'" Be careful about this.

Peter's not advocating sloppiness, loveliness, doubtiness. I think it's the responsibility of every Christian girl to look as good as she can with what the Lord gave her to start with. It's the responsibility of every wife to be as attractive to her husband as it is possible for her to be, but not to depend on that to win her husband to the Lord, because it won't work.

"Who's adorning? Let it not be the outward, external fixing of the person,' verse 4, "but let it be the hidden man of the heart, and that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." Weakness has to do with submission in which the woman sets aside her desire to take the husband's desire. It has to do with selflessness. Quietness has to do with keeping the mouth shut.

A lack of argumentativeness. It goes back to what Peter said in verse 1, "If any obey not the word, they may without a word be wise." Now, how does a wife usually, or often, try to get what she wants from her husband? Tease, then beg, then nag, and then rebel. See, that's that argumentativeness, and it's the opposite of a quiet spirit.

Now, the husband who had grown accustomed to sealing himself against the wiles of his wife because of what she wanted, suddenly finds the wife submissive, and her selfishness and self-centeredness is gone, and she is quiet in word toward him, is going to be so amazed at the transformation he's going to inquire as to what brought this transformation about. And when he detects that she is submissive to him because she is submissive to the Lord, and is emulating her Lord in his submission to authority, the man is going to have an irrefutable testimony that he cannot gainsay. Now, Peter gives us an Old Testament example of this submission.

Abraham and Sarah lived together for a long, long, long time, and even when Abraham was approaching the century mark, and Sarah was about 90 years of age, Abraham loved her and desired her more than anything in the world. When somebody else tried to get her away, he was willing to fight for her. Have you ever wondered why? Well, we're told in the Old Testament, in Genesis 18-12, Sarah addressed Abraham as, my Lord.

Throughout her life, Sarah was subject to the authority of Abraham, and while she must have been a ravenous beauty, or otherwise the king would not have coveted her when Abraham left the land, it was not Sarah's beauty that tied Abraham to her heart. It was her submission to the authority of Abraham that joined Abraham's heart to Sarah. It is that illustration that Peter presents to these women after this manner, also.

That is, here's another example of submission. He's referred in verse 1, using the same phrase in the same manner, to give us the illustration of the submission of Christ. But now, in verse 5, using the phrase after this manner, he gives us the submission of Sarah.

Sarah recognized the authority of her husband, and throughout her life was subject to his authority. She trusted God and adorned herself not as a rich man's wife might adorn herself. But with brocades and fancy clothing and jewels of silver and gold, Sarah adorned herself for Abraham by submission to his authority.

The submission in the home is God's will. As much as submission to authority in government, submission to authority in business, or submission to authority in the church, because the home may become a cell of rebellion, God has instituted authority in the home and has constituted the husband the head of the home. And he commands the wives to recognize that God-assigned authority and submit to it.

And Peter's teaching is that such submission will win an unsaved husband to the Lord. If we were to summarize Peter's teaching, we could put it very simply this way. If an unsaved wife desires to win her husband to the Lord, she should keep her mouth shut and be such a model wife in every area assigned to a wife that the husband may be impressed that her savior can produce such a change that a desire will be created in him for what has changed his wife.

To let this teaching be misused, and to safeguard this teaching from a domineering husband, this paragraph closes in verse 7 with a word to the husband. Again, it's introduced in like manner, and will you notice that the example of submission to authority of Christ that is used in reference to the wives in verse 1 is now used in reference to the husbands in verse 7. In like manner, verse 1. In like manner, verse 5. In like manner, verse 7. And just as Christ was subject to the authority of his Father, so the husband in the home must be subject to the authority of the Father over his life. And as Christ loves the church, so the husband must be subject to the authority of Christ that the love of Christ is manifested through the husband to the wife.

You see, this assignment of authority to the husband and the command to submit to authority to the wife is positional. It is not personal. The wife personally is not one bit inferior to her husband.

That would be impossible because the two have become one flesh, and what is one flesh cannot have a disparity. So, this is not personal, it is positional, and the husband is commanded to dwell with wives according to knowledge. According to knowledge of what? That God has given authority to him, that he is responsible to exercise that authority before God in reference to his wife and the children.

The question is often asked by a wife, but suppose my husband won't take the place of a husband and assume responsibility or authority. Should I do it then? Absolutely not. If you wives take over the authority, it's an easy thing for the husband to let you do it, and if you don't do it, then he has to.

There is no scriptural reason why the wife should assume the responsibility, nor any scriptural reason why the husband should let his wife assume that responsibility. You are to dwell according to knowledge of this divine arrangement, and the apostle points out that the wife is to be honored as a weaker vessel. Honored.

I could go to the dime store and buy a coffee cup, but it would be just a common, old, pottery kind of a cup. It would have to be thick and heavy. If I were to go to a fine china shop and bought a coffee cup, it would be very, very fragile.

It would be frail, it would be delicate. If I held that dime store cup up to the light, I'd see nothing through it. It had to be thick and heavy because of the way it was made, but if I held that china cup up to the light, the light would shine through because it is so fresh.

You don't mind banging around the old ten cent cup from the dime store, but you treat that fragile china cup with the respect that it deserves. The land we're made rough, rugged. Let's face it, where are those old ten cent store cups? The artistry is in the weaker vessel.

God says, respect it as that weaker vessel, because it's weaker does not mean it's less valuable. It is entitled to respect. We are to live together as heirs of the grace of life, and Peter is referring to this marvelous arrangement of God.

This is not an apostolic arrangement, this is a divine arrangement, for God has brought man a rational, strong creature, and has joined him to a creature controlled by heart, fragile and beautiful, and put the two together so that mind and heart might balance each other, and the rugged physical characteristics might counterbalance the weakness and the fragility of the weaker vessel. That was God's arrangement for this life, and we are to recognize that as a divine arrangement, the wife not to rebel against this divine arrangement, and the husband not to misuse this divine arrangement. We are to live together as husband and wife, as heirs of that which was a gracious provision for God at the time of the creation of beings, that it is not good that man should be alone.

I will make a help suited exactly to him. Peter concludes with this significant word, that your prayers do not hinder. I think he has in mind here the prayer of the wife for an unfaithful husband that would be hindered, a prayer prayed fervently but which God could never hear.

Why? Not because God is not willing to save that husband, but God cannot and will not hear a prayer that is voiced for a husband when the wife is not in right relationship to the authority of her husband. If I understand this passage, you're right. Until there is a right relationship to authority in the home, with the husband assuming the God-given responsibilities for the home and the wife subject to the authority of her husband, there will be no answered prayer that arises from those in that relationship.

Peter's getting right down where we left off from morning to night, and as he compels his believers to recognize authority in faith, in authority of the employer, and will emphasize the authority in the church, so he presents Christ as a model for the home. As he was subject to the authority of his father, so there must be recognition of the authority of Christ in the husband. The husband must recognize the authority of Christ over him and his relationship to the members of the home, that your prayers be not hindered.

We pray, our Father, that the Spirit of God may take these very practical instructions for daily life, and may teach us from this passage that every area of life might be brought unto the authority of Christ, that we who know him and are saved because he was obedient unto death may find his obedience to the Father reproduced in us by the Holy Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name, may the riches of thy grace, mercy, and peace rest and abide upon each one, now and ever. Amen.

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