

STUDIES IN 1 PETER (16)

Submitting Wives

1 Peter 3:1-7

Today we continue our study of 1 Peter. We are in the midst of addressing the subject of submission. In dealing with a world that is antagonistic to our faith, we must do our part to diffuse troubles. One way Peter emphasizes is by submitting to others when possible, and even when it is not the pleasant or desirable thing to do. But if it will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men and possibly cause them to glorify God (1 Peter 2:11-12, 15) then it is a good work. Peter gives 3 specific examples: Governing authorities, servants to their masters and wives to their husbands. The latter is our study today.

I. Wives are to submit

- a. This is another controversial subject in our time and society (and back in the times when it was written). God's instructions to wives/women is a cause for many to reject or reinterpret scripture to their personal desires. But we are reminded that God must have final say in our conduct in all things (Colossians 3:17).
- b. The Bible is clear that wives are to submit to their husbands
 - i. The husband is the head of the wife in his household. He has primary responsibility for the house – to provide and protect the family.
 - ii. Passages that call for submission - Ephesians 5:22-24, Colossians 3:18, Titus 2:3-6
 - iii. Reasons – 1 Timothy 2:12-15 –
 1. Woman was created from man (13, Genesis 2:18-25)
 2. Eve was deceived first (14-15, Genesis 3:6, 16)
- c. Again, considering the times, the Bible was ahead of its time in this.
 - i. In the Roman empire, and much of history, women were treated as second class citizens in many ways. They received their rights as citizens through their husbands/fathers. There were limits concerning voting, education and testifying in courts. Many men treated their wives as property (similar to many Muslim countries and some brutish men even today), and fathers would trade their daughters for favor, etc.
 - ii. However, the Bible is clear that women were NOT second class, though their place was established by God as noted above.
 1. Galatians 3:27 – we are all one in Christ;
 2. 1 Peter 3:7 (our text) speaks of the responsibilities of husbands to dwell with their wives with understanding and notes that they are *heirs together of the grace of life*. We will address this in our next lesson.
 3. Ephesians 5:28-30 also describes how the husband loves his wife as his own body

II. The context

- a. The command – **Wives**, likewise (even as slaves, and submitting to government), **submit to your own husbands**. Note that it was to THEIR husband they were to submit.
- b. **Even an unbeliever may be won by your chaste conduct** –
 - i. We have already noted the reasons according to God for this submission.
 - ii. But, here we observe, IN CONTEXT, another reason – being the best possible example before others, including unbelievers.
 - iii. The best hope one has of converting their spouse is by being a proper example. While this does not always work, it exponentially increases one's potential to win them over.

- iv. Typically, you cannot control how others behave, BUT you can control yourself and your part. And when you are doing what is right, it almost always is helpful.
 - v. Likely, this is the premise behind the instructions of 1 Corinthians 7:10-16. If you love your spouse who is not a believer, your best hope is by being a godly and PLEASANT example.
 - vi. NOTE: Do not view this as a recommendation to marry an unbeliever. There are inherent dangers in that, which would be included in the warning of 2 Corinthians 6:14.
- c. **When they observe your chaste conduct...** –
- i. This continues to emphasize godly example. Be reminded of how other glorify God when we are godly – 1 Peter 2:12, Matthew 5:16, etc.
 - ii. Chaste conduct means to be pure or without moral flaw. The point being, you are doing your part, everything you can, to enhance the quality of the relationship.
 - iii. **Accompanied by fear** – we are reminded of the importance of respect, reverence. Ephesians 5:33. This will be further emphasized with a Biblical example in this text. NOTE: Hopefully one is not afraid of their husband (that would be another set of concerns), but there must be proper respect their. AND this respect ALSO applies to God – it is because of your fear (reverence, terror and love – cf. 1 John 4:18-19) for God that you submit in any relationship (this ties together the various relationships addressed throughout our context – government, servants and now in the home).
 - iv. God, in the marriage relationship, provided each role to be complimentary. When BOTH are acting as they should – the likelihood of success is exponentially increased. Are you doing your part to make this sacred relationship as pure and harmonious as possible?
- d. **Let your beauty be inward** –
- i. The description to not let your beauty be outward is not condemning one taking care of themselves or the use of beauty products.
 - 1. This is also true of 1 Timothy 2:9-10 which addresses women adorning themselves with modest apparel, with propriety and moderation.
 - 2. As with so many examples in scripture, this is about priority. Copeland¹, in addressing this passage described this as a Hebraism – an idiom of contrast for the sake of emphasis (e.g. John 6:27 – is NOT saying you should not work for physical food, but in context Jesus was addressing something more important).
 - 3. We know of beautiful women (and men) who inwardly are as ugly as one can imagine. We know of beautiful people who will use their outward beauty to get whatever they want and manipulate others. Such attitudes are unbecoming of a Christian, and counterproductive to winning others to Him. Proverbs 11:22, *As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, So is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.*
 - 4. Most translations add wording which properly emphasizes this – see the italicized words - *merely* outward and *fine* apparel (NKJV).
 - ii. **Let it be the hidden person of the heart.**
 - 1. Godly attitudes that do not provoke. Proverbs 21:9, *Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.* A spouse (husband or wife) with ungodly attitudes makes a relationship miserable, usually causes problems, possibly causes irrevocable damage and is sinful. It goes against everything God says the marriage relationship is to be.
 - 2. *The incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit* - Peter describes the wife who is respectful, humble and cooperative. Most of us understand the type of disposition that is described here. AND remember the context – she is trying to win her husband to the Lord (which if successful will likely improve the relationship).

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/textual_series/1peter/1pe_15.html

3. **Which is precious in the sight of God** – NEVER forget that God takes note of our actions AND the motives behind those actions.
 4. NOTE: This is something one CAN control!
- e. Consider the example of Sarah
- i. Peter appeals to examples in foreign times of women who trusting God submitted to their husbands with the inward adorning described.
 1. Examples such as Rebecca, wife of Isaac; Ruth whose humble spirit resulted in her being the grandmother of David (Ruth 4:17); Hannah – mother of Samuel, etc.
 2. Proverbs 31:10-31 – the virtuous woman (wife) is a descriptive example.
 - ii. Peter appeals to an example of a submissive wife – Sarah. She was by no means perfect, but she understand her role and respected that. Genesis 18:12, shows that she submitted to Abraham and even called him lord. The text is when she was still barren and approaching 90 and the LORD appeared to Abraham telling him Isaac was about to be born. Sarah laughed but described Abraham as Lord. Consider also her faith in Hebrews 11:11.
 - iii. **Whose daughters you are, if you do good and are not afraid with any terror**. When we consider how Sarah is the mother of Israel, we see God’s favor upon all who in submission to Him, submit to their husbands. Again, as we consider fear, we must ask – who are we fearing most? Is it God or man? Contextually, remember that we are dealing with unbelieving husbands – so this could be reference to pagan husbands who are less than respectful of their Christian wives. Regardless, you do good.

III. Application –

- a. The heart is where “true beauty” is found. We are continually reminded of the importance of the heart in our lives. Keep your heart with all diligence – Proverbs , Matthew 5:8 – it is the pure of heart that see God. This is true in ANY relationship!
- b. Husbands and wives need each other – vs. 7 speaks of prayers not being hindered. Notice how accountable the man is – your prayers will be cut off if you do not do this. More on this in our next lesson.
- c. How is your example? Recall the context – the world is watching and they need to see reverence and respect, in every relationship, including this one.
- d. Are you willing to submit, even in the challenging situations? Never forget that your true godliness is reflected in the trying times.

And thus we see Peter’s admonition to believing wives as another example of submission, even in challenging circumstances. Our best hope in this world is found when we do what is right regardless of what the other one is doing. Remember Paul’s admonition in Romans 12:17-21, *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* **What are you doing to ensure that your light is shining brightly?**