

Submission In Marriage: For Wives

1 Peter 3:1-6

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Now by way of introduction, rather than starting with my text in chapter 3, I want you to back up in your Bible. I want you to look at chapter 2, verse 12, because it introduces the topic that we're covering in this section of Peter.

Chapter 2, verse 12. Peter says, "Having your conversation..."—or your manner of living—"...honest..."—or beautiful or lovely—"...among the Gentiles..."—which is a reference to the non-Christians. Why?—"...that whereas they speak against you as evildoers..."—So they attack you and "speak against you." He says, "...they may also by your good works, which they shall behold..."—or look at—"...glorify God in the day of visitation." Now I read this verse because it introduces our topic. And that is, that we live beautiful lives before the non-believing world, so that one day they can come to know God and they can glorify God on your behalf. So chapter 2, verse 12, tells us those three things: live a beautiful life before the unbelieving world; they will speak against you and attack you; but in time God can use that—your beautiful life—that they will come to glorify God.

So Peter has mentioned four areas where we're to live the beautiful life. By way of review, I want you to remember in chapter 2, verse 13, we're to live the beautiful life in the government or in the state. We're to live this beautiful, honest life in chapter 2, verse 18, in the workplace. And then we're to live this beautiful life today in the home, chapter 3, verses 1 to 7. All of them are dealing with the subject of submission. And then following that in chapter 3, verse 8, we'll be looking at living in submission beautifully in the church.

Now all four of these areas of the beautiful life involve one thing. And that is submission. Now I know that our culture today doesn't like the word. They rebel against the concept. And especially as we read this morning. Now don't shoot the delivery boy; I'm just delivering the goods; okay? When we read, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands—Now in the 43 years that I've been a pastor, I've done a lot of weddings. And in those weddings, I can't tell you the times I've read those verses in the Bible. And when I do weddings, a lot of non-Christians come to see their friends get married. When I read, "Wives, submit to your husbands," if looks could kill, I would have been dead a long time ago. They just "grrr." The fangs pop out, the eyeballs, the neck, you know. The veins pop out. "Did he just say 'submit'?" I'm serious; there are weddings that I thought I needed to have my car running back stage. Boom! As soon as the I do's, you know—"I now pronounce you man and wife"—I'm outta here. I'm in my car to take off. 'Cause they wanna kill the preacher! "What cave did he just crawl out of? Did he just say, 'Wives, submit'?" It's in the Bible; okay? Pastors are supposed to read the Bible. That's all I'm doing. I teach the Word of God.

I believe that these principles are not only Biblical, but they're good for us as married couples and for our nation. No one can argue that marriage has hit hard times today. When our Supreme Court of the United States changed the definition of marriage that it can include same-

sex marriage, it broke my heart. Why? Not because I'm a homophobe and I hate these people. I love them. Christ died for them. They're humans whom Christ died for. And any sin is sin, and God can forgive it, but marriage is a divine institution. Did I make myself clear? Marriage is God's idea. He designed it. He created it. He instituted it. And He said in the very book of beginnings, in Genesis, "For this cause a man leaves his father and mother, joined..."—or cleaved—"...to his wife, and the two become one flesh." Marriage is one man and one woman glued together by God for life. That's marriage as the Bible describes it. And for anyone to think that we can redefine marriage or change marriage is fooling themselves. It is the building block of society. As marriage goes, so goes our nation, so goes the church. And I believe we're seeing that great decline today, because we've turned away from God and His Word. There's nothing more important for us than to turn back to God and His Word.

So I believe that this passage today is so very important. Let's read it beginning in verse 1. He says, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection..."—I'm in chapter 3 of 1 Peter, verse 1—"...to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word..."—"a word" in the Greek—"...be won by the manner of living of the wives; while they behold..."—or look at or study. Now I read chapter 2, verse 12, which says that the unbeliever will behold and glorify God. So the idea is that we live this beautiful life before the unbelieving world. They're going to behold, they're going to study, they're going to look at, and they will be converted as God convicts them and works in their heart. "While they behold your pure conversation..."—or manner of living—"...coupled with a reverence for God..."—verse 3—"...whose adorning not be the outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair, and the wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel. But let it be the hidden person of the heart, an ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price. For after this manner in the old time..."—verse 5—"...the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose daughters you are..."—or you become—"...as long as you do well, and you're not afraid with any amazement..."—or you don't have to be afraid.

Now Peter in these verses that we just read is speaking to wives. And he's speaking primarily and mainly to Christian wives with non-Christian husbands. I want you to get the context. Peter is speaking to a Christian wife married to a non-Christian husband. Now if you are a Christian wife married to a Christian, that doesn't mean that it doesn't apply to you. So you can't leave right now yet; okay? "This doesn't apply to me; let's go to lunch. Hallelujah." It applies. If you take all that the New Testament teaches about marriage, the principle is the same. In Ephesians 5:22 to 33, "Wives, submit to your husbands." Colossians 3:18 to 19, "Wives, you be subject and likewise submit to your husbands." In Titus 2:4 to 5, husbands are to be loved by their wives, and you are to be obedient to them or submit to them. So marriage, as God's idea, is given to us as instruction for the wife married to a non-Christian husband, but the principle applies universally.

Now, there are three things we're going to see in this text. If you're taking notes, you can write them down. By the way, I want the wife to take notes, not the husband take notes and give them to the wife; okay? Isn't it funny how the husband knows the wife's verses? And the wife

knows the husband's verses? And they shoot them at each other. Not good. Ladies, this is for you. But I believe as the men read this with us, they'll understand how valuable and precious their wives are, gifts from God.

So there are three things. We're going to see her behavior, her beauty and her belief. Her behavior, her beauty and her belief. First of all, let's look at the Christian wife's behavior, verses 1 and 2. And again, this is not exhaustive; we could go to the other verses and bring things in, but we're going to try to stay in this Peter passage. Her behavior, in verses 1 and 2, "Likewise, you wives, be subject to your own husbands." So the first thing that the wives are to do is to submit. "Be subject to your own husbands." And notice that word "likewise." "Likewise." It means in the same way or in the same fashion. Or there's the continuation from chapter 2, verse 13, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man," and chapter 2, verse 18, "Servants, be subject to your masters." "Likewise, ye wives..."—but again, as I said in verse 7, "Likewise, ye husbands..." So he's still speaking about submission: to the state, the workplace, in the marriage—wives to husbands, husbands to wives. "Likewise, you wives..."—what are you supposed to do? Well, you're to be in submission to your husband.

Now what does he mean by submission? Well, first of all, I believe that it is a voluntary submission. In the Greek, the phrase literally reads "submit yourselves to your husbands." Guys, you can't demand your wife's submission. "I command you to submit in the name of Jesus, right now!" Say it like a Southern preacher, and it has more power. You better duck quick, because there's a frying pan coming your way. You can't order your wives. "Woman, submit!" Cool your jets, dude. Cool your jets. That doesn't work. We're going to see in this passage that a wife's submission to her husband is done "as to the Lord." You got that? It's done "as to the Lord." You do it voluntarily as unto Jesus.

But the word "submission" literally means to rank under or to arrange under. Yes; it's a military word, but the home and the marriage is not to be run like the military. Okay? The idea is it means just to rank yourself under. Same word used in chapter 2, verse 13; chapter 2, verse 18. There's no personal inferiority implied. Erase that from your thoughts. The women, the minute they hear the word "submit," think that it's because women are less important or less valuable. No, no, no. Jump down to verse 7. "Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel..."—Notice this phrase in verse 7—"...and as being heirs together of the grace of life." You are heirs together of the grace of life. You are equal in the sight of God. Even Jesus submitted to the Father, 1 Corinthians 11:3. And in 1 Peter 5:5, all Christians submit one to another. So submission is not just for the wife. Submission is for every one of us. It's voluntarily arrange yourself under your husbands to serve a greater purpose. It denotes function.

Now in Ephesians 5:22, it says that this is to be done "as to the Lord." Now there's a whole sermon in that concept. If you look at your husband, there're times you're thinking, "Ah, I'm not going to submit to him. Look at him. He's drooling right now. He's a dodo bird." I said that. You didn't say that. Okay? "I'm not going to submit to him. You know, Peter wrote that before he was born. If he'd have been born before this was in the Bible, I think that—if Peter saw my

husband, he'd say, 'Well, never mind, lady.'" No. Submit to your husband. Arrange yourself under. But you do it as to the Lord. You look to the Lord. You focus on the Lord.

And then the next point I would make about submission is that it is pleasing to the Lord. That's what Paul tells us in Colossians 3:18. When you, as a wife, submit yourself to your husband, guess what you are doing? You're pleasing God. You're pleasing God. You go, "Aw, I don't care. I don't want to please God." You want to be pleasing to God? Then you submit yourself voluntarily to your husband as unto the Lord. And it's because the husband is the head of the wife, Ephesians 5:23.

Now this point on submission, I must confess—it's like in our culture, this is almost laughable that anyone preach it. If you took this sermon and you put it on television, popular media, people would freak out. And they would want me arrested and put in jail. But it's in the Scriptures. One of the problems that we have today is that we have abandoned God's Word, which supersedes culture. It transcends culture. And I believe it's culturally relevant. I believe it's for today. It doesn't change. These are unchangeable principles that God designed in marriage. He made marriage. He knows how it's to function and how it's to work best. You say, "But what if my husband's not a Christian?" And some Christian women in that time and in that culture go, "I'm free! I'm married to a heathen husband. He's a full-blown pagan. And I don't want to be around him anymore, so I'm outta here!"

Now some people wonder why do the wives get six verses and the husbands only get one. You ladies can gather around Peter and ask him when you get to heaven. But I do believe in the early churches—and it is somewhat true today—that more wives were coming to Christ than men. And they found out that these women were married to non-Christian husbands. If a husband got saved, it would be more natural for the wife to follow her husband's lead in that culture. Even somewhat today that's true. And yet if a wife gets saved—the male ego, the proud heart of man, harsh—he would become hard and cruel toward his believing wife. In the Greco-Roman world she's following some Jesus, she's giving up her religion, and they would be persecuted. So Peter has in mind Christian wives, non-Christian husbands, who are being persecuted by their unbelieving spouse. And they get the idea, you know, "I need to leave because he's not a Christian." No. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 that you don't leave or divorce your husband because he is a non-Christian. There's no Biblical support for the idea "I want a Christian man." "When I come to church, I want one who has a Bible and loves God, and I want a Christian man. So I'm going to dump the heathen man for a Christian man." No; you can't do that. God says that you have a sanctifying influence on his life. You may be his only hope of salvation. You may be his only light, his only witness, and your life becomes a Bible for him to read on a daily basis.

So what if your husband is not a Christian? Well, he makes it clear in verses 1 and 2. "If any obey not the word..." verse 1. Notice that. That's a reference to a non-Christian husband. He says, "...they also may without a word be won...."—that is, won to Christ. They can be won without you preaching a word. How? By your blameless behavior. By the wife living a godly life. Notice in verse 1, "...by the way that you live..."—verse 2—"...while they look at..."—or

study—"...your chaste manner of living coupled with a reference and fear of God." What he's saying here is, "Wives, not only don't leave your husband, but don't preach to your husband." Not a good idea to build a pulpit in the living room. And then your husband, he's not going to eat until he listens to a sermon. Not a good idea to glue the radio channel on 88.9, so he has to listen to Revival radio Monday through Friday. Not a good idea to stick tracts in his sandwich when he goes to work. [Crunch.] You know, those really cool tracts that say "Return or burn," and when you open them up, flames pop out. That's not going to work. You don't preach at your husband. That's not going to win him. What do you do? You live a loving, submissive life before the Lord. You live in all purity and godliness. And we're going to see that women in the Old Testament gave us an example of how you are to live. So if your husband's not a Christian, they're going to be won to the Lord by the way that you live. So you submit to him, you pray for him and you live a pure life, verse 2, with a reverence and fear for God.

Now there are many issues that come into play. And I'm sure some of you have questions passing through your mind, and I'll answer them after service. But the Bible is very clear. Christian husband or no Christian husband. Good husband, bad husband; it doesn't matter. You're to be submitted to your husband and have a reverence and fear for God.

But I give you one last verse before we leave this point. And that is Galatians 6:9. "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season, you will reap if you faint not." How many men I've seen come to God, because their wives were obedient to His Word. They didn't preach. They didn't pester. They didn't heckle their husbands. They lived a godly life, and God's Spirit convicted these husbands of their need of Jesus Christ and they came to the Lord. They'll be a lot of men in heaven because of their wives. And you want to make sure your husband becomes a Christian because of you, not in spite of you. So we want to live in that manner.

But secondly, we move in verses 3 and 4 to her beauty. And what an amazing passage this is. It really talks about a Christian wife's adorning. Notice it in verses 3 and 4. "Whose..."—that is, this Christian wife, the submissive wife—"...adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair..." Now I'm reading from the King James translation. I'll try to change it a bit to contemporize it. But "the fixing of the hair, the wearing of gold jewelry, and the putting on of fancy clothing..."—or apparel—"...But the focus should be the hidden person of the heart, which is not corruptible..."—notice that—"...even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is great price."

Now the word "adorning" in verse 3 is the word "kosmos," and we get our word "cosmetics" from it. And it actually means "to put in order." And Peter here is telling the women that they should make the priority and the focus of their life not the outward cosmetic adorning with the fixing of the hair, the wearing of gold and jewelry or the putting on of apparel. Now Peter is not giving wives an outright prohibition. He's not saying, "Wives, you can't fix your hair. You can't wear jewelry, and you can't wear makeup." There are some crazy Christians who interpret that this way. I had a guy call me years ago and say, "I see those Jezebels coming to your church!" I don't kid you. "They're all painted up, and they're wearing pants! They're going to hell!" I thought, "Are you serious?" "Yah, you got those Jezebels coming to your church all painted up and wearing

pants, and they're going to hell!" Where is that in the Bible? Jesus said like this. He said, "Don't labor for the food which perishes." Was He saying we don't work for food? No. He says, "But labor for the meat which endures to eternal life." Jesus wasn't prohibiting working for food. Nor is Peter prohibiting women wearing dresses or wearing clothes. If you eliminate makeup, jewelry, fix your hair, you'd have to also eliminate clothes. He's not promoting nudity in the text; okay? "Women, you can't comb your hair, you can't wear jewelry, you can't wear makeup and you can't put anything on." Peter's not saying that. Peter's just saying let the balance be a priority of your life; that the focus is on the inward beauty. Don't be unduly concerned with outward adornment. Don't focus only on the outward beauty.

Now let me just balance that. This is a little frightening for me to say. But let me balance that by saying it is okay to wear makeup. It is okay to comb your hair, to fix yourself up and wear a nice dress, and jewelry is fine; okay? It's fine, but don't make it the priority. I believe the rule of thumb is the outward should reflect the inward you. If you are a woman of God, it should be obvious by the way you dress. And if you're married, by all means, look nice for your husband. I've met women who say, "I don't care. We're hitched now. It doesn't matter what I look like. He's gotta live with me. We're married and I don't have to do nothin' for him!" Please, ladies, have mercy on us! We have to look at you. And women have to look at us. When you come home, your husband is in his skivvies, burping, drinking beer, you know, watching TV. "Dude, shave. Comb your hair. Put something on!" "Yah, but we're hitched now. She's gotta hang in there." I love the old J. Vernon McGee quote. He said that someone wrote to him and asked, "Dr. McGee, is it okay for women to wear makeup?" He wrote back and said, "If the barn needs painting, paint it." I didn't say it; he did. I'm just quoting him. Thank God for cosmetics; amen? And thank God a Christian woman doesn't have to look ugly to be spiritual. "Oh, look at that ugly lady. She must be a woman of God." No; she's just flat-out weird, I think. Nothing wrong with being attractive and having new styles and wearing jewelry. And Christian women should reflect the beauty of Christ.

So he's not outright forbidding that. And I think that as married couples we should try our best to look presentable for our wives or husbands and for others. But the focus is on the inner beauty. I want you to notice in verse 4, "Let it be the hidden person of the heart, that is not corruptible, and put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God, is of great price." In other words, it's pleasing to God. God sees it as valuable.

I want you to note five things in verse 4. Number one, focus on the inner beauty of the heart, because God looks on the heart, not on the outward appearance. Secondly, this inner beauty "is not corruptible," he says. And thirdly, you are to put on a meek, or gentle, and humble spirit, and a quiet, fourthly, or calm spirit of tranquility. And then, fifthly, he says that God views this as very precious. Ask yourselves, ladies, when God looks at my heart, is God pleased? Does God approve? We should be thinking more of God and what He thinks rather than what other people think. I love what Warren Wiersbe said. He said, "Glamour is artificial and external. True beauty is real and internal. Glamour is something that a person can put on or take off. True beauty is always present. Glamour is corruptible; it decays and fades. True beauty from the heart grows more wonderful as the years pass. A Christian woman who cultivates the

beauty of the inner person will not have to depend on cheap externals. God is concerned about values, not prices.” Amen?

And write down Proverbs 31:30. “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who...”—what?—“...fears the Lord, she shall be praised.” Inner beauty is always in fashion. Think about that. Inner beauty never goes out of style. It’s always in fashion. And it grows more beautiful with age. Some of the most beautiful Christian women I’ve ever seen are older women who have the love of Jesus Christ just shining through them. It’s so awesome! Years of walking with God is shining through their lives. That’s the focus.

So your behavior is submission, your beauty is spiritual. It’s the inner beauty of the heart. And that’s cultivated through the Word of God, by the Spirit of God, praying to God and out of obedience to God.

But there’s a last point Peter makes about the Christian wives. And that is in verses 5 and 6. And that is her belief. This is what motivates her. And that is her belief or faith in God and relationship to God. Now follow with me, verses 5 and 6. It says, “For after this manner in old time, holy women, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands.” So the ornament of “a meek and quiet spirit” is how women in the Old Testament adorned themselves. And they were in subjection to their own husbands. Verse 6, “Even as Sara obeyed Abraham...”—or submitted to Abraham—“...calling him lord, whose daughters you become as long as you are doing what is right, and then you don’t have to be afraid.” That’s what that verse says; you don’t have to worry or be afraid of your husband’s response. So Peter says that Christian wives should look to holy women of the past as models for their conduct.

I believe that if you’re a younger woman today, find an older, godly woman to be a role model for you. Find a woman who has loved her husband, walked with God, a woman of the Word, a woman of God, raised children, and let her be a model for your lives. It’s so sad that the younger generation discards the older generation. You know, when you finally get older and you know all the answers to questions, no one’s asking you anything anymore. It’s like, find a woman to ask, “How do you relate to your husband? How do you raise your children? How do you clean your house? How do you do that?” And just allow an older, godly woman to mentor you and influence you.

But in the Bible you can find your heroines in the Old Testament, women of God, who had these qualities. Write them down. Number one, they were holy. They were holy, verse 5. They were called by God, set apart by God and they had a relationship with God. Are you a woman who is holy?

Secondly, they trusted in God. And I believe this is central and so important. They trusted in God. So they were women of faith. Ladies, do you trust God with your marriage? Do you trust God with your children? Do you trust God with your finances? Do you trust God with the issues that concern you? Do you talk to God in prayer? Do you entrust your life to God? So

they were women of God, who trusted in God.

And then, thirdly, they then adorned themselves, verse 5, with what? Submission to their own husbands, which I would call God-like behavior. Based on their relationship to God, their love for God and their faith in God, they were women who submitted to their husbands. How they behaved came from what they believed. Now there's an example given to you in verse 6. Her name is Sara, which means "princess." My oldest daughter is named Sara. It's a beautiful name. And what a great role model Sara, in the Old Testament, is for women. And actually Peter says she obeyed Abraham, calling him "lord." Now this is not a command that you women have to go out of here today and call your husbands "lord." "Sweetheart, would you iron my shirt?" "Yes, my lord." "Honey, would you fix some lunch for us?" "Yes, my lord. Yes, my lord." No; that's not what he's saying. By the way, I do have my car running outside. I'm going to split right after church. No; I'm just kidding.

Where in the Bible did Sara call Abraham lord? I looked it up. Genesis 18:12. An angel had just told Sara and Abraham they're going to have a child in their old age. It says, "Therefore, Sara laughed within herself, saying 'After I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure, my lord...'—referring to her husband, Abraham—"...being old also?" She says, "Am I going to have pleasure with my husband? I'm old and he's—ha, ha, ha!" She thought that was hilarious. But she did respectfully address Abraham as "my lord." It was a title of respect. In Ephesians, Paul says, "Wives, you should respect your husbands." And husbands, you should love your wives. So what an awesome thing; love and respect, those important ingredients in a marriage. In verse 6, the NIV translates that you are "her daughters if you do what is right, and you do not give way to fear." So like Sara, don't be afraid to submit and obey your husband.

Now let me summarize what we learned here as Peter's instructions for wives. Number one, your behavior is submission. Number two, your beauty is to be spiritual beauty. And number three, your belief is to be faith and trust and hope in God. That's how I would summarize this passage. Your behavior is submission, your beauty is spiritual and your belief is faith and hope and trust in God. This is why the writer of Proverbs said in Proverbs 31, "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband does safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." She is valuable. She is trustworthy. And guys, she's a blessing. She is a blessing.

Let's pray.