

FBC POWELL, 5-19-19 AM NOTES
1 Peter 3:1-6
“The Powerful Influence of a Godly Wife”
10 in Series, “1 Peter, Standing Firm in the True Grace of God”

Isaiah 40:8 (NASB) “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”

I. The Godly Wife’s Position (v. 1a)

1 Peter 2:13 (NASB) “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority.”

1 Peter 3:1 (NASB) “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.”

Ephesians 5:22-23 (NASB) ²²“Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.”

A role-less marriage is not only unbiblical; it is impractical and impossible.

Submission is not based on worth or ability. Submit is a **function word**, not an **ability word**. To put it another way, to “submit” is not about who is the smartest; it is about how marriages function.

1 Corinthians 15:28 (CSB) “And when everything is subject to Christ, then the Son Himself will also be subject to the One who subjected everything to Him, so that God may be all in all.”

Submission does **not** mean that the wife becomes a piece of property!

Submission does **not** mean “no exceptions.”

Submission does **not** refer to every realm of life.

Submission does **not** mean giving up on seeing the husband changed.

“Submission is an inner quality of gentleness that affirms the leadership of a husband.”

—Ligon Duncan

“Submission refers to a wife’s divine calling to honor and affirm her husband’s leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts. It is not an absolute surrender of her will. Rather, we speak of her disposition to yield to her husband’s guidance and her inclination to follow his leadership. Her absolute authority is Christ, not her husband. She submits ‘out of reverence for Christ’ (Eph. 5:21). The supreme authority of Christ qualifies the authority of her husband.

She should never follow her husband into sin. Nevertheless, even when she may have to stand with Christ against the sinful will of her husband (e.g., 1 Pet. 3:1, where she does not yield to her husband's unbelief), she can still have a spirit of submission—a disposition to yield. She can show by her attitude and behavior that she does not like resisting his will and that she longs for him to forsake sin and lead in righteousness so that her disposition to honor him as head can again produce harmony.”
—John Piper and Wayne Grudem

II. The Godly Wife's Practice (vv. 1b-2)

Proverbs 19:13b (NASB) “...the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.”

III. The Godly Wife's Pursuit (vv. 3-5)

We are never more like the devil than when we refuse to submit to God-ordained authority and we are never more like the Lord than when we graciously submit to God-ordained authority.

IV. The Godly Wife's Praise (v. 6a)

V. The Godly Wife's Persuasion (v. 6b)

Sermon 10: The Powerful Influence of a Godly Wife

1 Peter 3:1-6

There is no area of life that the Scriptures do not address either in particular or in principle. One of the most important areas of life is the family. The *Bible* has so much to say about the family. Here is an amazing fact about the Bible – it never changes. Our culture and customs change; the psychologists' and other experts' views change, but the written Word of God never changes! Isaiah 40:8: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” This message begins a three part “series within a series” that focuses on the family. We are going to begin by examining the heart of the family – the wife. Here is one of the questions we are going to answer from today's Scripture: “How does a Christian wife relate to her husband, and especially a husband who is not saved or not real serious about His relationship with the Lord?”

In the Greco-Roman world of Peter's day, women received very little respect and had few rights under the Roman law. Culturally, it was “a man's world.” That society generally regarded women as servants who were to follow the instructions of their husband. Wives were often treated as a piece of property. As the Gospel was preached, many men and women came to Christ in salvation. With Christianity growing rapidly, there were questions raised about what to do if the wife became a Christian and the husband remained unsaved? If the wife believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved, there was often great conflict with her non-Christian husband.

What was the Christian wife to do? Often the wife was demanded by the husband to forsake her relationship with Christ. How should she respond when to fail to turn away from the Gospel often meant serious problems with her husband? It is likely that the number one question on the minds of the wives was, “How do I deal with my unsaved husband?”

While our customs may differ in some areas from the Roman Empire in the first century, the basic principles given in 1 Peter 3 are applicable to today. I’ve entitled this message, *The Powerful Influence of a Godly Wife*.

We will see that there is to be a difference between Christians and non-Christians in the area of the family. As was stated earlier, we are focusing today on the wife. The next sermon will focus on the husband. Let’s dig into this text.

I. The Godly Wife’s Position (v. 1a)

The woman of influence takes a position of submission. This passage is often ignored or determined to be antiquated and irrelevant in today’s culture. But we need to treat it *carefully* to make sure we interpret it *correctly*. The phrase “In the same way” is referring back to two previously mentioned examples of submission by men and women in 1 Peter 2:13 (submission to governing authority) and 1 Peter 2:18 (submission to those in authority in the workplace). The same word translated “submit” used in 1 Peter 2:13 and 2:18 is used in our text in 1 Peter 3:1. This passage that details the relationship of the wife to her husband tells her to submit using that same Greek verb. To try to explain that away requires doing injustice to the text and violating the basic rules of hermeneutics (the science of interpretation). Even though the Scriptures are clear, this command was as adamantly disliked in the first century as it is today. It flies in the face of what is culturally desired and makes those who believe it look like Neanderthals to many in the world.

In our day, it has become popular for those who want to make this doctrine acceptable to the culture to try to reinterpret what submission in marriage means. In other words, if we can’t legitimately deny what the Bible says about submission, we seek to change the meaning or application of the word “submit.” Let me give you an example. Elizabeth Elliot, a former missionary, author, and conference speaker tells about attending a workshop on marriage. The woman leading the workshop quoted a passage that says the same thing as our text about submission. Ephesians 5:22-23: “Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.” She then said that marriage is 50/50 and that it is up to each couple to work out their own roles in their unique relationship. She said that wives should submit to their husbands in some areas, but it may be better in some other areas for the husband to submit to the wife; in other words, the roles are interchangeable. At question and answer time, Elizabeth Elliot asked a question: “Could I reverse the nouns in this passage then?” The leader said, “of course”. So Mrs. Elliot began reading verse 22 & 23 like this, “Husbands submit to your own wives as to the Lord. For the wife is head of the husband, as also the church is the head of Christ...” The conference leader said, “Oh no, you can’t take it that far.” But if you arbitrarily change one part of the analogy, why could you not change all of it? If you are going to reject the God given roles, at least be honest and just say you don’t believe the Bible applies to today. All this “politically correct” talk about role-less marriages is not only unbiblical; it is impractical and impossible. In any business organization or a union of any kind, there has to be a leader, a head. Someone wisely said, “Anything in nature with two heads is a freak and anything with no head is dead.”

It is obvious that the key to understanding the wife's role is understanding the word "submit". Let me approach this subject by looking at some things that *submission is not!* First, submission is not based on worth or ability. Submit is a *function* word, not an *ability* word. To put it another way, "submit" is not about who is the smartest; it is about how marriages function. Marriage certainly isn't the only area where the Bible tells us to submit. Luke 2:51 says that Jesus as a child submitted to His earthly parents. Romans 13:1 tells citizens to submit to the governing authorities. In 1 Corinthians 16:15, 16 and numerous other passages, believers are to submit to their spiritual leaders. In 1 Corinthians 15:28, God the Son submits to God the Father. In none of these instances is the one submitting inferior or of less worth to the one being submitted to.

Some object to male headship and female submission in marriage on the basis that women are just as competent and have just as much ability as men. I totally agree that women are just as competent and have just as much ability as men. However, that is irrelevant because that isn't the reason for headship of the husband and submission of the wife in the first place. We are talking here about function, not worth. As I pointed out earlier, we even see that same principle in the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are equally God, but in function, God the Son is subject to the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:28 (CSB): "And when everything is subject to Christ, then the Son Himself will also be subject to the One who subjected everything to Him, so that God may be all in all."

Submission does *not* mean that the wife becomes a piece of property! That is not what this word means. In the 1 Peter passage, we will look at in a moment, we will see how a husband who is not walking in obedience to the word of God can be influenced and changed by a submissive wife. Submission does not rule out the wife giving of her opinion and making appeals to her husband.

Submission does *not* mean "no exceptions." There are some exceptions. When to submit to the husband would involve committing a sin, the wife has the responsibility to obey God rather than man.

Submission does *not* refer to every realm of life. Women are not told to submit to all men – only their husband. Nowhere is every woman told to submit to every man. There is no hint of that in the Bible. Therefore, it is not wrong for a woman to hold a place of leadership over men in her vocation. We are talking about marriage and certain roles in the church.

Submission does *not* mean giving up on seeing the husband changed. It is quite the opposite! When a wife is obeying God in the issue of leadership in the home and prays for her husband to change for the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel, God hears and will work on the husband's heart from the inside. We will see more about that later. Don't fall for these or other perversions of submission.

The word "submit" actually means to line up under established authority. Let me share some good accurate definitions of submission as they are used in this text. First, here is a short definition from Dr. Ligon Duncan: "Submission is an inner quality of gentleness that affirms the leadership of a husband." [Ligon Duncan, sermon preached at First Presbyterian Church, Jackson Mississippi] That is a good definition! It is more an attitude than rule keeping. Here is a longer definition from John Piper and Wayne Grudem:

Submission refers to a wife's divine calling to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts. It is not an absolute surrender of her will. Rather, we speak of her disposition to yield to her

husband's guidance and her inclination to follow his leadership. Her absolute authority is Christ, not her husband. She submits 'out of reverence for Christ' (Eph. 5:21). The supreme authority of Christ qualifies the authority of her husband. She should never follow her husband into sin. Nevertheless, even when she may have to stand with Christ against the sinful will of her husband (e.g., 1 Pet. 3:1, where she does not yield to her husband's unbelief), she can still have a spirit of submission—a disposition to yield. She can show by her attitude and behavior that she does not like resisting his will and that she longs for him to forsake sin and lead in righteousness so that her disposition to honor him as head can again produce harmony."

[John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, page 56-57]

We see the godly wife's position.

II. The Godly Wife's Practice (vv. 1b-2)

In verse 1b, we see a tremendous principle concerning how the godly wife can lead her non-Christian husband to Christ. That phrase, "even if any of them are disobedient to the word..." means that they are not Christians. In other words Peter is showing how a Christian wife can lead her non-Christian husband to Christ. It is not through nagging or constant pleading (which is often thought of as nagging). It is her way of life that God uses to open her husband's heart.

Proverbs has some interesting language concerning a wife who seeks to win her husband by her many words. Proverbs 19:13b: "... the contentions of a wife ['a wife's nagging' CSB] are a constant dripping." As she continually pleads (which he sees as nagging), he grows less interested. As she talks, all he hears is "drip, drip, drip." I doubt that any husband has ever come to Christ through his wife's nagging. It is her life that the Holy Spirit uses to draw him to Christ. Certainly at those times he is open, she should share the Gospel, but otherwise speak by your behavior.

Leading another person to Christ always involves "words" – the facts of the Gospel must be stated, but in a marriage, those words are to be continually put on display by the wife's life, specifically her – "chaste and respectful behavior." The ESV says, "when they see your respectful pure conduct."

III. The Godly Wife's Pursuit (vv. 3-5)

The word "adornment" is the Greek word *kosmos*. It means to set in order. It carries the idea of beauty. Peter is telling women how to be perpetually beautiful to their husband, and how to influence others including their husband. The word translated "adornment" refers to the kind of beauty that doesn't fade away with passing years. Here is what Peter is saying: True "adornment", true beauty, is an inside job! He is not saying outward adornment is wrong; he is saying that outward adornment is temporary while inward beauty gets better with time.

Look at the error many women fall into – hair braided elaborately, jewelry, and implied expensive dresses. Unlike some of the Holiness denominations that use this verse to justify their belief in no makeup or jewelry, Peter uses the phrase "merely external." "Merely" implies that there is nothing wrong with external things like jewelry and makeup, but all of the jewelry and makeup in the world cannot bring about genuine beauty that comes from the inside.

In verse 4, Peter focuses on “the inner person of the heart”. That beauty from the inner person of the heart is “imperishable” – it cannot be taken away by time or an accident or a disease that might disfigure. What is that “inner person of the heart”? It is a “gentle and quiet spirit.” That word “gentle” is translated “meek” in the KJV. It refers not to a weak person, but to a broken (in the good sense of that word) person. This Greek word was used of a wild horse that had been saddle broke and is now gentle and responsive to the bit and bridle. A quiet spirit means a still and tranquil demeanor. It is the opposite of boisterous, of calling attention to one’s self.

In verse 5 “former times” refers to the godly women of the Old Testament. The word translated “adorned” is translated “beautified” in the CSB. This adorning or beautification is combined with being submissive to her husband. Listen carefully: We are never more like the devil than when we refuse to submit to God ordained authority and we are never more like the Lord than when we graciously submit to God ordained authority. That principle goes way beyond just husband and wife stuff. It covers every area of God ordained submission.

IV. The Godly Wife’s Praise (v. 6a)

Peter uses Sarah and her relationship with Abraham to make the point about submission. The word “obeyed” has the idea of listening with a desire to obey. The godly wife doesn’t want to find out the minimum she has to do, the least that she can get by with. This is the picture of a woman who is listening for and waiting for ways to give practical love to her husband. The word “lord” simply means the one under whose authority she is. It was a term of respect. How does a wife respect her husband? By never putting him down, never making him look bad in private or around others. It is an attitude that never looks for ways he is failing but looks for ways to affirm what he does right.

V. The Godly Wife’s Persuasion (v. 6b)

A woman of influence who as verse 5 says puts her hope in God or literally “trusts in God”, looks to God to change her husband while she focuses on obeying God and loving her husband. Many women are afraid of turning their husband over to God for Him to change. They often think that God is too slow. A woman of influence is persuaded that God can take care of her and God in His timing can change her husband. In the enabling power of God’s Holy Spirit, she seeks to do what is right in loving and honoring her husband, and does it with courage, trusting God to change him where he needs changing, and doing it in His timing. She is *not frightened by any fear*.

NASB (New American Standard Bible)

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