

Dear Friends,

Regardless what a pastor teaches on this subject, in today's divisive culture, someone will disagree, often with strong emotion. When emotion takes over our minds, reason and Biblical teaching goes out the window. Whether you agree or disagree with what I write in this week's Gleanings, I ask that you consider it as the best and balanced teaching I've been able to draw from my study of Scripture. Further, I've lived long enough to both experience and to observe the truth of Scripture's teaching on the subject. As you will discover in the writing, I do not place all the blame for today's tension and imbalance all on either men or women. Honestly, I believe there is a sufficiency of error by both that we all would profit greatly if we as a Christian culture worked to return to the mutually respectful and godly balance of Scripture's teaching.

If I survey my some sixty-eight years of trying to preach to the Lord's people, I gladly honor the many godly women who profoundly influenced me to devote myself more fully and righteously to my faith and to my Lord. Instead of looking for reasons to criticize women, I gladly honor them for their wisdom and grace in my life.

When Paul taught the Galatians how to deal with problems, he taught them, first and foremost, to examine themselves, not find a way to blame others. "...**considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.**" (Galatians 6:1b KJV) Whether we are dealing with spiritual error, such as the Galatian problem, or personal relationships, such as we study this week, Biblical truth and godly balance occur far more often when we look within instead of looking for someone else to blame for whatever the problem may be.

In my own marriage, when I started striving more to show the Jesus-kind of love to Sandra, the more she reciprocated and showed me the Biblical kind of grace that Scripture honors.

In every aspect of our lives, we teach that Scripture reveals the right way. The more we live that way instead of resisting it the more weight our testimony will carry to those who observe us. This agrees with Peter's teaching in our study passage. A believing wife married to an unbelieving husband can most effectively influence him by living her faith with grace in their relationship.

Lord help us to work long and hard to emulate Jesus and His love for His people in our lives, especially in our interpersonal relationships.

Lord bless,  
Joe Holder

## **Biblical Submission—Wives**

**Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of 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 meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of 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 Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. (1 Peter 3:1-6 KJV 1900)**

The idea of “Submission” in today’s broken culture is despised and rejected, often by sincere people who love the Lord. We sadly often allow this world’s broken sinful outlook to control our minds, despite our profession of faith in Jesus. In our broken culture, professing Christians often ignore Scripture’s teaching and ridicule any thought of “Submission.”

An example of those who profess faith in Jesus falling prey to this world’s attitude. A preacher, quite well known for emphasizing the New Testament teaching of wives submitting to their husbands was visiting some friends, along with his wife. As is often the case, men and women have different interests, so the men migrate to one room and the women to another room. As one of the men was walking through the women’s group to get a drink of water, he overheard the ladies’ conversation. One of the women asked the preacher’s wife what she thought of her husband’s teaching. She replied, “I fully agree with it, but I would add that, as he is the head of our family, I am the neck, and the neck can turn the head any way she pleases.” All too many professing Christians profess to believe and practice this New Testament theme, but they, as this wife, in fact refuse to truly practice it in their marriages.

**Likewise**, (Peter freely uses this word in our study context) a husband who insists too loudly for his wife to submit has likely neglected Paul’s charge to him—to love his wife even as Christ loved His church and gave Himself for her. Paul didn’t write one word about the husband harping at his wife to submit. He requires the husband to love his wife in self-sacrificing love just as he requires the wife to submit to her husband. I offer a simple observation. If more husbands truly loved their wives as Christ loved His church, there would be far fewer women who struggle with submitting. In the end, the Biblical model of marriage does divide responsibilities between husbands and wives, and both husbands and wives should respect and strive to practice that teaching. But it also teaches a cooperative united labor in both to nurture and maintain a godly harmonious and healthy family unit.

The lesson before us in this week’s study is not an isolated teaching. In fact, “Submission” forms a centerpiece of the New Testament principle of authentic discipleship. A little child is necessarily submissive to his/her parents, and Jesus taught that we must become as little children if we hope to enter His kingdom. Peter started this lesson on applying the gospel to our life situations in the second chapter.

**Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme. (1 Peter 2:13 KJV)**

**Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. (1 Peter 2:18 KJV)**

The idea of a wife submitting to her husband is not an exception, but rather part of the greater submissive, gentle grace of the New Testament discipleship model. Peter will continue this “Submission” theme.

**Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.** (1 Peter 3:7 KJV)

Peter's injection of "**Likewise**" imposes this same submissive attitude onto husbands as he taught wives. The longer I live the more I respect the wisdom of Scripture. When I observe a husband who truly lives a self-sacrificing love for his wife, I also observe a joyfully submissive wife. He never coerces her submission; she submits willingly and joyfully. Lord willing, we'll study Peter's instructions to husbands in our next article. For this study, let's set aside the unbelieving broken world's rejection of Jesus and His teaching and study the godly response of wives to their faith, to their God, and to their husbands.

**Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.** Peter's instruction to wives to submit is not power based, a sinful carnal attitude. It is framed with the potential for a godly gracious wife to gain the opportunity to influence her husband to godliness and stronger faith. We have an instructive example in the New Testament in the case of Aquila and Priscilla who worked together to influence Apollos in the right way of Jesus and His truth.

It is even possible that a godly wife might win an unbelieving husband to the faith. A favorite objection to Christianity in our culture is "I don't go to church. Churches are full of hypocrites." However, if an unbelieving husband with that disposition thinks about his wife, a woman whom he knows intimately to be authentic and devoted to her faith, she will nudge him to rethink his generalization. Does he think his wife is a hypocrite? No, he knows her well, and he knows she is genuine through and through. Perhaps her church has many other women—and men—who likewise devote themselves to the faith of Jesus. He must rethink his dismissal of all Christians because of her faithfulness. He sees her "**chaste conversation**," her godly "Citizenship" in the household of faith, as well as in her family. Her godly grace becomes compelling. She doesn't manifest or promote her faith in Jesus by the clothes she wears, her hair style, or jewelry, but by her devoted and sincere lifestyle.

**Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.** You know my penchant for chasing words and their meaning. "**Adorning**" was translated from the Greek word "Kosmos." It refers to the universe "...as an ordered structure." (Louw-Nida) We find this word in such English words as "Cosmopolitan," or "Cosmetics." The godly woman's whole ordered world, her consistent lifestyle, Peter describes in both negative and positive terms.

Negatively, the godly woman's "Ordered" life is not defined by her outward appearance in such things as ornate or overly elaborate hair styles, jewelry, or clothing. I've known a few Christian women who interpreted this verse as requiring that they avoid any styling whatever of their hair, the plainest of wardrobe, and no jewelry whatever. Read Peter's point carefully. If he intended such a strict appearance in a woman, would you also interpret his last point so literally, "**putting on of apparel**"? I suggest that dress, hairstyle, and general appearance in a godly woman should not be so different in either direction as to attract attention to her. Her appearance should not be so plain as to draw attention, nor should she be so excessive

in style as to draw attention to her physical appearance. Simply stated, the godly woman should not make her physical appearance, either too plain or too stylish, her dominant feature. Now we look at the positive.

**But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the 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 the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands.** A materialistic culture, favored by carnal values, emphasizes a woman's physical beauty, but you seldom hear anything about her character. Peter emphasizes the true inner beauty of the godly woman, "...**the hidden man of the heart.**" What qualities make up this "Hidden" persona?

1. **She is not corruptible.** She lives her faith "Faithfully." In a world that delights in the values of spiritual and moral corruption, she will not compromise her faith or her character.

2. "...**the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.**" As mentioned above, Peter doesn't forbid a woman wearing jewelry, but he does require that the main "Ornament" of her life is something far more valuable and enduring than jewelry. What is "**Meek**"? I've heard a lot of imaginative ideas about the word. We need not resort to our private interpretation of the word. It has its own established meaning. Louw-Nida defines the word translated "Meek" in this verse as "being gentle and mild." Keep in mind; Jesus described Himself with this word. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; **for I am meek and lowly in heart:** and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:29 KJV) Ladies, can you live by a better model than Jesus Himself? When you think about gaining something by being stormy and demanding, remember Jesus and remember this godly "Jewelry" which you should wear all the time.

...**which is in the sight of God of 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.** The ideas and values we accept, and respect shape our lives. If we accept the fickle values of the world around us, Scripture warns that we sacrifice the values that are "...**in the sight of God of great price.**" This principle applies to every believer; Peter here applies it to godly women. Should we pursue the values that the broken world in which we live magnifies? Or should we treasure the values and lifestyle that God regards to be "**of great price,**" of great value?

Peter reminds us that what he wrote is not something new or novel. It is the timeless lifestyle of godly women in the Old Testament era. Trust in God goes hand in hand with the inward "Adorning" which Peter teaches in our study passage. Scripture contains much "Ink" about Abraham's walk of faith. Have you ever pondered Sarah's faith that nudged her to go with Abraham on that long journey? Paul gives Sarah due honor for that faith in Hebrews 11:11-12. He also uses Sarah as a symbol of godly faith—and faithfulness—in Galatians 4:21-31.

Peter started this instructive lesson with "**Submit**" and he ends it on the same note. (1 Peter 2:7 KJV) A word of caution. To be in "**Subjection**" does not mean slavery. It does not mean that husbands are taught or even allowed to lord themselves over their wives. The godly wife voluntarily chooses the path of subjection. A husband worth his position will earn that relationship by loving his wife **as** Christ loved the church, self-sacrificially so. We never read in Scripture that a husband is to harp at his wife and demand that she submits. Biblical submission in marriage is the same as Biblical submission in our discipleship. It is voluntary and done in love and joyful service. I have long been persuaded. If husbands focused more on loving their wives "**as**" Christ loved His "Bride," instead of demanding their submission, we'd see more

wives lovingly, joyfully, and willingly choosing to submit to their husbands. Coerced love is not love at all. It is slavery. Love is voluntary and joyful. Husbands, do you show that kind of love to your wife?

Elder Joe Holder