

“Endurance”

1 Peter 3:1-7

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1 Peter 3:1-7 *Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct*

accompanied by fear. 3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. 7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.



It’s been said that “culture eats strategy for lunch.” So it should not surprise us that Satan is moving to simply corrupt the culture rather than overtly attempting a frontal assault to break the backs of faith and Christianity. Satan has for years been subtly but continually picking away at the underpinnings of the Christian world order, every foundational element of our faith is being challenged. Some acquiesce and bow to the push of the world, and others....? Well, some even yet will not be so moved.

In the latter half of chapter 2 of 1 Peter we began this issue of submission and authority. I mentioned at that time how these issues are not considered so much spiritual debates as they are hot-button social concerns. Fresh out of decades of abuses in racism, police brutality, international military conflicts, governmental overreach and corporate corruption, there has arose a new awareness of the individual and one’s self-determination.

Of course by any measure we have overshot the finish line and have wandered into the quicksand of ramped narcissism, self-entitlement, gender fluidity, and the multiplicity of self-identity. Historical and biblical roles are more than simply abandoned, they are even ridiculed and publically rejected by those who still claim to be God’s church. By any measure, Satan is currently winning that battle even while eventually losing the war.

Our letter from Peter to these believers in Asia would now venture into this modern social “muddle” and attempt to cast light upon the truth and the plan of our Creator. Certainly there is no “safe” way to approach this dragon. No gentle path to be found. No soothing and agreeable presentation is possible. Thus Peter just takes on the subject “head-on.” He just blasts through the front door...

“...you wives must accept the authority of your husbands...be submissive to your own husbands.”

One can clearly hear the hearts of modern females around the world slamming shut. Along with their **ears**, their **minds**, and maybe their **fists**! This is one of those perceived “old-school” paradigms that have been blamed for the mass exodus from the greater church over the past few years. I hold that such did not *cause* the exodus, but rather it *is* the exodus. The fall in church attendance and Christian participation is a “house cleaning.” The “chaff” is being blown away. The church has lost no one. Those who have exited were in reality never here in the first place but were simply warming a pew and easing their conscious with some moral latitude and religious platitudes.

So today the greater church lives under a model that changes as the culture changes. We don't go with what God has said, but rather what Oprah, Ellen, and Saturday Night Live says. So in this passage Peter...*well*, "offends us." Especially the females amongst us. *How dare you? What am I? Your door mat? Your hired servant?*

Certainly I am no marriage expert. I have yet to publish even a sticky note worth of marriage advice. Yet I am, *at the time of this writing*, approaching some 39 years of marriage with the same woman. And frankly, if we were any more crazy about each other there could be some suspicion that something funny is being smoked in our house! That "brass ring" really boils down to just a couple of inexplicable and rather non-flashy points:

One, I think my wife is the most beautiful and wonderful person I have ever met. I love her madly. And despite what all the Acts 29 boys say and the new modern church heavyweights want to preach, *she's my soulmate*. I never forget that, never take her for granted, and live every second of every day in thanks for ever getting even 5 minutes with that woman. **Secondly**, we seek in every way to have a *biblical* marriage. One defined by God and His word. She knew that pursuit clearly before she ever said "I do." There was no surprises. No "slight-of-hand." And "lo-and-behold"...through it all, my wife does not appear to be abused, mis-used, or beaten down. In fact, much to my own surprise and chagrin, she seems...*well*, kinda blissful! So while the world around us cry's foul over the concept of biblical marital union...the "one man and one woman" design...the supposedly elitist ideal of the "man of the house" concept, we just smile at each other and walk on together past the protests.

You see, the trouble doesn't lie in the fact that **marriage** is broken, but rather that **WE** are broken. **Humanity** is broken. Thus we tend to come into the dance already out of rhythm. We have lost the race before we even get off the blocks. Because any time one attempts to embrace any faith aspect while continuing to place himself or herself in the first position or worse the *controlling* position, we are done before we start. This because Christianity is firstly, uniquely, and overtly an "*other-centered*" lifestyle. When I cannot submit myself to others...when I cannot humble myself, I will either reject Christianity immediately or I will eventually fail to follow-through in such a walk and will in time depart from the faith because of one over-riding element: *me*.

Every individual that once walked the halls of this fellowship and eventually rejected us and/or the faith as a whole, did so with that little word on their lips! The great "I, me, and mine." They at one time...**often for many years**, was in full agreement and support of this body of believers until that fateful day ...that that one fateful issue came, and then "**I don't have to take that!**" "**He said this about me!**" "**He wouldn't support me.**" "**They criticized me.**" "**They hurt my feelings.**" All of which negates the mandatory component of Christianity that says to walk in faith means I must die to self. It means as a Christian, the "me" is dead. Matthew 16:24-25 says "**Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."** We need to remember the warning in James 3:16 "**For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.**"

Furthermore, this personality trait...or 'behavioral aspect' never stops at the church door. No, it inevitably goes home with an individual. Usually to work too, and often to every other aspect of one's life. A self-centered individual tends to be so in every aspect of his or her life, including every relationship...every friendship. So it would be pure fiction to believe that such a heart would fail to touch one's marriage! So when Peter herein calls upon wives to submit to their husbands, well, again, many of us would simple bristle at the very idea of such because of who we innately are.

We live in a country, *if not a world at large*, that wants to believe it has the answers to the ills of our society. Yet we just keep digging the hole deeper and deeper. The self-help industry in America is now a 12 billion dollar a year business. When comparing print sales from 2013 to 2017, there was a 56% increase in the category of self-help, with a 22% increase just between 2016 and 2017.

This *of course*, is a classic case of the proverbial "blind leading the blind." When we allow the culture to dictate the parameters of our faith, when we believe we are an island unto ourselves, when we try to circumvent the life that Jesus died to give us and negate the Spirit's leading, we essentially reject the headship of Christ which is the very heart of our living faith.

Scripture gives us clear and simple direction on this matter of marriage, and like in all other scriptural directives we must simply decide whether we will be obedient or not: whether we will walk in the light or not. Whether we will live the life of a Christian or whether such will be merely lip service. *“Women be submissive to your husbands.”* Please note that there was no added exemptions. It was simple, clear and emphatic.

The biblical fact is, God has designed the family with the man as the spiritual head whether we agree with such a principle or not. And He has not changed His mind, because He is clear that He *“changes not.”* (Mal 3:6) The family is to be a miniature picture of Christ’s relationship with His church. In the church, God is the head to whom we submit all aspects of our living. And in the family, the man is to be the picture of Christ and serve as the head. It is a daunting call upon us as men, and certainly can be a difficult call upon us as women. Worldly perceptions present this arrangement as being wholly one-sided in favor of the man, but I’m just not seeing it. Why would we men naturally want that responsibility? It’s far from a easy position, *at least when the man leads as God has prescribed.* Certainly there are plenty who reject such. They don’t attend **this** church for very long, but they certainly exist.

A lot of men do see the burden of such a position and just ‘bow-out’ and pass the authority to their wives. By doing so they feed into the curse of Eden, where after the fall of mankind God said that women would thereafter be cursed with the desire to usurp authority of their men. And when that kind of marriage becomes entrenched, what you inevitably have is a train wreck. Men think that surrender in this matter will bring peace in the house, but it doesn’t, and then the woman loses all respect in the man because he effectively **isn’t** one, and it’s really hard to love what you do not respect. Even the modern premise of a 50/50 marriage is a farce, an impossibility, and is ultimately a feeble attempt to circumvent the laws of God. Furthermore, it never works, and is frankly an embarrassing and shameful picture of Christ and His church.

Now it is important to understand a couple of things: **one**, this is not a call for all women to submit to **men**. That’s not what it says nor what it means. This is not speaking of the work place or ‘out on the street.’ This is referring strictly to the marriage union, and it can be wholly avoided and personally rejected by simply not getting married. The text says “submit to **their own husbands.**” But the world dynamic out there today is that we want our cake and eat it too, right? We want marriage and still not set down our selfishness and self-centeredness. Like when we want children *and* a career. Just like we want to go to the church of our choosing and hold to the same thinking. People often come around here and love the energy and dynamic of this fellowship, but reject the participatory aspects and framework that made it what it is. In essence, we are saying we want all the blessings of God and this church and still reject His instruction and parameters of order.

And **two**, submission has nothing to do with *worth* and *value*. It’s hard for us to not see it that way, because mankind in our fallen state is quite sensitive to any insinuation that I’m not the ‘master of my own domain.’ You know...*like it is in Christianity.* This is about order, peace, and workability. It doesn’t even mean that the man can do a better job of leading than the woman! It means that the man is to lead the wife and God is the head over the man, because God has an agenda. And again, make no mistake...that arrangement is no picnic for the man, I assure you. That means that the husband has to answer *before God* for how he leads his family as a husband and a father. We will literally be *judged* for how we led! It would be swell to step off from that responsibility, and as I have already said, many will do just that. But just because we pass the buck doesn’t mean God will fail to follow through with the judgment part, **because He won’t.**

No doubt one reason for this call is the matter of the testimony a wife can have before her children as well as a husband who perhaps is not a believer. There are many Christians today that for various reasons have found themselves in a marriage with one person being a non-believer. Remorse, regret, and the search for a marital exemption must be set aside, and the believer must focus on the Godly lifestyle that can affect the unbeliever’s view of Christ and faith. Such will never occur through yelling, complaining, crying, and overt “in-your-face” combat-mode evangelism. This does not mean that I should allow the unsaved partner to stand between me and Christ, nor my love and obedience to Him. Jesus must be first, even if that means a marital ‘throw-down.’ It also doesn’t mean that I can avoid, surrender or usurp my overall marital participation and mutual responsibilities because I am spending every night at church. It means that Jesus is first, but with the understanding that *I am married* and that is a mission and responsibility also.

The world sees all of this as demeaning toward women, while in fact what Peter was teaching was revolutionary and even radically feminist for his time. Because in that day, in that culture, women had no rights at all and were essentially

on the level of a slave. So what Peter was teaching was pushing the limits for his day, giving women a very real place and participation in the marital union!

Verse 2 calls upon you ladies to practice a “*chaste conduct accompanied with fear.*” “*Chaste*” means “pure, modest, and reverent,” while “*conduct*” speaks of one’s lifestyle. The “*fear*” that is referred to here is that of “respect and reverence.” Such means “toward God” no doubt, but also reflects the respect and reverence which should occur between a wife and husband. Gentlemen, you can try to demand that, or you can *earn* it.

Peter goes on to instruct women to seek a beauty that transcends one’s make up, jewelry, or clothes. A real man...a *Godly* one, does not need instruction on this matter, for while he may appreciate the physical beauty of a woman, he clearly recognizes that there is so much more to be sought after than that. In fact, a woman who tries too hard to lure in a man with an outward façade can be a real turn off for men who are seeking for more. I guess it just depends on what kind of man you want....*what kind of man you are.*

It is a difficult rejection for women today to say no to a culture that overwhelmingly pushes an overt sexuality. Relationships become a competition and a ‘hunt.’ What I am saying is not meant to be a prohibition against makeup, a nice dress and a comb. But if you buy a man with your outward beauty, what happens when you don’t have it anymore? Or do you think you always will? I appreciate physical beauty also, but I am easily turned off by a woman who tries too hard. Peter says that “*the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, ...is very precious in the sight of God.*” Well, it’s precious in the sight of a lot of men too ladies!

Peter’s direction herein to men is shorter, although I doubt if that is because we need less instruction. I would guess it was because too much information would likely get lost in the simplicity of our minds! He tells us men to “ *dwell with our wives with knowledge.*” Such simple instruction has miles of impact! Make no mistake...such a task requires investment, time, and commitment.

Men, do you even *know* what makes your wife tick? Do you truly *know* her? Her wants, desires, and passions...*her failings*? The things she dislikes, the things that upset her, the things that make her fearful? Neil Young says a ‘man needs a maid.’ Well, a real man...a *godly one*, needs more than that. The fact is...*and I choose my vernacular with care and purpose*, we generally *need* a wife gentlemen, and one of Godly character, strength, and wisdom.

Peter goes on to call upon us to *honor our wives*. Honor is more than respect, and even more than love. Honor is a “reverence due to position.” A position that her Creator has given her. It is not negotiable for us gentlemen, nor is it optional. It is a command...a holy directive...an absolute. She is your wife. To deny her the honor that is due her is nothing less than a sin against her as well as God Himself. Don’t want to do that? Then don’t marry. Because in the providence of God, marriage is a ‘package deal.’ Doing marriage badly is slap against the street cred of Christ Himself.

Peter calls your wife your “*joint heir.*” Together you have inherited the blessing of marriage, unity of path, and the gifts He has given you both. You are “one flesh” before God. If we fail in these directives, this passage tells us our “*prayers will be hindered.*” This comes from more than God’s refusal due to disobedience on our part. It seems that the very stubborn and un-loving heart within us serves as a damn in the spiritual river of prayer, preventing our spiritual communion with God. **(Eph 5:25)**

I realize that many folks today are suffering through the ramifications of marriage issues. Unsaved partners, abusive relationships, lousy interaction and dysfunctional communication. Things are difficult, and decisions concerning your marriage are precarious and potentially disastrous. But you are not alone. God has got your back, and so do we.

Now, there *is* a time to separate. I’m not saying divorce, although God placed even that at your disposal in certain situations. But no one gets an ‘out’ on these things herein prescribed because it’s just too hard in your house. Remember that Peter’s readers were really under incredible pressure when he wrote these words. Yet we are still held accountable for how *we* live and how *we* love, and that includes...it *must* include, how we live and love Jesus through the times when it is the hardest. We all must answer that critical question: *How big is your God?*