



## A Holy Marriage

*Series: Pursuing Christ in a Pagan World*

1 Peter 3:1-7

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There is a great temptation in our culture that is plagued, quite honestly, by radical feminism and self-absorbed or emasculated men of horribly weak character and leadership to remove this text from our working canon, to eliminate it from serious consideration in the church today. But the truth is this: The Lordship of Christ not only **should** be evident in our marriages, it **must** be evident in our marriages for our confession of Christ as Savior and Lord, for our faithfulness to Christ, and for the power of the gospel to be taken seriously and be received as radically life changing in our world. John MacArthur once said, "It is difficult to see how Christianity can have a positive effect on our society if it cannot transform its own homes." He is absolutely correct. The gospel is at stake in the way that husbands and wives relate to one another. Apart from faithful, long-lasting, strong, durable, God-glorifying marriages, we can never have churches that magnify the worth and greatness of God and that display the power of the gospel. If the marriages in this church look just like the marriages in the world, then we deny the sin-conquering, soul-changing, Christ-pursuing work of the gospel in us. The message that Peter has for us this morning may be summarized with two statements...

**1) Women, honor Christ as Lord and love your husband by being counter-cultural wives for the sake of the His gospel. (v. 1-6)**

### **Submit to your husbands**

In our society, the idea that a woman should voluntarily submit to the authority of her husband is considered out-dated, sexist, and offensive. But instead it is God's timeless truth – as relevant in our day as in the day of Peter. Marriage in Peter's day was a sin-polluted institution. Greco-Roman society, much like the Jewish culture, treated women as an object. The whole purpose of wives in that time was to bear legitimate children for the husband and to keep house. Husbands typically found sexual gratification with concubines and prostitutes, whereas wives, often with the encouragement of their husband, found sexual fulfillment with their slaves. Just as in our culture, marriage was held in low esteem and was thoroughly divested of its meaning and purpose.

But Christ re-established the character and the nature and the purpose of marriage and the role of the husband and wife in marriage. Paul wrote of character, nature and purpose of marriage in Ephesians 5: **(Eph 5:22-33)**

This is God's standard for marriage and it begins with this command in our text today from Peter, echoed by Paul, wives submit to, be subject to your husbands. What is proper submission? Submission is the divine calling on a wife to honor and affirm her husband's God-ordained leadership in the family and to assist him in fulfilling his calling through the proper use of the gifts that God has given to her to do so. It is to give place to his position as the God-ordained leader of the family. It means making a choice to affirm her husband as leader within the limits of obedience to Christ. That phrase "be subject" comes from a military term that means to arrange under rank – to take your rightful place. This is not to say that the man is better than the woman, or more spiritual, or more intelligent, or has more ability, or is of greater character. Neither is this passage encouraging dictatorship or lordship on the part of the man either. The wife is to recognize that awesome weight of responsibility that the husband has, and support him in it. This call to submission requires a wife's sacrificial self-giving loyalty to her husband.

Submission is most clearly shown in Jesus Christ's relationship to the Father. We firmly believe in the co-equality of the Son with the Father. Jesus declared, "I and the Father are one." Still, He came to earth by the Father's authority in sending him. He acted by the Father's authority in every miracle and sermon preached. He submitted to the Father's authority, as he became a propitiation for our sin. He said that he always did those things that pleased the Father. Was this wrong? No. We rejoice in the Son's submission to the Father for our sake. What we must see is a wife's submission to her own husband is a reflection of the Son's loving, loyal, and joyful submission of the Son to the Father. Ladies, you reflect Christ when you willingly and joyfully submit to your husbands.

John Piper put it this way: "[Submission] is an attitude that says, 'I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for things and lead with love. I don't flourish when you are passive and I have to make sure the family works.' But the attitude of Christian submission also says, 'It grieves me when you venture into sinful acts and want to take me with you. You know I can't do that. I have no desire to resist you. On the contrary, I flourish most when I can respond creatively and joyfully to your lead; but I can't follow you into sin, as much as I love to honor your leadership in our marriage. Christ is my King.'"

Submission is a commitment to support one's husband in such a way that he may reach his full potential as a man of God. Submission glorifies God and it is used by God to encourage, to spur on, husbands to greater holiness and pursuit of Christ. But what about an unsaved husband? Peter tells us: **even if some do not obey the word... they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.** Now obviously, I am not advocating staying in a situation where there is physical or sexual abuse. That is not the idea. In that situation, the elders of the church need to get involved and so do the civil authorities. This is not about that extreme this is about men who have heard the gospel perhaps, who have rejected the gospel or who show no signs of spiritual life whatever. What about those guys?

Peter does not tell them to leave their husbands, to nag him and argue with him, to preach at him, to badger him, or stick evangelistic tracts under his pillow or have the preacher come to the house when he's home alone to let him have it with both barrels. No, Peter's point is that the gracious and God-glorifying submission of a Christian woman to an unsaved husband is the strongest evangelistic tool she has.

**Respectful and pure conduct** – conduct that demonstrates faithfulness to God and faithfulness to her husband, purity, holiness – God uses that in the life of an unsaved man to bring Him to repentance, to bring him into submission to the truth of the Word of God. Wives, it is more important what you are than what you say. Your life validates the gospel on your lips. That's his point.

### **Pursue true beauty**

Look at what Peter writes: **(1Pe 3:3-4)** Make sure that you understand what Peter is saying here. Peter is not saying that wearing makeup or doing your hair or wearing jewelry is sinful or wrong. Nor is he saying that it is particularly spiritual for a woman to just “let herself go” if you know what I mean. The Bible is not against cultivating a feminine appearance. That is not his point. His point is this: It is wrong to be consumed with outward appearance at the expense of inward beauty. Looking at a beautiful woman who lacks inner beauty and character is, according to Proverbs, like a pig with a gold ring in its nose. **(Pro 11:22)**

But where does our society put all of the emphasis? On the outside, on the surface, on our looks. But here is the truth. All the makeup in the world can't cover up an ugly soul. Instead Peter says that the adorning of the woman should be the hidden person of the heart – inner beauty – and what God sees as beautiful is a gentle and quiet spirit. A spirit that does not draw attention to itself, not a domineering spirit, not one that seeks the attention of others, but one that seeks the approval of God in her life. That is what women are to pursue as true beauty – the fruit of the Spirit of God in their lives – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. It is inner beauty that is truly beautiful. How much time do you spend cultivating that, ladies? How much effort do you make to grow in

beauty on the inside? Sisters, listen – too many place their hope, the joy, their value, their person in how they look, how they dress, their external appearance – but your hope is in Christ, your joy is in the transformation He has done in your soul, your value and your person is found in being a chosen daughter of the God of the universe. Delight in that, pursue the beauty of being God’s daughter.

This whole concept is so counter cultural. Just think of when you are going out of the check out line in the grocery store, what do you see lining the way – all the different magazines with the airbrushed, perfectly dressed, perfectly made up women, a thousand photographs to get that one – and what do we call those women? Models. Models of what exactly? Models of purity? Models of inner beauty? Models of virtue? Models of modesty? Models of God-honoring womanhood? Models of character? Peter would say no! Those women are make-believe. Instead he would point us to the women whose beauty has been precious before the eyes of God. He would tell you, ladies, to

### **Follow the example of godly women of old (1Pe 3:5-6)**

Peter is saying to the ladies, “If you are looking for someone to emulate, someone to look like, don’t pick the magazine model, pick the spiritual matriarch. Notice how Peter describes them. Holy women of old, who hoped in God – that’s significant. Their hope, their trust, their faith, was not in their husbands’ perfection or in their looks – their hope was in God and because they trusted in God, they could submit to their own husbands faithfully, confident of God’s faithfulness and purposes.

We see that reflected clearly in Sarah. **(Gen 18:9-14)** The words recorded in Genesis 18:12 are the words Sarah thought to herself. Sarah was speaking to herself and Sarah calling Abraham “lord,” indicated the way she really thought of him. Sarah serves as a beautiful picture of Christian women who have their hope fixed on God.

### **2) Men, honor Christ as Lord and love your wives by being counter-cultural husbands for the sake of His gospel. (v. 7)**

**Know and care about your wives in a manner that reflects Christ -- live with your wives in an understanding way.** What does Peter mean here? He wants us to live in an understanding way – to know and care about our wives, to understand God’s purpose in marriage, to understand our responsibility to reflect Christ in the way that we relate to our

wives. There are a whole host of men out there who do not know their wives, who do not care for them as they should, who do not know even the purpose of their being married. Remember what we read in Ephesians?

How do we know and love and care for our wives? It means first to love your wife without condition. Jesus loved us as we were and by His grace changed us. In the same way, men are to love their wives. It's that deep affection that sees your wife as a sister in the Lord, that sees your wife as a weaker vessel to be cared for, that sees your wife as your best friend that sees your wife as the most important human being in the world that sees your wife as your most critical permanent investment and life-long partner.

To love your wife like Christ means to love sacrificially. Jesus Christ "gave Himself" for the Church. It was a sacrifice of his life and a willingness to suffer so that his Bride, the Church, might be radiant with glory. Our wives are to get priority in our lives. How prone men are to take their wives for granted.

It means to love purposefully. Christ works to present the church in its fullest glory. In a similar way a wife's greatest encourager should be her husband, not her best girlfriend. A husband's job is to help his wife become all that God created her to be for Christ' glory. We must invest in our wives and in their lives. We must seek to nurture her, to care for her, to help her enjoy marriage to the fullest. George Knight asks, "Just as Christ works to present His church to Himself as a glorious bride in a glorious marriage, should not the husband work to make his wife glorious and their marriage glorious?"

It means to love personally. We are to love our wives like we love our own bodies. Every husband needs to become an avid student of his wife. You need to know her personality, her likes and dislikes, her needs, her strengths, her weaknesses, her fears, her hopes, her joys.

It means to love her spiritually. As a husband leads his wife spiritually into a fuller knowledge of all that God has prepared for those who love Him, they will grow together in a depth of intimacy the world can't know. [\*\*You must take seriously the responsibility to pursue Christ with your wife and to take the lead and here are some ways to do it – encourage her in her walk with Christ, read the Bible or good books to her, pray for her and with her, study the Word of God with her, apply the sermon with her.\*\*](#) This means, men, that if you're spiritually passive, you're not being obedient to what God wants you to be doing as a husband. Loving your wife requires that you become a man of God in the home, serving to give wise spiritual guidance and leadership.

It also means to love actively. Look for ways to demonstrate that you love your wife. Not merely sexually but pursue her heart. Be sensitive to her needs, sensitive to her feelings, be affectionate, be involved in her life. You are not her master, not her coach, not her priest – her go-between with God, not merely a financial provider. She is not your slave, not a sex object, not your mommy, not your idol. She is your wife, You are her husband. You are one flesh. Like Paul says: **In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.** So Peter says:

**Honor and protect her -- showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel.** Peter calls us to honor our wives and to protect them as the weaker vessel. We are to protect, care for, cherish, nurture and defend our wives both physically and spiritually. In doing that we can

### **Rejoice in who she really is**

Christian husband, your wife is a fellow heir of the grace of life, eternal life, with you. She is not merely your wife for a lifetime, but your sister in Christ and fellow heir of the glories of Christ forever. She shares with you in the glorious inheritance that awaits every believer on the day of Jesus Christ. That is who she is. She is the daughter of God, are you loving her like that? Christian man, do you realize that you will stand before her Father in heaven and give an account of how you cared for His daughter?

### **The blessed result – favor and fellowship with God -- so that your prayers may not be hindered.**

Do you see what Peter is saying? To take the time to develop and maintain a good marriage is God's will; it is serving God; it is a spiritual activity pleasing in his sight.

Our relationship to our spouse affects our spiritual life. You can hear people talk about their great faith all they want, but the first thing you ought to check is how they treat their wife.

Does this really matter? It does if you understand the nature of prayer and what it is. If your prayers are hindered, it means your fellowship with God is broken. If your fellowship with God is broken, He will begin to seem unreal, distant, unapproachable, far off. He won't seem to be there anymore. So concerned is God that Christian husbands live in an understanding and loving way with their wives, that he "interrupts" his relationship with them when they are not doing so.

For someone who has tasted the joy of knowing God, the joy of His fellowship, nothing can be worse than feeling like God is afar off. But the opposite is true as well, if we are loving our wives as Christ loved the church, we will enjoy the fellowship and the favor of Father

God and we will with our wives experience the joy of our marriages being to the praise of His glory.

Brothers, let's love our wives, living with them in an understanding way, giving honor to them as the weaker vessel, knowing they are heirs of the grace of life with us and longing for our marriages to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church. This is the deepest meaning of marriage. And that is why ultimately the roles of headship and submission are so important. If our marriages are going to tell the truth about Christ and his church, we cannot be indifferent to the meaning of headship and submission.

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