

## **“A Marriage Surrendered to God”**

1 Peter 3:1-7

The theme of this section is Christian submission, and it is all patterned after the submission that Jesus Himself displayed in His earthly life and ministry. He is the perfect example of what a surrendered life truly looks like. In every possible way, God the Son was surrendered to the will of God the Father. Even so, as Christ's disciples, we are to be surrendered to Him in every way.

A life that is surrendered to the lordship of Jesus Christ will have a practical application within a marriage relationship. There is no greater relationship among human beings or one that is more important than marriage. It should come as no surprise then that Satan hates marriage and will do everything he can to destroy it, simply because of the picture that it is of Christ and His church. Marriage is a mysterious and wonderful relationship, a glorious gift God has given, but it is also hard.

**Tim Keller** — *“Modern culture would have you believe that everyone has a soul mate; that romance is the most important part of a successful marriage; that your spouse is there to help you realize your potential; that marriage does not mean forever, but merely for now; and that starting over after a divorce is the best solution to seemingly intractable marriage issues. All those modern-day assumptions are, in one word, wrong.”*

Over the last several decades, marriage has been in a steady decline in our society. The divorce rate is nearly twice as high as it was in 1960. In 1970, 89% of all births were to married persons, but today only 60% are. Prior to 1960, more than 72% of American adults were married, but only around 50% are in 2018. How true it is that we have more information available about marriage

than ever before and yet we have more marital problems and divorces than did those generations before us.

Marriage is more about being the right person than it is finding the right person. It is something that we have to work at, and success doesn't come automatic. And when you add to the mix an unbelieving spouse, it can be especially difficult. Such was the case in Peter's day.

For the third time now in his letter, Peter calls upon his readers to be 'subject.' First, he says that they are to be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake. Then, he says that servants are to be subject to their masters. As we move into the third chapter, you will see that he also calls upon wives to be subject to their own husbands, and lest we think we men are off the hook, he's going to give us some instruction as well.

There are three parties involved in every marriage—the husband, the wife, and God. If I can live as a surrendered disciple in my home, then I can live as a surrendered disciple anywhere. But if I'm not living as a surrendered disciple in my own home, then I really can't live as a surrendered disciple anywhere. And so what Peter says in these verses really gets to the heart of where we live—our homes and our marriages.

(Understanding this passage in its context is important)

Everything that Peter has said about submission in the Christian life is to be seen in light of Christ's own example. Well, here in the third chapter of 1 Peter, the apostle Peter takes up the subject of Christian surrender within the context of marriage. In verses 1-6, Peter addresses Christian wives, and in verse 7, he addresses Christian husbands.

What does a marriage surrendered to God look like?

### **1. The instruction given to WIVES (3:1-6)**

At first glance, perhaps we might be tempted to think Peter isn't being balanced. Why six verses on the role of a wife, and only one verse devoted to the husband?

Remember that these were new Christians. Their living situations were different now that they had trusted Jesus. The wife's position was far more difficult than the position of the husband.

**John MacArthur** — *“In Peter’s day when a wife became a Christian, the potential for difficulty was much greater than it was if the husband first became a believer. In that society when women, who were viewed as inferior to men, became Christians without their husbands also becoming saved, the likelihood of his being embarrassed and shamed by what was viewed as an act of defiance by his wife, was predictable, as was the conflict subsequently generated.”*

If a husband became a Christian, he would automatically bring his wife and family with him into the church. Yet if a wife became a Christian while her husband did not, she was opening herself up to potential conflict.

Peter is well aware of the conflict within the homes of some of these Christian ladies who risked much for Christ's sake. Much in the same way that his words to servants elevated them to a place of dignity, so also do Peter's words to wives recognize their dignity as well. They are not property like the society around them said, but were now daughters of God.

And though many of these women lived with an unbelieving husband, Peter wants them to know that their manner of life could win their spouses over to Christ.

You will notice that Peter's instructions to Christian wives involves three or four imperatives. What does he say?

Be mindful of your actions (1-2)

*“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that 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.”*

The word 'likewise' means in the same manner, or in the same way. And so by using this word in conjunction with the command for wives to be subject to their husbands, he is connecting it with the submission of Christ to His Father, which he has already explained in the preceding verses.

Their willing submission to their own husbands was to be reflective of the way that Jesus Christ was surrendered to the Father's plan. In perfect submission, He went to the cross.

Pay attention to the specific reason that Peter calls upon these wives to be subject to their husbands—“so that if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives.

His instruction has an evangelistic purpose behind it.

As a pastor, there have been countless examples I've come across in the churches that I have served where a wife was married to a man who was not a Christian. Some of you are there now. You are doing your very best to represent

Christ in your home to your children, but you get no support from your husband because he is lost. Peter has a word for you here in these verses.

He says that the way you live your life, the way that you love out your faith, it has a spiritual impact whether you can see it or not. Through your actions, your devotion, through your surrendered spirit, you 'flesh out' the gospel before the eyes of your husband. In fact, some of you men who are here this morning have this very testimony. It was the faithful example of your wife who brought you to faith in Jesus Christ.

(Illustration of "Mismatched Marriage," by Leslie Strobel)

I read a "Focus on the Family" article where Lee gave his testimony of how it was Leslie that introduced him to Jesus, whom he would set out to disprove, only to be saved:

*"My wife, Leslie, and I lived a fairy-tale life. A home in an exciting, upscale neighborhood. Two beautiful children. The exhilaration and challenge of climbing the corporate ladder. Sure, we had issues to work through in our marriage, but our relationship remained strong and secure. Our deep love for each other smoothed over a lot of rough edges. Then unexpectedly, someone came between us. It wasn't an affair. It wasn't the resurfacing of an old flame. That someone was none other than God himself.*

*Leslie announced one day that, after a long period of searching, she had decided to become a follower of Jesus Christ. To me, this was awful news! "Look, if you need that kind of crutch," I sneered at her, "if you can't face life without believing in a make-believe god, then go ahead. But don't give the church any of our money, and don't try to get me to go anywhere on Sunday mornings." Nice guy, huh?*

*That was the beginning of what turned out to be a turbulent, emotion-churning phase of our marriage. Our values began to clash, our attitudes started to conflict, and our*

*priorities and desires were suddenly at odds. More than once I let my frustration with Leslie's relationship with Christ spill over into a tirade of shouting and door slamming.*

*Needless to say, I wasn't making it easy for my wife to grow in her new faith. To Leslie, Christianity wasn't a crutch, it was a source of wisdom, comfort and joy unlike anything she'd ever experienced. And she couldn't share these experiences with the man she loved the most! Every time she tried to help me understand, I would ridicule her or ignore her pleas. Leslie later said this experience was like visiting some beautiful and romantic city, drinking in its wonderful sights and sounds, but knowing I was neither interested in going with her nor hearing about it when she got back. It was the first time since we met as teenagers that we couldn't experience something together.*

*As for me, I wasn't sure I wanted to continue experiencing anything with my wife. I felt like a victim of bait and switch. I had married one Leslie — the fun-loving, risk-taking Leslie — and she was being transformed into someone different. I wanted the old Leslie back!*

*Everything culminated one hot, humid day while I was mowing the lawn after another of our arguments. "That's it," I muttered as I plowed through her flower bed. "This isn't what I signed up for! Maybe it's time to think about getting out of this marriage."*

*But before it was too late, Leslie learned how to live her faith in a way that began to attract me rather than repel me. She learned how to grow and even flourish in her relationship with Christ, despite discouragement from me. Though Leslie would admit that she made mistakes, she was the one who restored equilibrium to our relationship."*

Eventually, Lee Strobel came to faith in Jesus Christ, and it was the surrendered life of Leslie that eventually brought him face to face with the Lord.

Perhaps that gives some of you hope this morning, to hear firsthand of how God uses wives to reach their husbands.

Be intentional with your appearance (3-4)

*“Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.”*

You'll notice that Peter makes a distinction between outer beauty and inner beauty. Notice the word ‘adorning.’

**“Adorning”** —*the word is ‘kosmos’ and means decoration or arrangement; same word to describe the heavens*

The word referred to anything that was used to beautify or decorate. Luke used the term to describe how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones (Luke 21:25). Paul used the word to describe the ordered universe (Acts 17:24).

Peter uses it here to describe the way that a woman orders her physical appearance. Now, you need to understand that he is not forbidding the use of cosmetics. Some have wanted to use this as a proof text against a woman wearing makeup or jewelry. That’s not what this means at all.

Peter’s point is that those who substitute an emphasis on their external appearance for the lack of cultivating their inner character have chosen the wrong priority. (Swindoll)

He is saying to these Christian wives that there must be a proper balance. And this is a very important principle for Christian ladies to remember, especially in a culture that says outward appearance is everything.

Cosmetics is the work of a moment; character is the work of a lifetime. A woman can be beautiful on the outside but rotten on the inside. And when a woman, or a man for that matter, stands before Jesus Christ, don’t expect Him to be

impressed with the designer labels you wore. What matters is the inner beauty of a Christlike spirit that manifests itself over time.

Be submissive in your attitude (5-6)

*“For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.”*

Peter calls his reader’s attention to the ‘holy women’ of old who hoped in God. This is not the first time that Peter connects personal holiness with a person’s hope. When Christ is my hope, holiness is not a chore. By hoping in God, through turning their full attention to Him as their source of strength, these women of old were able to then conduct themselves in humility and submission.

He uses the specific example of Sarah. I know we talk a lot about Abraham, and rightfully so. He is held in Scripture as an example of what it means to be justified by faith. God called, Abraham obeyed. God promised, Abraham believed. He is the father of faith.

Have you ever thought about God’s call of Abraham from Sarah’s perspective? If he is the father of faith, she is the mother. Think about it. One day, Abram comes home to his wife and says, “Sarai, God appeared to me in a vision and said it’s time to move.”

“Okay. Where are we going?” Don’t know. “Okay. How are we going to get there?” Don’t know.

(That one has since played itself out over and over. A man doesn’t know where he’s going, but don’t tell him that...)

Or, how about later on in their life, he says to Sarah, “God appeared to me and said that this time next year we’re going to have a son.” Both of them were far past the age of bearing children, but they stepped out in obedient faith.

**Hebrews 11:11 — “By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.”**

For nine months, Sarah carried Isaac in the womb. Isaac was every much hers as he was Abraham’s. And think about the faith that she displayed when Abraham says that he has to do the unthinkable—offer Isaac up as a sacrifice to the Lord.

Scripture is silent about Sarah’s involvement, whether or not she knew, but we have no reason to believe that she was kept in the dark, or was not as willing to do what God commanded as her husband was.

Peter’s point is that Sarah was submissive to Abraham, for which she is upheld as an example of virtue.

## **2. The instruction given to HUSBANDS (3:7)**

Since this is an instruction for Christian marriage, and since there are two equal partners in a marriage relationship, we will see that Peter now instructs Christian husbands. Peter says, “Likewise, husbands...” Or, “In the same way, in like manner.” Again, keep the context in mind. Peter is once again calling attention to the example of Jesus.

Just as wives have responsibilities in marriage, so also do Christian husbands have an equally important role to fulfill. How is a Christian man supposed to relate to his wife? Peter gives these men at least three instructions.

### Be sensitive to her needs (7a)

*“Likewise, husbands, live your wives...”*

This means much more than sharing the same address. The idea being expressed here is that a husband is to live in close, intimate proximity with his wife. Sometimes, it is easy for husbands and wives to live under the same roof but be miles apart mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. It is easy for men to substitute making a living for making a life. There is a big difference. A man is responsible for cultivating intimacy with his wife. Rather than being an insensitive clod, he is to be sensitive and fully aware of her needs.

Rather than spending everything you have at work, make sure you leave plenty in the tank for when you get home. Be present in both mind and body. Far too many men want to ‘check out’ when they get home, but that is where their real work begins.

### Be knowledgeable in her honor (7b)

*“...in an understanding way...”*

Peter calls on husbands to live with their wives in an understanding way. Literally, a husband is to live with his wife in a way that is according to knowledge. He is speaking of a deep understanding and a heartfelt appreciation for who she is as a unique person. It involves perceiving her most intimate desires and discerning her most serious concerns.

He is to be considerate and thoughtful, listens to his wife from the heart, and shares honest and meaningful communication with her. A husband is to know his wife—her fears and concerns, her needs, her hopes and her greatest desires.

God intends for a man to be the thermostat in his home, for he sets the emotional and spiritual temperature. But your wife, however, is the thermometer. She lets you know what the temperature is. And men, some of you need to know that its getting pretty cold.

Peter's instruction here goes much deeper than surface issues. He is calling on Christian husbands to know their wives in every possible way as an equal.

#### Be appreciative of her value (7c)

*"...showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."*

When Peter refers to the woman as the weaker vessel, he is not referring to inferiority. She is not weaker in character or intelligence, because let's just be honest, guys. Our wives are smarter than we are.

In fact, studies show that women are often more intelligent and perceptive than men. I know that when you look at that guy sitting next to you, you find that hard to believe.

#### The Differences Between Men and Women (Joe McGee):

- the average woman speaks 20,000 words a day, while the average man speaks 7,000, which is why 84% of domestic violence is a man hitting a woman, not a woman hitting a man; not because he's stronger but because he ran out of words
- when a man is in his deepest sleep at night, 70% of his brain shuts down; 90% of a woman's is still active

- women have two 'x' chromosomes, men have only one which is why it looks like we got dressed this morning back here in the church's costume closet; we only see the rainbow, we don't see 'mauve' (Roy G. Biv)
- women have 180 degree peripheral vision, while men have long range vision; four times more men are broadsided in an accident than women (men literally can't see it coming!)

Guys, your wives are smarter than you. There's a reason that they live longer than we do. And I've got photographic evidence to prove my point...

When Peter refers to a woman as a 'weaker' vessel, he's merely acknowledging the physical advantage that a man often has on a woman. It is as if he is saying, "Guys, don't throw your weight around!" (illus. of expensive 'vessel')

Some of you are at each other's throats in your marriage because you fail to recognize that God made you opposites and for good reason. Husbands and wives are to complement one another. Equal, but different.

**Genesis 2:18—“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him...So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”**

Jesus upheld this ideal in Matthew 19. We live in a culture that is all too quick to surrender marriage whenever the road gets tough. Instead of surrendering your marriage in defeat, husbands and wives are to surrender their marriage in faith.

If your marriage is on the rocks today, let me encourage you to surrender it to the Rock of Ages. Some of you precious ladies live with an unconverted man. The way that you carry yourself and display your character goes a long way, perhaps even further than you realize. It may just be that God uses you to lead him to the cross.

Men, love and honor your wives for the priceless treasure that they are. A godly woman is a rare and special jewel. Consider how valuable:

**Proverbs 31:10—“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.”**

The way she carries her person:

*11—The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain.*

*12—She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.*

The way she works with her hands:

*13—She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands.*

*14—She is like the merchant ships, she brings her food from afar.*

*15—She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants.*

*16—She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard.*

*17—She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms.*

*18—She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night.*

The way she creates a home:

*19—She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle.*

*20—She extends her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.*

*21—She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet.*

The way she adorns her adorns herself:

*22—She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.*

*23—Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.*

*24—She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants.*

*25—Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come.*

The way she speaks:

*26—She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.*

*27—She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.*

The way her family praises her:

*28—Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:*

*29—“Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.”*

The way she leaves her mark:

*30—Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.*

*31—Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.*

Perhaps most important is the picture that marriage is of the relationship that Jesus Christ has with His bride, the church. He loved His bride so much that He laid down His life for her on the cross. He shed His blood so that we might be forgiven of our sin and given eternal life. He rose again from the grave, and one of these days He is going to return for His bride. And we will be with Him forever!

Do you know Him personally? Do you belong to the bride of Christ? If not, repent and trust in Him for salvation.

*“Father, we thank You for the gift of marriage and for the spiritual picture that it represents. Enable those who are wives to submit to their husbands, as unto the Lord. And enable those of us who are husbands to love our wives as Christ loved the church—He laid down His life for her. May we be surrendered to God within our homes! Amen.”*