

Submission, Influence, and Lasting Beauty

1 Peter 3:1-6
May 28th, 2023

1. A godly wife's _____ (3:1-2)
 - a. What submission does not mean:
 - i. Putting a husband in the place of _____
 - ii. Giving up _____ thought
 - iii. Giving up efforts to _____ her husband
 - iv. Giving in to every _____ of her husband
 - v. It is not based on lesser _____ or _____
 - vi. It does not imply _____ of person
 - b. What submission does mean:
 - i. An inner quality of _____ that affirms her husband's leadership.
2. Her beauty is _____ and _____, not external and fleeting. (3:3-4)
3. _____ example of hope in God (3:5-6)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on 1 Peter 3:1-6

1. How does 1 Peter 3:7 show us that submission does not spring from an inequality between men and women?
2. Is submission in marriage merely for marriages with unbelievers as a form of evangelism? (See Col. 3:18 and Eph. 5:22-33)
3. Do the follow up passages for husbands in 1 Pet. 3:7, Col. 3:19, and Eph. 5:25, 28-29, 33 settle some concerns that a wife might have about submission? In what way?
4. Were any of the statements about what submission does not mean helpful for you? Would you add anything to that list?
5. How can intergenerational relationships in the local church help a wife who wants to learn how to practically apply these principles in her marriage? (See Titus 2:3-5)
6. How might women in the church today be tempted to measure beauty in competition with others?
7. What women in your life come to mind when you think of internal beauty with a gentle and quiet spirit? What do you appreciate about them?
8. Keeping in mind that a strong woman like Sarah is used as an example, what does it mean to have a gentle and quiet spirit? Sarah was under no illusions regarding Abraham's shortcomings, so why would she call him "lord"? How can married readers apply Sarah's example to their own speech and behavior today?

Some questions partially adapted from *Knowing the Bible: 1 Peter* by Crossway

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Big idea: A godly wife's submission can influence her unbelieving husband and demonstrates that her hope is in God.

Intro

Two passages are hard to teach in 1 Peter – the instruction to slaves and the instruction to wives.

It's not because they are confusing.

It's hard because we know they have been abused. It's hard because there are inevitable "what ifs" that can make the message become unwieldy but if left out leave it open to be misunderstood.

A major complaint by many today outside the church and some inside the church is that the Bible is oppressive to women and it was oppressive to slaves. They would point to passages like this in 1 Peter that instruct those groups to be submissive.

The historical reality is that there was explosive growth in the early church in those two groups. If the message was oppressive to them, why was it so attractive to them?

What women and slaves found in the gospel and in the community of believers is that they were known and valued, regardless of their low social status at the time. They were seen as image bearers of God, adopted into God's family, able to serve and contribute with their gifts, able to learn with everyone else.

1. A godly wife's **submission** (3:1-2)
 - a. "In the same way"
 - i. Thinking about behavior for the purpose of influence
 1. **1 Peter 2:11-12** Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. ¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.
 - ii. The general call for all believers to be subject
 1. **1 Peter 2:13a** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution
 2. All of us are in complex arrangements of relationships where we have responsibilities and, in some cases, authority.
 - a. None of us are isolated or all powerful.
 - b. You might have some employees that line up under you, but you might have 5 layers of bosses above you that you answer to. You might own your own business but you are bound by the government. You might be in leadership within the church but you are overseen by a board of elders. You might be on the elder board but you are mutually accountable to the other elders. On and on we could go.
 - c. A man who hears this passage should not first think, "is my wife doing this?" But "am I submitting to all the various authorities in my life with a glad and willing heart?"
3. Matt Smethurst – It's just as Christlike to submit as it is to lead.

- a. **John 4:34** Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.
 - b. **Phil 2:8** – he was obedient to the point of death
 - iii. Suffering like Jesus
 - 1. As an example of suffering innocently, graciously, confidently (2:21-22)
 - 2. Entrusting yourself to the shepherd and guardian of your soul when being mistreated. (2:25)
- b. You wives...
 - i. Implies that the word is speaking directly to the women, not that it is going through their husbands. Not "you husbands tell your wives..."
 - ii. There's a reason that there was explosive growth in the early centuries of the church in two groups – women and slaves.
 - 1. So much so that Roman elites mocked and despised Christians because of it.
 - 2. Women and slaves were treated with dignity as image bearers of God and valued in the church when they often weren't outside the church.
 - 3. Modern readers might look at this passage and object that it feels oppressive to women. Original readers had the opposite experience.
 - iii. Karen Jobes – two points probably not lost on the husband – 1 – this apostle of Jesus Christ instructs the Christian slave and wife, a role that is normally the prerogative of the husband. 2 – this direct instruction to slaves and wives implies that both have a measure of moral responsibility and choice unprecedented in Greek thought. The husband or slave master cannot object, since Peter does indeed affirm the man's authority. On the other hand, he also sees in this affirmation that his wife's or slave's submission is motivated no longer by the expectations of Roman society or the principles of Greek moral philosophy but instead by the authority and example of the crucified and resurrected Christ. In a masterful move, Peter both upholds and subverts the social order.
 - 1. Shields Christianity from the accusation that it is a social evil but also clearly motivated by evangelistic intent.
 - iv. Voluntary submission is in view here. Husbands do not have the responsibility to ensure that wives submit to them.
- c. Be submissive
 - i. Voluntary yielding to legitimate leadership.
 - ii. In a moment we'll consider several things submission doesn't mean. But it's a mistake to shift the emphasis of a passage to what it doesn't mean rather than focus on what it does mean.
- d. To your own husbands
 - i. Not every woman under the authority of every man. This is the sphere of the home that is in mind.
 - ii. Particular focus is on women whose husbands do not know the Lord. (even if any are disobedient to the word), but clearly not limited to that as "even if" implies. Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 have similar commands that aren't in the context of unbelieving husbands so we can't say this is only applying to evangelistic marriages.
- e. What submission does not mean:

- i. Putting a husband in the place of Christ
 1. **1 Peter 2:13** – Submit yourselves *for the Lord's sake* - affirms that the Christian life is lived for God as follow Christ's steps (2:21)
 2. Similarly **Eph. 6:1** – children obey your parents in the Lord
 3. A wife is first and foremost under the Lord's authority. She doesn't go through her husband to get to God. She doesn't follow her husband instead of God.
- ii. Giving up independent thought
 1. Is there an assumed independent thought going on in this passage?
 - a. Absolutely! Wife is a Christian and the husband is not.
 2. Assumes that the wife has pondered, considered, understood, and respond to God's word herself even though her husband has not.
 3. Doesn't affirm a missionary dating/marriage effort. Only speaks to a wife who finds herself in this situation of being married to someone who isn't following Jesus.
 - a. May be that she came to Christ after the marriage began (likely in the 1st century context Peter was writing to)
 - b. Can because he initially said he was a Christian but it became clear he wasn't after the wedding (common)
 - c. Or maybe she made an unwise decision to marry someone who doesn't share her faith in Christ but want to know how to live now.
 4. There is still room within this framework for a wife to have an independent mind – to think, consider, and disagree with her husband.
 - a. Men, you can't use this passage to pressure your wife to believe everything you believe, because it's clear that the wives in this passage don't share the same beliefs as their husbands.
- iii. Giving up efforts to influence her husband
 1. She is encouraged to influence her husband to Christ. The passage simply shows her the best way to do that – more actions than words although words will come into play because someone can't understand the gospel apart from words.
 2. Sam Storms - Peter does not mean that these women should never speak at all, but that their godly and loving behavior will likely be more effective in persuading their husbands of the truth of the gospel than any prolonged verbal argumentation
 3. Not the kind of wife that makes her husband want to live on the corner of a roof because of her constant nagging
 - a. **Proverbs 21:9 (and 25:24)** It is better to live in a corner of a roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman.
 4. Notice it does not say, "submit so that your abusive husband will stop being abusive."
 - a. If your husband abuses you physically, constantly berates you verbally, threatens, intimidates ... ask for help. We'll value your privacy and safety.

- iv. Giving in to every **demand** of her husband
 - 1. Same caveats to submission as in the section on government because they are general in authority dynamics
 - a. We must disobey when commanded to do what God forbids or forbidden to do what God commands
 - i. Remember that the first priority of submission is to the Lord.
 - ii. Must maintain chaste (morally pure) behavior so can't follow husband into sin.
 - b. We may disobey when the decisions are foolish or unjust.
 - i. The example I gave a few weeks ago to support this was a marriage example in the OT with Abigail and Nabal in 1 Samuel 25.
 - c. We may disobey when they overreach their sphere of authority
 - i. For example, she obviously has independent thoughts and beliefs because she is confessing Christ and he is not.
 - ii. Plutarch -for peter's readers the wives were expected to adopt the religion of their husbands in the Greco-Roman world. Plutarch said, "a wife should not acquire her own friends, but should make her husband's friends her own. The gods are the first and most significant friends. For this reason, it is proper for a wife to recognize only those gods whom her husband worships and to shut the door to superstitious cults and strange superstitions."
- v. It is not based on lesser **intelligence** or **competence**
 - 1. The woman in Prov. 31 is highly competent
 - a. She makes great things with her hands, her husband trusts her, she considers a field and buys it and plants a vineyard from the money, cares for the poor, has a business selling clothes, speaks wisdom.
 - b. She isn't a micromanaged woman either.
 - 2. The issue isn't intelligence but order.
- vi. It does not imply **inequality** of person
 - 1. Schreiner – those who argue that a different function implies inequality betray a secular worldview that identifies worth with stature and the exercise of authority.
 - 2. Both are equally made in the image of God
 - a. **Genesis 1:27** God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
 - 3. Both are equal in Christ
 - a. **Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
 - b. In the next passage when Peter speaks to husbands, the emphasis is that they are to treat their wives as coheirs of eternal life.

4. Submission isn't a matter of value, worth, or equality. It has to do with functions and roles.
- f. What submission does mean:
- i. An inner quality of ***gentleness*** that affirms her husband's leadership.
 1. A willingness to follow his lead for the family.
 2. To voluntarily place yourself under his leadership and empower his leadership.
2. Her beauty is ***internal*** and ***lasting***, not external and fleeting. (3:3-4)
- a. Hair, jewelry, and clothing were all ways to display wealth and draw attention.
 - i. There are statues with elaborate hairstyle from the 1st century that give examples.
 - ii. They weren't forbidden in and of themselves.
 - iii. One author, David Helm, described how some people read this the way Amelia Bedelia would. She's the fictional character in children's books who took everything she was told to do literally — woodenly. So she would put real sponges in the sponge cake she was baking or pitch a tent by throwing it into the woods. An Amelia Bedelia interpretation of this verse would leave women without any braiding of hair, wearing of jewelry, or wearing of clothing. Peter is not advocating any such thing. His concern is one of emphasis, as any discerning reader will understand.
 - iv. The father in the parable of the prodigal son welcomed his son back with the best robe and a ring — so attractive, even expensive, clothing and jewelry isn't the problem in itself.
 - b. Rather than concern is that a woman should not focus on her outward adornment as that which will have the most worth or even the most influence.
 - i. Instagram, tiktok, and whatever other social media fad comes next only makes this worse. The toll on the mental health of teen girls and young women in particular is staggering.
 - ii. How exhausting to feel like you have to compete with online women who are already pretty and then made impossibly beautiful with filters on their phones and expensive clothing given to them by sponsors.
 - c. The hidden person (meaning, internal qualities made external through actions) is imperishable (lasting).
 - i. He highlights gentleness and quietness.
 - ii. Gentleness was to characterize all believers.
 1. **Matthew 5:5** "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.
 2. **Matthew 11:29** "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.
 3. It is to be humble, considerate, kind, friendly.
 - iii. Quietness has to do with tranquil, peaceful, at rest.
 1. Not incompatible with being extroverted, talkative, funny, energetic.
 2. Juan Sanchez said it's the quietness of peace not the loudness of war.
 - iv. These qualities have great worth in the sight of God
 1. Precious — great worth — comes from the financial realm, indicating that such godly qualities are "costly". Peter likely used this word to distinguish these qualities from the

expensive clothing and ornamentation desired by women in the Greco-roman world.
Schreiner

2. **1 Samuel 16:7** But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

3. **Sarah's** example of hope in God (3:5-6)

- a. Sarah was the wife of Abraham that you can read about in Genesis 12 and following. The other "holy women" probably refer to the women in those narratives that marry into the family – Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah.
 - i. Sarah is real in Genesis – she doubts, she pushes back at Abraham, she takes initiative, she sees God fulfill promises, and she follows her husband's lead in some difficult circumstances.
- b. The most important descriptor of them – and of the women this passage speaks to – is that they hoped in God.
- c. When did Sarah obey Abraham and call him Lord?
 - i. **Genesis 18:12** Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"
 - ii. Talking to herself after being told that she and Abraham would have a son even in her old age.
 - iii. Even in a casual aside she was honoring her husband.
- d. Commends the women who do what is right without being frightened by any fear. Fear of what? Who?
 - i. Fear of intimidation (LSB)
 - ii. What if he runs over me? What if I don't get something I really want? What if I think he is making a bad decision that will affect all of us?
 - iii. This shows that God gets that fear – He understands you and wants to encourage you to lay the fear aside and entrust yourself to Him, which is why this fits on the end of ch 2 with the encouragement to entrust yourself to Him who judges righteously, trust in the Shepherd and Guardian of your soul, hope in God.



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