

FIRST PETER 3:1-6 "In All Things Honor Christ With Your Lives."

1PE 3:1-6 "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

Up to this point Peter has been talking about submission. In verses 13-17 he spoke of Christians submitting to governing authorities. In verses 18-25 he spoke to slaves encouraging them to submit to their masters, even masters who may not have been very kind. And now he addresses wives and gives them some godly advice in the way of submitting to their husbands.

Now, admittedly this is an area that has been abused, misunderstood and taken out of context by not only the world but, unfortunately, even some of those in the church. From this and other portions of Scripture some have arrived at the conclusion that women are second class citizens and should keep quiet and march when they're given orders.

The word submissive certainly carries with it the idea of being obedient. But, as we'll see this is not a one way street. Husbands too have an obligation to their wives which we'll also look at. So, you guys aren't going to get off the hook this morning.

But, it's important to know that it's not a matter of some burdensome command given to wives by God, and it's not a similar command given to husbands with the idea of keeping both parties in line, like some cop mediating a domestic disturbance. This is not why Peter gives such instruction.

The Holy Spirit is giving us God's way of bringing love and stability to the institution He created in the Garden of Eden, known as marriage, with the first man and woman, Adam and Eve.

There are those who would take the beginning of verse one, and make the connection to the previous verses concerning slaves, by suggesting that just as slaves were to serve hand and foot to their masters without complaint, wives should consider themselves as slaves to their masters or husbands.

I mean look at verse one. "Wives, in the same way". Same way as what? The same way as the slaves who are to submit to their masters, right?

The problem with that is that there are some obvious differences between wives relating to their husbands and slaves relating to their masters. Well, they're supposed to be obvious.

God's intention is that a wife and a husband are to compliment each other. One is not the King while the other is the lowly servant. And so when Peter says "in the same way" he does not mean in exactly the same way as the previous example, except in motive. And that's the key.

The slave was to submit with all respect doing it as unto the Lord, whether the master was kind or cruel. But it is born out of a love and submission to Christ who is our Master and Lord, and who has loved us unto death.

In the same way the wife is to submit to her husband with respect, doing all as unto the Lord. But let's get into this idea of a wife submitting to her husband. I know that the militant women's movement would have us believe that some male chauvinist dreamed up this notion, but that's simply not the case, though it was probably a male chauvinist who twisted the truth about this area of submission.

But, when it comes to roles in a marriage it is the Creator of man Who is the One who instituted marriage and who knew what was best for that marriage, especially in light of sin entering into the world.

We need only go back to GEN 3:16. To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

God set it up so that the one who is responsible to God Himself for how he rules his family is the husband. Though Gen.3:16 is set in the context of judgment for sinful behavior, this is not necessarily

an exclusive punishment for the woman. I know some women may think so, but it was intended by God to keep order in a society which now had to deal with sinful ambitions.

But what has happened because of sin, is that some men see this as an opportunity to dominate instead of taking the privilege and honor of ruling well and lovingly in that marriage relationship, with the idea of helping his wife to want to willingly submit to the authority God has given him in that relationship.

Dr. Hiebert in his commentary on Peter very wisely sees how this is to work. He says, "To operate effectively, the home -- like every human institution -- must have a head, someone who is the final authority. God assigned that position to the husband."

But, here is where some men miss the intent of that authority. Dr. Hiebert continues: "But Scripture and human history alike confirm that the moment we divorce the thought of subjection from that of affection, we have lost its God-given significance."

In other words, to rule without the love of Christ is to rule in your own sinful strength. We'll touch more on this as we get to verse 7, but let's return to what the Holy Spirit is encouraging Christian wives to do.

1PE 3:1-2 "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives."

Here Peter is talking about a situation which was very common in the first century and is somewhat common today, though not in quite the same way. He's talking to Christian wives who may have had a husband who didn't believe. Notice that Peter doesn't encourage the wife to leave this guy but to submit to him.

Why? Well marriage is not just for Christians. Though an unbeliever doesn't have the Spirit of God indwelling them through faith in Christ that doesn't change God's order for marriage. And so, it's certainly possible for a believer to be united to an unbeliever.

That is not what God desires for an unmarried Christian to seek out as we see in 2CO 6:14 "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

But, there will be cases where a marriage of two unbelievers find that one may come to faith in Christ while the other rejects. But in the case of a believing wife she is still to fulfill her role and ministry as a wife before God even if her husband isn't a believer. This was much more difficult for a woman in the first century in the Roman Empire.

Women had few rights in the eyes of Rome. They were just a step above slaves and in some cases on the same level. It was Christianity which liberated women from the abuses of a system which placed them as lowly creatures.

Jesus Christ emancipated women, just as he did men, from the bondage of sin and then placed both groups into one; the Body of Christ, being joint heirs of the Kingdom of God. No longer was a man to treat a woman as something less than an equal as regards to their standing before God in Christ.

This didn't mean that their roles would be the same, it just meant that the Christian woman, like the Christian slave, was a child of God. Paul brings this out when writing to Philemon who owned a slave by the name of Onesimus. Onesimus ran away and found Christ through Paul's ministry.

And now Paul is about to send him back, but he puts this particular slave's salvation into perspective for Philemon.

PHM 1:15-16 "Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good - 16 no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord."

In Christ both master and slave were on equal footing. Both were indwelt with the Spirit, both had access to the throne of God through Christ. Both had the promise of an eternal inheritance. And both called Jesus Savior and Lord.

And so too for the woman. But you can imagine how that flew in the first century where women were viewed as inferior to men by law.

William Barclay writes: "In Greek civilization the duty of the woman was to remain indoors and to be obedient to her husband.

It was the sign of a good woman that she must see as little, hear as little and ask as little as possible."

He continues: "Under Roman law a woman had no rights. In law she remained forever a child. When she was under her father she was under *patria potestas*, (Latin) *the father's power*, which gave the father the right even of life and death over her; and when she married she passed equally into the power of her husband. She was entirely subject to her husband and completely at his mercy."

Now, you take two pagan people in a marriage under Roman law who worship the gods of Rome and now all of a sudden the wife in that marriage becomes a believer in Christ and her husband doesn't.

This is not simply now an inconvenience, this had some serious problems for the believing wife, especially if she wanted to share her faith and her husband didn't want any part of it. And Peter recognizes this. The husband could have created a lot of problems for his wife, legally.

But Peter, always the evangelist, encourages the wife in such a situation to take heart because God desires to use her to be a witness for her husband. The end of verse one..... "they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives."

Won over without words? Yeah. You ever hear the expression, 'one picture is worth a thousand words'? That's what Peter is saying to these wives and to wives today who find themselves in a similar situation. Let your husband see your salvation.

Dr. Hiebert makes the comment: "If the husband will not yield to the authoritative spoken word of the gospel, he may be reached by the wife's silent demonstrations of its transforming power in her daily conduct. Instead of trying to coax and argue her husband into becoming a Christian, she will be more effective by quietly living out its saving power before him. His conscience will be forced to admit the presence of a divine power in her faith that he has often mocked. It is her translation of the gospel into life -- right before the man's eyes -- which proves a telling witness."

This doesn't mean that the believing wife may not get an opportunity to share the word of God, but what it means is that the opportunity will be paved by loving submission which loves even

when the husband expects an attitude from her because he hasn't accepted her faith in Christ. But instead he sees the love of Christ.

2 ..."when they see the purity and reverence of your lives." The NAS puts it, "as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.", while the NKJV puts it, "when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear."

The idea here is that the wife has been called by God to demonstrate His love in her life in the marriage whether her husband is a believer or not. Her behavior is to be chaste. The Greek word is literally translated clean and means innocent and modest.

This would be the opposite of sinful and selfish. And this would also tell us that even in a marriage we must obey God rather than men if that wife, for example, is called upon to sin in that marriage by her husband.

None the less, submission to her husband's authority is her call by God. And in the case of an unbelieving husband this submission may very well lead to his salvation. That should be an encouragement for any wife in that situation. Granted, this is not a guarantee of that but the Lord can certainly use her life as the only opportunity he may ever have of tasting the love and grace of Christ.

Just as Christ was self-less as He stood in our place for the penalty of our sins, wives are to be showing a selflessness pertaining to marriage.

William Barclay puts it this way when talking about submissiveness. "It is not a spineless submission that is meant but, as someone has finely put it, a voluntary selflessness. It is the submission which is based on the death of pride and the desire to serve. It is the submission not of fear but of perfect love."

Okay, so a believing wife has an unbelieving husband. How does she attract him to Christ? Verse 3 "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. 4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

The temptation is to attract her husband to her faith by attracting him to herself. Not the inner self, but the outer self. Peter warns

against this. He talks about the beauty which Christ gives to a believer as opposed to the beauty of the world which passes away.

3 "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes." Oh, you ladies are in trouble. You know some have taken this verse to be a prohibition of such things. This isn't the case. Peter isn't suggesting that women stop putting their hair up or wearing jewelry or wearing clothes.

He's simply putting into perspective what kind of beauty should be utilized to attract her husband to Christ. There are Christian groups who oppose any outward beauty and try to be unattractive on purpose. And so they wear no make-up, clothing with no color, other than black and white and shades of gray, and their hair is hid under a bonnet, in some cases.

Now, don't misunderstand me here. There's nothing ungodly about presenting yourself like that if that's what you choose to do. But that should never be used to suggest that you're more righteous in the eyes of God because you want to look like that.

The problem Peter is addressing here in our text has to do with excesses. Peter has nothing against braided hair as such. But here the idea of braiding was an elaborate process of taking the hair and forming it into intricate patterns which took a great deal of time. It wasn't something the woman could do on her own. It cost a great deal of money as you paid a specialist to spend hours going through this process.

Wearing gold jewelry again speaks of excesses. There's nothing wrong with wearing jewelry. But Peter wants these women to understand that you don't need to go to excesses to attract your husband into the kingdom using worldly means.

It's a good thing for women to be attractive for their husbands. And that will vary between people, but keep in mind that the husband really does respond to his wife's inner beauty which should not be neglected for the outward beauty only which we're so tempted to accentuate.

What would be the point of dressing up in your finest dress and putting on your finest jewelry when your attitude is contentious? How will that effect your husband's attitude when he only wants peace in the house and instead he's got a beautiful looking but argumentative wife?

PRO 21:19 "Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife."

PRO 25:24 "Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife."

Now, I know this works both ways. But our text is talking about the wife. And her role is one which should have the proper attitude accompanying that role, especially before an unbelieving husband.

A believing husband can and should be patient with his wife when she's not having the best day. Love is to cover a multitude of sins. But an unbelieving husband may not always have the patience to deal with sin.

4 "Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

What is this inner self, or as the NAS puts it, "the hidden person of the heart? Paul alludes to this in 2CO 4:16 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."

Essentially it's the new you in Christ. And now, in Christ, you are a new creature fit for His kingdom because we now are clothed in His righteousness. And so Peter is saying that this inner self, this new creature in Christ, should be the one taking center stage to honor the Lord so that the husband, in this case, may clearly see Christ at work in your members.

The inner should effect the outer in such a way where the inner is seen. Again, Paul brings this out in a practical way when writing to the Romans.

ROM 12:1-2 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual, (Or reasonable), act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

This is obviously not limited to wives, but includes everyone who is a believer in Christ. Our entire lives should be an act of worship before our God and this is what Peter wants these wives to see. In

other words, worship God by being a wife who submits to your husband in the love of Christ.

Peter says this is the “unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.”

The phrase "unfading beauty" is better translated "imperishable quality" as the NAS puts it. The idea is to contrast the outward beauty which is perishable with that quality which will last forever.

That is what God places great worth in. We don't want to measure the standard of a gentle and quiet spirit according to man's evaluation but we want to know what God says of the matter and we need to know that God deems it precious in His sight when we walk according to His ways in the power of His Spirit.

This is what the believing wife is being told regarding her unbelieving husband as well as the other situation of two believing spouses. In either case the inner beauty should manifest itself for the sake of the relationship which by its very nature is a picture of the relationship of God with man in intimate communion.

In a marriage relationship the two become one. In Christ we are one in the Spirit. We are bound to our loving God. Christ is in us and we in Him by faith.

Now to drive his point home Peter uses the example of the O.T. women who followed the Lord by faith.

1 Peter 3:5-6 ⁵ For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; ⁶ just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

Peter says, 'you want to make yourself beautiful to your husband and to God? Consider the godly women of the O.T. What does Peter say about these women? They put their hope in God.

This can be a tall order for a woman who has an unbelieving husband. When your situation is not ideal it can be hard to trust that God is in total control of your situation and that you can count on Him to be there for you. The temptation is to try and solve the situation in your own strength.

Unfortunately, this can also be a tall order when both husband and wife know Christ, and the husband does not take his responsibility

to love and respect his wife, seriously. This places a burden there that undermines the ministry of the wife as she desires to submit to God in that relationship.

But Peter says you need to trust God in all things especially during those times when the situation is beyond your control, as is the case with an unbelieving, or an unreasonable believing, husband. Your part in that situation is to honor God and in the process God will honor you. That may or may not be seeing the unbelieving spouse come to Christ, but we must still hope in God.

But Peter says, that in the process of hoping in God, the O.T. women used to make themselves beautiful. The NKJV and the NAS use the expression of adorning themselves as they put their hope in God. The idea here is they put on the righteousness of Christ as they trusted the Lord.

Peter wants these women to do the same. Paul talks about this in Rom.13:14 "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."
(Or the flesh).

The enemy would love to see a household in upheaval, but God is able to empower us to clothe ourselves with Christ to the degree that our victory is evident as we live for Him and honor Him and are used by Him in the process to Him glory.

And that's to take place in a marriage relationship as well. The power of sin is not to rule in earthly relationships we have. Christ is to rule and reign in our hearts.

But Peter reintroduces the subject of submission. In verse 5 we read ..."They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Their beauty came in fulfilling their role in marriage which was to submit to the authority God gave their husbands. In the case of Sarah she obeyed Abraham and called her master or lord as other translations have it.

You mean to tell me that you have to call your husband master? No. This was a cultural politeness and sign of respect in those days. It's not unlike a child showing respect by calling his mom or dad sir when answering them.

But even that is cultural to an extent. You'll find that sort of response more in the deep south than you would in N.Y. city. Little Billy is asked to clean up his room by his dad and he may answer, Yes sir.

In other parts of the country he may answer differently in just as respectful a way. Okay, dad. Sarah may have called Abraham lord, but in our society a woman may say that my husband is the head of our house.

Now we need to be careful not to let society rule how we show respect, but society can reflect respect in different ways as it's measured by God's word. His word must always be the final authority.

"You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear." As Abraham is the father of all believers, Sarah, his wife, is metaphorically, the mother of all women who believe and follow her example.

In other words you can identify yourself with Sarah if you follow her example in honoring Christ in your marriage. So, follow her by doing what is right. By the way, Sarah didn't do everything that was right. And so here the intent was to follow her in her obedience not in her disobedience.

"And do not give way to fear." Peter is saying that if you honor the Lord with your life in your marriage you don't need to be afraid that He won't use you or that you'll ever have to be ashamed of having to trust God.

Dr. Hiebert puts it this way. "The meek and quiet spirit of the Christian wife has nothing in it of weakness, irresolution, or cowardice. She will not allow the threats of an unbelieving husband to scare her out of her Christian faith."

In other words, life may seem scary at times. But you don't need to approach life in fear if Christ is your Lord because He is always with you. I mean fear can be a reality in a relationship where the unbelieving husband wants to make life miserable for his believing wife, but God assures her that she does not have to fear that He will forsake her.

As she lives in the power of the Spirit the love of Christ will be used to speak to her husband. She need not fear that she's in this

alone. All of this of course is to be used for all people in all areas of life. It just happens to be brought out here for wives who may find themselves in the company of an unbelieving and non-supportive husband.

And as mentioned a moment ago, this unfortunately can be found with a believing husband who is not taking his responsibilities before the Lord seriously, which always affects his ability to be the godly head Christ has called him to be.

But in either case the answer is always the same for the wife. Let the fruit of the Spirit be tasted by all people so they desire to taste and see that the Lord is good. Your life is a testimony to that reality. And as we seek Him and trust Him He will accomplish His will in and through us.

You wives, see your role and ministry as something given to you by God Himself to glorify Him, and adorn yourselves with that inner beauty which attracts your husband in such a way that his role is fulfilled as he obeys Christ in loving you. We'll take a look at the men's role and ministry in marriage next week.

Singles, take note of what pleases God and use the same principles He has given us in Christ in different relationships you find yourselves in. In all things honor Christ with your lives.