

**Sermon Brief**

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**Text:** 1 Peter 3:1-7

**Title:** “Wives and Husbands”

**Subject:** The church is called to declare God’s goodness to the world.

**Complement:** Submission to authorities even when they’re unjust is a way to show God’s goodness.

**Textual Idea:** The Church is called to declare God’s goodness to the world which means submitting to authorities – even in marriage.

**Sermon Idea:** Ambassadors for Jesus represent Him in this chaotic world by submitting to governing authorities – even in marriage.

**Interrogative:** Am I contributing to a God-glorifying marriage?

**Key Points:**

Wives:

1. Live a respectful life in the culture God places you in. vv.1-2
2. Focus on wearing a Christ-like Spirit. Vv.3-4
3. Walk by faith in God, not fear of circumstances. Vv.5-6

Husbands:

4. Cherish your wife. V.7
5. Protect her vulnerabilities. V.7
6. Honor her as a spiritual equal in Christ. V.7

**What do I want people to know?** I want people to know that we are ambassadors of the kingdom of God called to make Christ known. To do that, we must maintain our personal integrity in the world by having marriages of mutual love and respect.

**What do I want people to do?** I want people to (1) consider the marriage conference, (2) seriously study your spouse, and (3) pray together.

**What need am I addressing?** I am addressing the need to live lives that honor God in the midst of a pagan society.

## “Wives and Husbands”

1 Peter 3:1-7

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A Dallas grandmother shared this, *“I was watching my 5-year-old granddaughter Christy play with her dolls. At one point, she “staged” a wedding, first playing the role of the bride's mother who assigned specific duties, then suddenly becoming the bride with her “teddy bear” groom. She picked him up and said to the “minister” presiding over the wedding, “Now you can read us our rights.” Without missing a beat, Christy became the minister who said, “You have the right to remain silent, anything you say may be held against you, you have the right to have an attorney present. You may kiss the bride.”* What have we done to give a little girl the impression that marriage is like getting arrested!! Lord help us! We’re talking about marriage today. Turn with me to 1 Peter 2.

We’re in a sermon series on the book of 1 Peter which I’ve entitled, **(LCD) Alien Living in a Chaotic World**. The people Peter wrote to were struggling to live faithfully for Jesus in a pagan society. In the first chapter and a half, he tells them who they are in Christ and then gives them this directive in 1 Peter 2:11-12, **(LCD) “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”** The two main points are that ambassadors for Jesus represent Him in this chaotic world by **(LCD) living with integrity within ourselves and within the world**, thereby causing people to glorify God.

Peter then applies this to different social circles that believers in Peter’s day struggled with and that we do too: **(LCD) submitting to governing authorities – even Nero, working for mean masters, loving spouses in difficult marriages, and getting along with others**. Today we’re looking at difficult marriages; let’s read it. 1 Peter 3, *“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own 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 elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, 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 adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. 7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”*

Peter starts out by saying, “submit...” I’ve said before this word carries a sense of being under another. Same word as we saw relating to governing authorities and to slave masters. Combined with “in the same way,” it almost sounds like Peter is telling wives they’re slaves in their marriages! That would be horrific! No! First of all, “in the same

way,” doesn’t mean a strictly parallel imitation but more a general pattern of God-given responsibility. Just as citizens have responsibilities to government and slaves to masters, so too wives to husbands. They are all called to submit, the same word is repeated, but how this plays out is unique to each situation. It’s more the idea of “similar, but not the same.” And, if you look down to verse 7, “in the same way,” is applied to husbands as well, they’re not left out, they have God-given responsibilities too that are “similar, but not the same.” Notice, unlike the others, they aren’t called to submit, but to live considerately with their wives. They still have a selfless role to play too. We’ll be talking about the husbands, but we start with the wives.

*“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own 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.”* Greco-Roman society was strongly patriarchal such that the wife’s life was defined by her husband. Look at this famous teaching by Plutarch, (LCD) **“A wife ought not to make friends on her own, but to enjoy her husband’s friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Therefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all peculiar rituals and outlandish superstition [Eastern religions like Judaism and Christianity and the worship of Isis...]”**

In this kind of an environment, how do you think it went over when a woman converted to Christ? Not good...and it happened quite a bit. That is the specific situation Peter has in mind. Frankly, this passage probably relates best to modern-day situations where Islamic women are killed, beaten, and abandoned when they turn to Jesus. It’s very common in highly patriarchal societies like those found in the Middle East. In spite of that, we can still find principles to live by. But you need to keep that in mind that this is not meant to be a general description of Christian marriage like what Paul writes in Colossians and Ephesians. Someone sent me a sermon on this passage in 1 Peter and the guy preached it as God’s design for marriage. That’s not what Peter is doing. Paul does that, but Peter is dealing specifically with difficult marriages. One commentator said this, (LCD) **“In society’s eyes these women were already highly insubordinate just by virtue of their Christian commitment, and Peter is concerned that they not compound the difficulty by abrasive or troublesome behavior...Peter’s unqualified advice to Christian wives to ‘defer to your husbands’ must be seen in this light.”**

Peter is concerned for the safety of these women as well as the conversion of their husbands. If, instead, these women say, “I’m free in Christ! I don’t need to obey this pagan husband of mine anymore,” this would be a terrible witness. If anything, Peter says, they’re attitude and actions should be transformed by knowing Jesus. The wife’s godliness, purity and reverence, would be a powerful witness to the reality of Christ in her life. Peter’s number one concern is the glory of God. He wants the women to be safe and God to be glorified. The best way to do so in that culture was to be submissive to the husband. The principle for us in our day is (LCD) **live a respectful life in the culture God places you.** The specific application will differ from an Islamic wife in Pakistan and a woman here in America, but the principle still remains.

Peter then describes what a respectful life that glorifies God looks like, verse 3, “*Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, 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.*”

Peter’s not alone in this critique; look at this cultural note, **(LCD) “The gaudy adornments of women of wealth, meant to draw attention to themselves, were repeatedly condemned in ancient literature and speeches...”** Peter wants the believing wives not to flaunt their freedom but, again, to live respectfully in that culture. Elaborate dress at that time was associated with idol worship and immorality. Instead, Peter wants them to stand out for their inner beauty and focus on their hearts like God does, **(LCD) “The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”** This is of great value to God.

And we still need that today! Edwin Blum comments, **(LCD) “Today, when the world’s values governed by materialism, self-assertion, and sex obsession are seeping into the church, Peter’s words need to be taken seriously.”** So true! Just last year, over \$382 billion was spent on cosmetics because society says that beauty is skin deep. Ed Sheeran sings about “the shape of you.” We’re obsessed with the outer! Yet let’s be careful that in trying to encourage inner beauty, we don’t shame outer beauty! Peter is not saying that adorning oneself with nice hairstyles, jewelry and clothes is wrong. Taking care of oneself and dressing well is good in and of itself. The problem is when a woman seeks her value from how she looks. It’s a heart issue. Same with men. Are we dressing to the glory of God or to our own glory? We all need to ask that.

Peter describes this inner beauty as a “gentle and quiet spirit.” Now I can hear a bunch of rambunctious ladies out there saying, “Looks like I’m out!” Hold on! The word for “gentle” here is **(LCD) “praus,”** or “meek” which means strength under control, not weak. It’s used as an adjective here and three other places – look at these two. “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.” “Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” Both describe Jesus. What Peter is saying is not, “Be a doormat,” but “Be like Jesus!” He controlled Himself under duress – didn’t return curse for curse but for blessing. That’s the idea here. So our second principle, **(LCD) focus on wearing a Christ-like spirit** versus impressing people with your wardrobe or forcing your way.

Peter then gives a great example of the kind of woman he’s talking about, “*For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves.*” These women of old found their identity and worth in God. Peter then specifies the most admired of them all, verse 6, “*like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.*” Sarah was consider the model ancient woman and she followed Abraham’s lead in several difficult and fearful situations like **(LCD):**

1. **Followed Abraham’s call from God to move into a foreign land (Gen. 12)**
2. **Agreed to pretend she was his sister (Gen. 12/20)**

### 3. Let Abraham sell the best land to Lot (Gen. 13)

### 4. Endured the near sacrifice of her son (Gen. 22)

She could have given way to fear, “No way am I following you there!” but she didn’t. She also challenged him on several occasions and counseled him with God telling Abraham to listen to her! Don’t forget that! The picture is of a woman who called her husband “lord,” but still had a voice and lived courageously because she placed her hope in God, not in man. Our third point, **(LCD) Walk by faith in God, not fear of circumstances.** The woman of faith is no pushover, she is a bold woman who trusts God.

Reaching their full personhood is what I think Peter has in mind as he turns to the husbands, “*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*” There is a powerful mutuality in marriage that requires much from both. For the man, he isn’t told to submit like the previous passages. Instead, he’s told to “be considerate” with his wife. The Greek is literally, “according to deep knowledge.” In other words, the husband is not to view his wife as an object to be used, but he is to cherish her by knowing everything about her. I often tell pre-marital men that they have just entered Wife 101 and they’re never going to graduate! A friend whose marriage I deeply admired and who has been married for over forty years shared this, “*I have made a conscious effort to spend a lot of time in prayer, reflection, study, and listening to determine how to cherish my wife. I got a notebook where I recorded the things I needed to do to make her feel great - to cherish her - to honor her in an understanding way. The first entry was to pick up my socks off the floor and the counters and the tables! Over time the list has included more substantial changes. But spending a significant amount of time doing this has paid off in knitting our hearts together. Sometimes, but not too often, I will ask her what things make her feel cherished. But I have found that this is not the best tactic. All of this is part of "living with my wife in an understanding way."* Cherish your wives men!

Next, Peter says to treat them with respect as the weaker partner. The vast majority of commentators agree this is referring to the undisputed fact that generally, not always, but generally, men are physically stronger than women. I know some women who can out-wrestle their husband, but it’s usually the other way around. This was an important thing for Peter to add in this culture, **(LCD) “It normally was quite easy for a husband to abuse his wife physically or sexually, or, because of his social power, including the power to divorce, intimidate her emotionally. All of this Peter rules out: especially because of her vulnerability he is to be sure to honor her in word and deed; rather than exploiting his power or denying that he has it, he lends it to her.”**

Unfortunately, this still needs to be urged today. Just recently, NFL star **(LCD) Cam Newton** was interviewed on a podcast, and he complained about women. He said, “*Now a woman, for me, is handling your own but knowing how to cater to a man's needs. Right?*” And I think a lot of times when you get that aesthetic of like, ‘I’m a boss b---, I’m this, I’m that.’ “*No, baby! But you can't cook. You don't know when to be quiet. You don't know how to allow a man to lead.*” That attitude is too common in the world and, because of some bad teaching on male leadership, is too frequent in the church too. Listen to this

from Preaching Today, *“Christianity Today did an extensive study of battered Christian women, and they found that two-thirds of these women believe that it was their Christian responsibility to endure their husbands' violence and that in so doing they would be expressing a commitment both to God and to their husbands. Fifty-five percent noted that their husbands had said that if they would only be more submissive, then the violence would stop. And one-third of these women believed their husbands, believing that their submission was the key to resolving domestic violence. It is not. It is not the key.”* Let me add that if you believe that you may be suffering some form of abuse, please seek help. Don't wait until it's too late. No one should endure domestic abuse of any kind.

Where does this come from? Partly, from bad translations like the **(LCD) King James in the elder requirements section, “One that ruleth well over his house...”** The NIV, “manage,” is much more in line with the thought here. The word is “proisthemi” and it can mean “to lead, to rule over, to manage.” Men are given the responsibility for the family to manage...but that doesn't mean to rule it like a military operation or as the traditional saying, “A man is the king of his castle!” No! We are to lead like Jesus...and how did He lead? **(LCD) By washing the feet** of those He was given to watch over. True leadership is selfless servanthood. Same with us men. What a privilege!

But where does that leave women who are more gifted leaders than their husbands? Peter says that women are *“heirs with you of the gracious gift of life.”* Partners in the kingdom. I think that means that if the woman is the better leader in a certain area, let her lead. To think that an area like finances should be handled by the man just because he's a man is crazy! I think it's best to go by gifting and abilities, not gender. That is good delegation. I call it delegation because I believe that God is still going to hold the man accountable for the end result. That's what my understanding of male headship is. Not that the man makes every decision and has his way with his wife unconditionally submitting, but that there is a give and take between them, like Sarah with Abraham, yet knowing that the husband is the one that God will hold accountable for what goes on in the family. That means that while the burden of accountability is on the man, the roles in marriage are more fluid than traditional headship has allowed. I like how one scholar, Karen Jobes, puts it, **(LCD) “The church today is right to uphold a biblical order within marriage that mirrors the relationship of Christ and his church, but it should also follow Peter's wisdom and refrain from trying to specify what that must look like in every case.”** Each marriage will look different and that's beautiful!

I would summarize the husband's role like this: **(LCD) he is to cherish his wife, know her well. He is to protect her vulnerabilities, especially physical ones. And he is to honor her as a spiritual equal in Christ by releasing her gifts in the marriage.** And if he doesn't do all this, Peter says that the man's prayers will be hindered. In other words, if you ignore your wife, God will ignore you! I've heard Christian marriage compared to **(LCD) ballroom dancing.** In ballroom dancing, the man leads, and the woman follows; but the whole point is so that the woman can shine, that the husband might present her as radiant before the crowds. Our job is to lead our wives so that they are radiant before God. So let's invest in our marriages such that God is glorified. One way to do that is by attending next weekend's marriage conference. Watch a promo and then we'll pray.