

## 1 Peter 3:1-7

Continuing his theme of submission, Peter next narrows his focus and describes how submission should fit in the marriage relationship. He clearly focuses his address on women whose husbands are not Christians (not that he would give different advice to women whose husbands were Christians), and he addresses them as independent moral agents whose decision to turn to Christ he supports and whose goal to win their husbands he encourages. This is quite a revolutionary attitude for that culture.<sup>1</sup>

Peter is encouraging these believing wives to be submissive (vv. 1-2). **In the same way as what?** As Christ submitted to the Father (2:21-23; John 5:19, 8:28, 12:49).

**How would you describe Christ's submissiveness as He approached the cross?** No complaining, no excuses, no retaliation, no threats. He knew that God was in control. He trusted in His Father (2:23).

Trust is a major component of submission. **Like Christ, a wife's submission should be a powerful expression of her trust in whom?** God. Wives are called on to submit to an imperfect man, a fallible human being who will make mistakes....which requires great trust in God – trust that He's got your back. Trust that He will honor your obedience.

**Why does Peter tell wives to be submissive (v. 1)?** So they might win an unbelieving husband.

**What was Peter's overriding point (vv. 1-2)?** A godly wife's conduct is going to be more influential than anything she may say. A husband may tune out nagging but he won't be able to miss a change in behavior.

What was surprising, looking at the historical setting, is that Peter was even addressing this situation. In that society women were viewed as second class citizens and wives normally followed the religion of their husbands. So wives being submissive to their husbands when it comes to religion should have been a non-issue.

**So why was it an issue?** Because these women he's addressing have decided to turn to Christ in spite of their husband's religion. They're not following the established model. They have broken from tradition. Peter supports that decision and encourages them to have the goal to win their husbands for Christ. This was a revolutionary attitude for that culture. And Peter knew that Christian women who came to Jesus prior to their husbands needed instruction.

**Why is submission important?** God has so ordered the human race. He has established His authority structure so that peace and order may prevail. He has given husband and wife differing roles. He has given the man positional authority. The marriage relationship is designed to work for the optimal function of the home. Today many Christians believe wives are equal in authority with their husbands under God (the egalitarian position) which is contrary to God's design for the marriage relationship.

Our society is becoming increasingly matriarchal as women are rising to places of authority over man. In many churches women seem to be more active and gifted than the men. But God's Word stands. The headship of man is the divine order. No matter how reasonable the arguments may sound, nothing but trouble and chaos can ultimately result when woman usurps authority over man.<sup>2</sup>

**NOTE:** There are three characteristics of Biblical submission. Voluntary (a choice – not forced), unconditional (no "if's"), and heartfelt (not just going through the motions). This concept was particularly challenging for these women married to non-believers.

**What two character traits should be present in a submissive woman's life? (v. 2)** Purity (moral purity) and reverence (attitude toward God). Both are visible behaviors.

**What point Peter is trying to make in dealing with the woman's attitude toward adornment(vv. 3-4)?** Peter was not telling wives to refrain from giving attention to their physical appearance. There is nothing wrong with dressing in a way that pleases one's mate. It is no sin to be well-dressed - Proverbs 31:22 "*She*

*makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.*" But it is wrong to be preoccupied or obsessed with outward appearances at the expense of inward beauty. Peter contrasted what human society values and what God values.

Inner beauty is associated with a quiet and gentle spirit. **What does a quiet and gentle spirit look like (vv. 3-4)?** Silence -- without words (v. 1) -- should characterize wives whose husbands are both lost and hostile to the faith. Silence vs. confrontation or disrespect. A quiet spirit vs. a contentious or argumentative spirit. His point was simply that a godly wife's conduct is going to be more influential than anything she may say. The lips are to be still while the life shouts from the rooftops.

**Who is the example of a submissive woman given by Peter (vv. 5-6)? Sarah. How is Sarah an example?** We see her attitude of respect in the way she spoke to Abraham. "Master" (or Lord) may sound servile to us, but an equally acceptable translation of the Greek word is "sir." The point is that she verbally expressed her submission to him in a way that was appropriate in her culture. Women who behave as Sarah did, show that they are her daughters in spirit. Such behavior demonstrates trust in God and holiness, separation from sin to God's will.<sup>3</sup>

**What does fear have to do with submission (v. 6)? What might women be afraid of when it comes to being submissive?** Fear of the unknown....fear of being trampled upon, taken advantage of....fear of the consequences of bad decisions by their husbands.

Obligations in the marriage relationship don't fall exclusively on the shoulders of the wives. **What does Peter tell the men to do (v. 7)?** Be considerate, be sensitive, treat your wives with respect, recognize them as spiritual equals.

This was a *radical* teaching in the world Peter lived in. In that ancient culture a husband had absolute rights over his wife and the wife had virtually no rights in the marriage. Peter is saying here that the husband has God-ordained duties and obligations toward his wife.

**How are wives the weaker partner (v. 7)?** Physically. By comparing a wife to a weaker vessel Peter was not implying that wives or women are inferior to men. In many marriages the wife may be the stronger person emotionally, mentally, spiritually, morally, socially, etc. Nevertheless, physically the wife is usually weaker than her husband. Both the husband and the wife are vessels, but husbands are more typically similar to iron skillet whereas wives resemble china vases, being more delicate. They are different but equally important to God.

**What is the implication of being co-heirs of the gift of life (v. 7)?** When it comes to bestowing grace, God shows no favoritism or partiality based on gender. The wife is a fellow-heir of God's grace just as much as the husband. They may have differing roles and responsibilities but spiritually they are equal.

**If a husband fails to follow Peter's instructions, how might that hinder his prayers?** When the relationship between a husband and wife is strained, it hinders their communion and fellowship with God. Conflict alters our mood and changes our mindset. It distracts us from the things of God.

Our culture teaches women to practice assertiveness and aggressiveness and outer beauty, not a gentle and quiet spirit. **Why would the world see a submissive wife and be favorably impressed?** Ideally the world would see the joy and peace and confidence she exudes including the way she talks about her husband behind his back. The wife very much reflects to the world whether her husband is a success or failure as a marriage partner.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Peter, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>)

<sup>2</sup> Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), pp. 2266

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Peter, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>)