

*A Biblical Plan For*

# Winning Husbands & Honoring Wives

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# Winning Husbands – Honoring Wives

*1 Peter 3:1-7*

## **I. Wives**

In chapter two Peter wrote to Christians to encourage them to be law-abiding citizens that their behavior in the world would be evangelistic and bring glory to God. In the latter part of chapter two he addressed household servants and told them that it was commendable in the eyes of God to follow the example of Jesus and be patient when those in authority over us are harsh. Peter seems to be moving from distant, unemotional relationships like our relationship with the state to more intimate relationships like that of an employer with an employee. In chapter three Peter now addresses the most intimate relationship on earth – husbands and wives. Not only is this an intimate relationship, it is also a relationship which contains one who is in authority and one who is to be in submission. Peter writes,

### **Submission**

**“Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands” (1 Peter 3:1a).**

When Peter uses the word ‘likewise’ he is referring back to the two other relationships in chapter two – citizens under the authority of the state and servants under the authority of the master of the house. Although the relationship between husband and wife may be quite different in many ways from the two aforementioned, in the respect of authority and submission it is quite similar.

### **To Arrange Under**

First let us address the barrage of feminist influence that has sought to undermine the word of God itself in the in the interest of a man-made, false and temporary liberty. The word submissive here means just that. It is a Greek military term meaning “to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader” The call to the wife here is to put herself under. It is addressed, by the way, to wives. It is not a matter of the husbands putting wives under them but wives putting themselves under the care and authority of their husbands.

### **Submit To One Another?**

Some have sought to soften the meaning of this by pointing out that Paul, in Ephesians 5:21,22 writes that Christians should be, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. <sup>22</sup>Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” It has therefore been suggested that wives should submit to husband and husbands should submit to wives. Not only is this logically impossible since the word means to put oneself under and two items can’t both be under each other. But if you examine many of

your Bibles you will find the word submit in italics in verse 22. The reason being in many Greek manuscripts it is not in verse 22. It is added for clarity but seems to have made things more confusing. The sense of the passage reads like this: “Submit to one another – wives to husbands, slaves to masters, children to parents. It would be as if I were addresses a military meeting and started off by stating that soldiers must submit to one another; then continued to explain that privates must submit to sergeants, sergeants to lieutenants, lieutenants to captains etc.

### **Keeping the Word Unadulterated**

I am not driving this point home because I am some sort of male chauvinist pig who desires to put women in their place while the guys sit in the study smoking cigars and playing pinochle. I mainly bring this to our attention because there are those who seek to undermine the word of God to press their own agenda forward in the church. This does great harm to husbands, wives, children, the church and the society. The word of God is not some wax nose we can twist any way we like. It endures forever and is the means by which God blesses. It shouldn't be adulterated even by well-meaning pagans.

### **The Goal of Evangelism**

**“...that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives” (1 Peter 3:1b).**

Husbands will be addressed in verse seven. The current focus of attention is on the wives. In the present context the blessing of submission is one of evangelism. Peter's goal is to help wives win their husbands to obedience to the word (which often means salvation). So we read here of the Biblical method of wives seeking to minister to their unsaved, disobedient husbands. Women shouldn't seek to nag or browbeat their husbands into submission to God. The method is to refrain from undue chatter and put forth noble conduct.

### **Chaste and Fearful**

**“...when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied by fear*” (1 Peter 3:2).**

The way for husbands to be won to obedience to God is for them to **“observe your chaste conduct *accompanied by fear*.”** Chaste here means reverent, venerable and sacred behavior. The word fear is also used in 2:18 regarding servants and masters does not mean a slavish fear of your husband. In fact in verse six the women are told not to be fearful. It should be more understood that since God has placed this person in your life, he is to sense that you, because of your reverent fear of God, respect his role or office.

## Not Merely Outward

Peter goes on to teach that women shouldn't let their adornment **“be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— (1 Peter 3:3).**

This is not to say that arranging your hair is inherently sinful. It would be absurd to suggest that Peter is calling women to merely wake up, take a shower, and let their hair just do what it will. Also, the word ‘fine’ in verse three is absent in the Greek text. Peter certainly isn't suggesting that women should abstain from wearing apparel. The interpretation in the New King James has an implied ‘merely’ which suggests that rather than merely trying to impress or even manipulate your husband with words or outward beauty should be avoided. Peter is telling women that the call of God for wives (which will also yield the best results) is to focus on the hidden person of the heart. Not so much the outward adornment but the adornment of the spirit. There is an incorruptible beauty to be pursued – that of a gentle and quiet spirit.

## Gentle and Quiet

**“...rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Peter 3:4).**

There aren't a whole lot of things that the Bible tells us are precious in the sight of God. But among those things, especially in wives, is a gentle and quiet spirit. This is not to suggest that women who have fun, outgoing and effervescent personalities are, by their very dispositions, sinful. Some versions say a meek and quiet spirit. Strong's defines meekness as,

**“...that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. In the OT, the meek are those wholly relying on God rather than their own strength to defend them against injustice. Thus, meekness toward evil people means knowing God is permitting the injuries they inflict, that He is using them to purify His elect, and that He will deliver His elect in His time. (Is. 41:17, Lu. 18:1-8) Gentleness or meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest. It stems from trust in God's goodness and control over the situation. The gentle person is not occupied with self at all. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, not of the human will. (Gal. 5:23)**

So God is telling women to have a demeanor which demonstrates that they are trusting in Him over their own ability to circumcise the heart of their husbands and bring joy and peace into the household. It is the inward incorruptible beauty of a woman who is trusting God by willingly and joyfully submitting to her husband that is precious to God.

## Not Just Appearing Quiet

It would be very easy for someone to appear quiet and yet have a very passive, aggressive, rebellious and faithless disposition. It would be very easy for a wife to grit her teeth, cross her arms and force herself to keep her mouth shut and think she is obeying this call. She would be wrong. Who could possibly think that silent rebellion is precious in the sight of God who searches the heart?

## Godly Submission

When Paul writes for women to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord that encompasses a number of things. It encompasses a cheerful disposition recognizing that God will use your husband, even in your husband's faithlessness and folly, to bless you. It means to seek him early as we should the Lord. Some interpret this to mean that after we fight all night I finally give in to him as the final authority. I certainly hope this is not our disposition to our Lord. We are not to seek his wisdom and counsel last but first. In a certain respect it is easy to trust in God because God is good. What requires even more faith is to trust that a good God can and does work through a sinful man. It is this trust that will yield the greatest fruit in the man himself. It is the wife's witness of the work of Christ in her life.

## The Example of Sarah

**“For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, <sup>6</sup> as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror” (1 Peter 3:5,6).**

The story of Abraham and Sarah obviously covers more than we have time to discuss this morning. Peter is merely interested in her disposition toward her husband. Knowing that the Lord establishes all authority she is commended for regarding his leadership in her life. Sarah's trust in Abraham could have been life threatening. No doubt some women feel their husbands are so ill-equipped to lead them and their family that the thought of trusting them in this capacity is frightening. Peter exhorts wives not to give way to fear.

## II. Husbands

**“Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).**

In Ephesians many verses are devoted to the role of the husband and few to the wife. Here is just the opposite. Six are devoted to the wife and only one to the husband. Peter tells husbands that they are to dwell with their wives with understanding.

## **Understanding**

Literally husbands are to dwell with their wives with knowledge. Men are to know their wives. We are to know the things that hurt and refrain from those things. We are to know that which nurtures and pursue those things. We are to seek to know those things that alienate our wives and avoid that behavior. We are to seek to know those things which give our wives security and comfort and go after such things. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Christ was not ignorant of the plight and frailties of humanity. Hebrews 4:15 teaches us that **“we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as we are, yet without sin.”**

## **Forming Christ**

The empathy Jesus had for his bride revealed itself in Him taking on the likeness of sinful flesh. I don't know if men are from Mars and women are from Venus but they are different. And as men seek to imitate Christ in their lives make no mistake about it. There is no conference, seminary, discipline or any other exercise that will more form Christ in you than the pursuit, with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, of loving your wife the way Christ loves the church.

## **Weaker Vessels**

Peter teaches that husbands are to give honor to their wives in two ways: First, as to the weaker vessel. This much debated passage has been opened to all sorts of interpretations. Weaker in what respect? Emotionally, spiritually or physically or all three. I'll tell you what it can't mean. It can't mean that every last single woman on earth is emotionally, spiritually or physically weaker than every man on earth. When I was in New Zealand on a track tour in 1980 Australia had a discus thrower who could bench press 400 pounds. She might have had a hard time with this verse. I think what Peter is saying is that men ought to honor their wives who, in general, need more love, a greater sense of security, a greater sense of protection and understanding in every respect.

Secondly, husbands are to honor their wives as being heirs together of grace of life. So whatever 'weaker' does mean it does not mean that men are somehow in a primary place when it comes to the grace of Christ. When it comes to the grace of Christ there is no male or female.

## **Hindered Prayers**

Finally Peter writes, “that your prayers may not be hindered.” When a husband mistreats his wife he can expect that his prayer time will be hindered. Some suggest that it

is emotionally hindered because of the distress in the household other suggest that it is God's discipline to hinder the prayers of his children when they are blatantly and rebelliously disobedient. Either way it will effect the spiritual well being of the entire household.

### **Marriage...A Picture**

Paul teaches that a marriage is to look like the relationship between Christ and the church. I would like to close with that picture in our minds. It is a picture of our Savior sinking Himself into the pool of fallen humanity to emancipate His adulterous bride. He didn't come to judge her but to rescue her from the judgment that was already upon her. The price that Christ, the husband, paid for the redemption of his bride was to have heaped upon himself the guilt, wrath and death that she deserved and He rose in victory and ever lives to continue to sanctify His bride until she is united with Him in eternity without spot or blemish. The bride, in response to this unspeakable gift, by the grace of God offers her trust, her faith recognizing that He is her only hope.