**1 Peter: Won without a Word**

1 Peter 3:1-7

**Context**

**1 Peter 3:1-7**—*In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,****2****as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.****3****Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;****4****but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.****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.* ***7****You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.*

Our testimony as Christians will either affirm our statements that Jesus is Lord or it will discredit us. The fact remains that Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings. He does not change, but our lives give evidence to the veracity of what we say we believe.

Peter wants us to know that the way we interact with the world needs to include lives that are blameless—in the society in which we live (**2:13-17**), in our workplace (**2:18-25**), in our family (**3:1-7**), and in our church (**3:8-9**). The way in which we do that means we submit.

In this text, the family unit is in view. Wives are to submit to their husbands. This is part of God’s design. Peter takes six verses to flesh that principal out and then shifts the focus to husbands in verse seven.

**Godly Submission**

1. **The role of the wife**

**1 Peter 3:1-7**—*In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,****2****as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.****3****Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;****4****but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.****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.*

* *In the same way—*a reference to the duty of submission

**Civil authority, 2:13***—Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority*

**Master/servants, 2:18***—Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.*

**Husband/wives, 3:1***—In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands…*

**To each other, Ephesians 5:21***—and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.*

* There are certain obligations that the wife has toward her husband that are listed here

1. *Be submissive,* vv**1-2** (hypotassō)—to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject, put in subjection; to subject one's self, obey[[1]](#footnote-2)
   1. Again, that is a military word
   2. *Submit yourselves* is reflexive—meaning you do it to yourselves; self-discipline
   3. It is a common word used in the NT

**1 Peter 5:5***—You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

**Luke 2:51***—And He [*Jesus*] went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.*

**Luke 10:17, 20***—The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” …****20****Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”*

**Romans 8:7***—because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so*

**1 Corinthians 14:32, 34***—and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;…****34****The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says.*

**Philippians 3:*20-21****—For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;****21****who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

* 1. To be clear: the one who is subject is no way inferior to the one who is the lead
  2. It is God’s design for roles necessary for mankind’s well-being[[2]](#footnote-3)
  3. True wisdom is shown by living so that the husbands may be gained “on having looked upon your conduct pure in fear.” By constantly having a true Christian wife before his eyes, by having seen the blessed change produced in her by the gospel, many a husband will also be gained.[[3]](#footnote-4)
  4. *Own husband*—the point is not to all men in every context, but specifically here to her own husband
  5. Additional thoughts from the Apostle Paul

**1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9**—*But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ…****8****For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;****9****for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.*

**1 Timothy 2:11-14**—*A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.****12****But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.****13****For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.****14****And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

* 1. *Disobedient to the word*
     1. This refers to her husband’s condition—an unbeliever who inherently is disobedient to the word
     2. It is a truism of every unbeliever; it is our condition prior to regeneration
     3. People who do not know God through Christ do not love Him nor His word
  2. It is possible for the Lord to save her husband *by the behavior of their wife*
     1. And doing so without a word from her
     2. Her behavior and submission to him is so overwhelming to him, it captivates him and can be used of the Lord to bring him to Christ
     3. Notice it says: without *a* word; not without *the* word

**1 Peter 1:23**—*for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*

**Romans 10:17***—So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

* + 1. Never underestimate the power of God through obedience to the scripture
    2. A Godly testimony will speak volumes—even without a word
    3. It makes the grace of Christ believable

**Matthew 5:16**—*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

1. Faithful
   1. *As they observe your chaste and respectful behavior* 
      1. *Chaste*—exciting reverence, venerable, sacred, pure from carnality, modest[[4]](#footnote-5)
      2. This is a life lived in a sanctified way because of God’s grace that allows her to have a pure conduct toward her husband…and her Lord

**Ephesians 5:22**—*Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*

* + 1. There is a direct correlation to how the wife is subject to the Lord in relation to how she treats her husband
    2. *Respectful* (phobos)—fear, dread, terror[[5]](#footnote-6)
  1. Faithfulness is evident through clear observation

1. Modesty, vv**3-6**
   1. *Adornment must not be merely external*
      1. Peter is not saying that women cannot adorn themselves on the outside
      2. There are other OT passages that tell us otherwise

**Song of Solomon 1:10***—*“*Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, Your neck with strings of beads.”*

* + 1. Not “merely external”—not an preoccupation or obsession at the expense of an internal character quality check
    2. In context, Greek women were devoted to external adornment
       1. They wore costly clothing, expensive make-up, elaborate hair treatments, and wearing costly jewelry
       2. These added nothing to spiritual virtue
    3. The mandate here still applies, especially to a saved wife to her unsaved husband
  1. The prophet Isaiah spoke of a similar issue much earlier

**Isaiah 3:16-24**—*Moreover, the Lord said, “Because the daughters of Zion are proud And walk with heads held high and seductive eyes, And go along with mincing steps And tinkle the bangles on their feet,* ***17****Therefore the Lord will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs, And the Lord will make their foreheads bare.”* ***18****In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, headbands, crescent ornaments,****19****dangling earrings, bracelets, veils,****20****headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets,****21****finger rings, nose rings,****22****festal robes, outer tunics, cloaks, money purses,****23****hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans and veils.* ***24****Now it will come about that instead of sweet perfume there will be putrefaction; Instead of a belt, a rope; Instead of well-set hair, a plucked-out scalp; Instead of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth; And branding instead of beauty.*

* 1. In contrast the external adornment, be intention about *the hidden person of the heart*
     1. Inner beauty of spiritual virtue

**1 Timothy 2:9-10**—*Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments,****10****but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.*

* + 1. The imperishable—eternal character qualities
    2. Not so concerned with the temporal that one loses sight of the eternal
  1. *Gentle*—meek, mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness[[6]](#footnote-7)
  2. *Quiet*—peaceable, tranquil[[7]](#footnote-8)
  3. *Precious in the sight of God*—clothed with these qualities, it not only has greater potential to win the husband, but more importantly, is precious in His sight
  4. In former times, *holy women used to adorn themselves*—Old Testament women

**Ruth 3:11**—*Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence.*

**Proverbs 31**

* 1. How? By being submissive to their husbands
     1. This is not foreign or unheard of behavior
     2. Specific reference to Sarah
        1. She obeyed Abraham
        2. Calling him lord
        3. The wording says that she continually called him lord; that is, she continually had an attitude of respect toward her husband
  2. Interesting parallel:
     1. We call Abraham the “Father of Faith” in that all who have faith in God are called sons/daughters of Abraham (**Rom 4:1-16; Gal 3:7-29**).
     2. Believing wives who submit to their husbands, in the same way that Sarah submitted to hers, are called daughters of Sarah

***6****just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children*

* 1. *If you do what is right without being frightened by any fear*
     1. Do what is good and right
     2. Admittedly, there are concerns on this type of submission to an unsaved husband in terms of his response
     3. *Fear*—to be afraid of with terror[[8]](#footnote-9)
     4. However, there is a trust in God and His word that compels and comforts

**Psalm 27:1**—*The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?*

**Proverbs 1:33***—“But he who listens to me shall live securely And will be at ease from the dread of evil.”*

**1 John 4:18***—There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.*

1. **The role of the husband**

**1 Peter 3:7**—*You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.*

* *In the same way—a reference to the duty of submission*
* *Husbands*—here, Peter references the husband who submits to serve his wife
  + Not to her headship, but to her care
  + The husband serves His wife’s needs in a number of ways:

1. Thoughtfulness: be thoughtful taking great care

***7***—*You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way*

* + - 1. *Live*—dwelling together; refers to living with someone in intimacy and cherishing them
      2. To live with her in this way, he must be considerate to her needs
      3. *Understanding way*—(gnōsis)—knowledge, to know[[9]](#footnote-10)[[10]](#footnote-11)
      4. Being sensitive and considerate to her deepest physical and emotional needs[[11]](#footnote-12)

**Ephesians 5:25-28***—Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,****26****so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,****27****that He might present to Himself the church [*[*q*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=eph%205&version=NASB1995#fen-NASB1995-29332q)*]in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.****28****So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself*

**Proverbs 5:18-19***—Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth.* ***19****As a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times*

**1 Corinthians 7:3-5***—The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.****4****The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.****5****Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

1. Chivalry—showing courtesy and bravery

**7b**—…*as with someone weaker, since she is a woman*

* + - 1. Weaker means that the man is weak, but she is weaker
      2. To be clear, submission does not in any way imply inferiority
      3. Women typically are weaker in physical strength
      4. Here, her weaker status does not mean intrinsically weaker in character, intellect, fortitude, spirituality
      5. Women are spiritually equal to men in Christ

**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.*

* + - 1. Men are to be protectors and providers

**Ephesians 5:23, 25-26**—*For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body….****25****Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,****26****so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word*

**Colossians 3:19**—*Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.*

**1 Timothy 5:8***—But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

* + - 1. This responsiveness to the wife is not based on her believer status; it applies regardless of her spiritual condition

1. Showing honor as someone precious

**7c**—… *and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered*

* + - 1. *Honor*--a valuing by which the price is fixed; honor which belongs or is shown to one
      2. By analogy, esteem (especially of the highest degree), or the dignity itself:—honour, precious, price, some.[[12]](#footnote-13)

1. As a fellow heir of the grace of life
   * + 1. *Grace (*charis*) of life*—grace; that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech[[13]](#footnote-14)
       2. Note that Peter is labeling marriage as the “grace of life”
          1. Q: do you view your marriage in this way?
          2. Q: Do you view your spouse as an “unmerited, undeserved favor” from the Lord?
       3. Marriage is a diving providence given to men regardless of his attitude toward the Giver.[[14]](#footnote-15)
          1. Q: Husbands, do you view the intimate companionship in marriage as the richest blessing of this life?
       4. The contrast between what Peter is saying here and the cultural context of the day in terms of how women were treated is stark
          1. Women did not have rights
          2. Women were thought of as chattel
          3. Husbands were more interested in what the wife could do for him vs cultivating a friendship, let alone a sacrificial love
          4. In opposition between that culture, the Christian husband is to honor his wife
       5. Why? In part…*so that* his *prayers will not be hindered*
          1. The unmistakable promise of God to those who treat their wives in this way: your prayers will ascend to the Lord unrestricted
          2. Negatively stated: not be hindered; positively stated: God will listen and respond
          3. Don’t throw road blocks in the way! Don’t cut yourself off! You’re doing this to yourself!

**Psalm 66:18**—*If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear*

**Isaiah 59:2***—But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.*

**John 9:31***—We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.*

**James 4:3***—You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

* + - * 1. Prayers here would relate to many things, but not the least of which is salvation for your unbelieving spouse
      1. Q: Married men, is it possible that your prayers are not being answered because you’re not fulfilling your responsibilities toward your wife?
         1. To thwart the blessings of God is a serious thing—completely unwise
         2. To be so shortsighted so as to violate this command has very dire consequences
         3. Honestly, can you think of a more dire consequence?
         4. There are promises that God makes to us regarding prayer

**John 14:13**—*Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.****14****If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.*

* + - * 1. At the same time, they are thwarted because of disobedience

**Conclusion**

Wives, if you hope and pray that the Lord will do a saving work in the life of your unbelieving spouse, the way we do that is having a positive witness by being faithful and submissive. You’ve modeled what would otherwise be so contrary to the culture that they cannot help but notice the contrast. That obedience pleases the Lord.

Husbands, show your wife honor as a fellow heir of grace.

May the kindness of the Lord lead us to repentance and faith to do what He has commissioned, for His glory. Amen.

**Source**

Most of the message and notes come from:

Richard W. DeHaan, Good News for Bad Times: 1 Peter

R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude

John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Peter

John MacArthur, How to Win your Unbelieving Spouse, June 18, 1998, gty.org

Jerome H Smith, The New Treasure of Scripture Knowledge

[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

1. Strong’s G5293 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. MacArthur, 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Lenski, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Strong’s G53 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Strong’s G5401 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Strong’s G4239 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Strong’s G2272 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Strong’s G4423 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Strong’s G4924 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Strong’s G1108 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. MacArthur, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Strong’s G5092 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Strong’s G5485 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. MacArthur, 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)