

## Likewise, Wives...Likewise, Husbands 1 Peter 3:1-7

### Intro

We come now in 1 Peter to what might be the most controversial passage from the letter in our day. Before diving in, recall some of what we talked about last week. God has ordered the world in certain ways and has commanded us to live in certain ways within that order. All that we experience in this world is for our good and part of making us more like Christ (Rom. 8:28-29). So how are we to approach the commands of God, particularly when they seem difficult? Jesus says, if you love Me, *keep My commandments* (John 14:15). God demonstrated His love for us by dying for us even while we were sinners (Rom. 5:8). We demonstrate our love for Him through obedience, through dying to ourselves. Wives are called to die to themselves in a certain way, and husbands in another.

### The Text

Wives are commanded, *likewise*, to submit to their own husbands. The stated purpose for this is that wives might win their husbands, not by arguments, but by their chaste and respectful conduct, even if their husbands are in disobedience to the word. Peter then gives an additional command to wives to not let their adornment be outward, but rather that it should come from their heart. Peter contrasts beauty defined by corruptible things with beauty that is incorruptible and precious in God's sight. The saintly women of the past (e.g., Sarah) provide examples of this adornment of the gentle and quiet spirit. If wives follow Sarah's example, they are considered her daughters. Their submission is done with respect, but not in terror. Husbands are *likewise* commanded to dwell with their wives with understanding, which means more than merely to live under the same roof. Husbands are to do this in such a way that gives honor to the wife for two reasons: she is the weaker vessel and a coheir with him of the grace of life. Husbands are warned that they should treat their wives this way so that their prayers will not be hindered.

### Wives, Be Submissive

Far too often, particularly in today's environment, we jump to the really hard cases when talking about wives submitting to husbands. We need to spend time with the easy cases, because the easy cases are not so easy for many of you.

We see here again that Peter has pragmatic and intrinsic reasons for this command. In the pragmatic sense, there are at least two reasons, one stated and the other not. The stated reason for the wife to submit is so that her husband may be won. The unstated reason is for her own protection. Recall that Christians in Peter's day had a reputation of being seditious.

In the intrinsic sense, Peter implies that wives are to submit to their husbands because this is the order that God has determined. The commands about how wives ought to speak and ought to dress are not given just to wives whose husbands are Christians or just to those whose husbands are disobedient. This is a command for all wives. Wives are called to submit because they are wives, not because their husbands are Christians or worth submitting to. Wives are to be submissive to their *own* husbands. This is not an injunction for women to be submissive to men, but rather delineates the structure within marriage.

## **Adornment**

Peter ties the command to submit with an exhortation about how a wife should adorn herself. The point here is not to forbid any sort of external decoration (e.g., Song of Solomon 1:9-11). The temptation for women is to think that this is how they become beautiful. Rather, Peter says, let your adornment come from your heart. Jesus makes clear that what is in your heart works its way out into your life. Just as sinful actions stem from sinful thoughts and desires, so a truly beautiful wife on the outside is founded on a beautiful heart and spirit.

Why is this beauty precious (“expensive”) before God? Perhaps because it cost Him His Son. The incorruptible beauty of a godly woman is precious before God like the incorruptible seed of new birth (1:23) which was bought with the precious blood of Christ (1:19). The sum of verses 3-6 is that how a woman dresses and how her heart is are directly related to how she submits to her husband. These things altogether—submission, modest dress, a quiet and gentle spirit—are all reflective of how she follows Christ as her example.

## **Husbands, Dwell With Them**

The husband is told first to live with his wife with understanding. He must treat his wife with honor because she is the weaker vessel and a joint heir with him in the grace of life. His strength can be used to protect and cherish her or harm her. And so, he is told to honor her and understand her. In understanding and honoring your wife, you lead her in obeying her command to submit to you. You are forbidden from requiring her to make bricks without straw. You are forbidden from requiring her submission without yourself obeying God’s command to you to understand and honor her.

Peter gives no explicit warning to wives if they do not submit to their husbands. But to the husbands, there is a dire warning. As the head of your home, if you neglect your wife—if you do not dwell with her, with all that that entails—if you do not dwell with her with understanding—if you do not honor her—if you do not treat her as God’s precious child and your coheir—God will not heed your prayers. Your sin—because that is what it is—will thwart your ability to cry out to God. When you despise one of God’s people, when you despise your wife, you despise God Himself.

## **Conclusion: Likewise**

Why does Peter give an address to both husbands and wives? Notice that he does not address “both parties” in the other two passages about submission. But he does so here, for perhaps two reasons. First, in order for a family to function, husband and wife must put the other one first while submitting themselves to God’s commands and design. Peter makes clear, that all of this must be done while looking to Christ as their example, which leads to the second reason. The marriage of a man and a woman preaches to the world about the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-33). The faithful relationship between a husband and wife is a gospel witness.

Jesus is the example for all these things. He lays His life down, He endures suffering patiently, all in order to save those He loves. It’s all about Jesus, about what He has done, and about how God is changing you to look like Him.