

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 6/13/93  
I Peter 3:1-6 "The Best Thing a Wife Can Give Her Husband"

**Communion:**

**Intro:**

Illust:

This morning we're beginning a brief, 2 week mini-series entitled, "How to Experience a Marriage That God Blesses." It's a timely topic. You don't need me to tell you that marriages are crumbling right and left. And listen. Even Christian marriages are disintegrating.

I don't think anybody enters marriage planning to fail. I don't think anyone here today wants their marriage to fail. No doubt you're wondering, "How can my marriage not be another statistic?"

God's Word answers that question for us. There are several classic texts on marriage in the Bible--Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, Genesis 1-2. Every Christian couple ought to be intimately familiar with those passages. And with one other classic text, the one which will be our focus--I Peter 3:1-7.

Today: "The Best Thing a Wife Can Give Her Husband"

Next Week: "How to be a Husband that Pleases God"

READ I Peter 3:1-7.

Q: What's the best thing a wife can give her husband?

**Proposition: Peter wants wives to get a handle on three things about submission in I Peter 3:1-6.**

- I. The Importance of Submission (1a)
- II. The Influence of Submission (1b-4)
  - A. A wife can influence by her Behavior (1-2).
  - B. A wife can influence by her Beauty (3-4).
    1. Not outward beauty (3)
    2. Inward beauty (4)
- III. The Illustrations of Submission (5-6)

Context:

Before we can dig into I Peter 3, we need to set the context. May I remind you that Peter wrote the letter we call I Peter to encourage some dear Christian friends who were facing severe ridicule and opposition from society. It was not popular to be a Christian in the pagan Roman Empire. One of the great themes of the letter is suffering. Christians were being hounded by the critics. No doubt the believers were a little intimidated. So here's what Peter told them.

First, get a handle on your identity. That's what ch 1 is all about.

Then in chapters 2 & 3 Peter gives specific instruction on the best way for Christians to silence the critics. What does he tell followers of Christ to do? Write letters to Caesar? Picket Rome? Boycott antagonistic businesses?

Were those his instructions? No. The best way to silence the critics of Christianity, according to Peter, is to model Christ and Christianity for the onlooking world. 2:11-12 "...having your behavior honest among the Gentiles..."

Quote: I agree with an article I read by Martin DeHaan of RBC, "...Maybe it's time to remember that our calling has never been to remove the darkness around us, but instead to be lights in a dark place. Our calling is to be a society within a society..." (May 1993 "Times of Discovery")

Our task is to model Christianity.

Q: In what areas of life should we model Christianity?

A: 2:13 is a pivotal verse which begins what we'll call the "Submission Section."

1. Model Christianity in our relationships to Civil authorities (2:13-17).  
V 13 "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man..."

2. Model Christianity in our relationships on the Job (2:18-25).  
V 18 "Servants be subject to your masters..."

Q: Where's the most significant arena in which we can model Christianity?

3. Model Christianity in the Home (3:1-7).  
3:1 "IN THE SAME WAY, ye wives..."

Please keep this in mind. The instruction on marriage in ch 3 falls into this context. God intends for us to model Christianity for the world in our marriages. Listen. One of the most potent evangelistic you have is your marriage. A Christ-honoring marriage is like a magnet to sinners with steely hearts.

I wonder, and this is only my opinion, if one of the reasons that the church's impact on society is waning is because of a breakdown right here. Crumbling Christian homes aren't very attractive to lost people.

We need to devote some serious attention to I Peter 3.

### **I. The Importance of Submission (1a)**

V 1 "In the same manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands"

Wives, be in subjection. Submission is important. But what does that mean?

First a couple of precautions about "submission":

1. Remember we are all to submit to one another.

Eph 5:21 "Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God"

Submission is a mark of being filled with the Spirit (18). Submission is not a negative, harsh responsibility. It's God design for maintaining proper relationships.

2. I Pt 3:1 is not a command that requires women to be subordinate to men in general. Notice again: "be in subjection to your own husbands" (vv 1, 5). Unfortunately, a lot of male chauvinism has been supported by a flipant handling of this text.

With these precautions in mind, please notice the importance of submission for the wife in the marriage relationship. In fact, Peter says you can sum up a wife's responsibility to her husband with this, "Wives be in subjection to your husband." A

wife is to be subject. A husband is to honor his wife (7). Paul echoed the same thought in Eph 5:22, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord." The words "be subject" and "submit" come from the same greek root.

Q: What is submission?

Illust: Stories by D. Jeremiah about submission ("Dorothy Webster")

"submit"--to place under rank; lit. "being under authority"

Submission is not a demeaning or devaluing responsibility. God has given order to the institution of the home. In His divine structuring, God established the husband as the head (not dictator, but head) of the home. That doesn't mean that the wife is inferior to her husband (in fact, in v 7 Peter makes it clear that the husband and wife are "heirs together"). Submission has to do with order and authority, not with evaluation.

Submission is the wife's recognition that God holds the husband ultimately responsible for the home. When a wife submits to her husband, she models Christ for an onlooking world (2:21).

Illust:

Tran: Why should a wife submit to her husband? That's Peter's next point--"that"...

## **II. The Influence of Submission (1b-4)**

One of the first things that strikes me when I read this section is that Peter devotes 6 verses to wives, and only 1 verse to husbands. And I ask myself, "Why is his advice to wives 6 times as long as to husbands? Is it because most of us men have a short attention span, that we can handle only one verse?!"

No. Notice something. Peter has in mind a very peculiar scenario in v 1, that of a Christian wife with a non-Christian husband. In Peter's day, if a man became a Christian, the whole family usually followed suit. But if a wife became a Christian, and her husband did not, she was taking a socially unacceptable step.

Peter lived in a man's world. Sadly, in ancient civilization, women had no rights at all. Commentator William Barclay observed that under Jewish law, a woman was a thing. She was owned by her husband in exactly the same way he owned his sheep and goats. The same held under Roman law. When a girl was born into a family, the father held the right of life and death over her. She was under the father's power. When she married, she passed under the power of her husband. The attitude of society said that no woman could dare make any significant decision for herself.

Do you follow me? Now suppose a married woman happened to hear the good news of Christ. She learned that though her sins separated her from God, she could be forgiven if she repented of her sins and believed in Christ. And suppose the Spirit of God convicted that woman of her need for Christ, and she called out to Christ for salvation. And suppose she did it all alone, and suppose her husband refused to abandon his ancestral Roman gods.

Can you imagine the problems that wife would face?

Application: My heart aches for believers who have non-believing spouses. There is great pain involved when one spouse loves Christ, and the other doesn't.

Let me say this to those yet unmarried. Please resolve to obey II Cor 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness?" Determine that you're going to marry only a Christian.

But suppose you are married, and you became a Christian AFTER you were married. Yet your spouse refuses to receive Christ. What do you do? Leave him? No. I Corinthians 7 makes that clear. Marriage is permanent.

So what's the best way for a wife to reach her unsaved husband? Stick gospel tracts in his lunch box? Crack up Charles Stanley on CDR radio? Drag him to church? Nag him?

Q: What's the best way for a wife to influence her unsaved husband?

A: A wife has 2 surgical tools at her disposal which God can use to cut away the callous from her husband's heart.

#### A. A wife can influence by her Behavior (1-2).

V 1 "that if any obey not the word...by the behavior of the wives"

Notice Peter has in mind a wife with an non-Christian husband ("if any obey not the Word"). Watch this. What does Peter say a wife can do for her lost husband?

Through her influence he can "be won." That is, he can be saved.

How? "Without the word" (not the Bible; means "without talk, without a lot of speaking"). Peter's not saying a believing wife should never talk about Christ to her unsaved husband. It's never right to be ashamed of our Savior! What he is saying is that a wife's most potent surgical tool is her behavior.

Wives, let your husbands SEE Christ in you. Let them SEE the difference.

Q: What should a husband be able to see in his wife? 2 types of behavior...

##### *1. Pure Behavior*

V 2 "While they behold your chaste conduct"

The word "chaste" means to be "free from ceremonial defilement." That which is chaste is holy and sacred.

Someone has said (BKC), "The powerful purity of a godly woman's life can soften even the stoniest male heart without a word."

Wives, your purity can melt your husband's hardness.

Let me ask you, "Do you ever give your spouse reason to doubt your purity? Do you ever do things which may cause your spouse to question your loyalty, your faithfulness?" Like what?

eg--cutting words like, "Why can't you be like so and so's husband!"

##### *2. Reverent Behavior*

V 2 "coupled with fear"--NIV "when they see the purity and reverence of your lives"

Peter says wives are to exhibit conduct marked by "fear." I don't think he's talking about fear of husbands (v 6 says they are not to be afraid). I think he means fear of God.

Wives, your husbands, even an unsaved husband, ought to be able to see the fear of God in your life. It ought to be very apparent to your spouse that Jesus Christ is real to you. Not because you bombard him with religious talk, but because you show him that the Lord Jesus has changed your life.

Illust:

Tran: There's another way a wife can influence her husband. By her behavior, and...

### B. A wife can influence by her Beauty (3-4).

Now look carefully, because you won't find the following counsel in Cosmopolitan magazine. What do we mean by beauty? First, Peter tells us what won't influence a husband for Christ...

#### *1. Not Sex-appeal (3)*

V 3 "Whose adorning, let it not be the outward adorning..."

Let me say upfront I don't think Peter is forbidding a woman to beautify herself. Someone mentioned to me this week a preacher who once remarked, "Even a barn door needs paint once in awhile!" But Peter lived in a day much like ours. Emphasis on sex-appeal was out of control.

You may not believe this, but it was true. Roman women in Peter's day were captivated by the latest fashions. They competed with each other in dress and hairdos.

Quote: Barclay "There were as many ways of dressing the hair as there were bees in Hybca. Hair was waved and dyed, sometimes black, more often auburn. Wigs were worn, especially blonde wigs, which are found even in the Christian catacombs..." (221)

Q: What's God's Word have to say about all this?

The word "adorning" in v 3 is the greek word "cosmos" from which we get our english word "cosmetics." It means "order." Cosmos is the opposite of chaos.

There's nothing wrong with taking moderate steps to make sure you don't walk out in public looking like chaos! But remember. If you want to influence your spouse for Christ, you won't do it through sex-appeal.

How will you do it? Through soul-appeal.

#### *2. Soul-appeal (4)*

What is soul appeal?

V 4 "But let it be the hidden man..."

Don't miss this. The advertisers tell us elaborate wardrobes and expensive jewelry are where it's at. But do you know what's precious to God? A woman who adorns her inner self.

Q: "Are you saying it's wrong for a woman to make herself attractive?"

A: Not at all. We can distract people by being sloppy as well as by being vain.

But the point is this. A woman who has soul-appeal, not sex-appeal, will impact her husband for Christ.

It's really a matter of balance. Ladies...

Q: Are you known as a woman of grace?

Q: Are you as concerned with your spiritual beauty as with your physical?

How much time did you devote to your physical appearance this morning? An hour?  
How much time did you devote to spiritual beauty this morning?

Application: You may be thinking, "Well my husband is already a Christian. What does this have to say to me?" The same thing. Wives you can have a dramatic impact on the spiritual development of your husbands. How? By nagging. No. By exhibiting behavior and beauty that encourages your partner to live for Christ.

Q: You may wonder, "What does soul-appeal look like?"

"a meek and quiet spirit"--A woman with a meek spirit is gentle. To be quiet means to be tranquil, not fiery. God commends a wife who is gentle and tranquil.

Observation: It's impossible to please God and be a loud, domineering, bossy, boisterous, loudmouthed, and clamorous wife. In fact, you show me a wife who is not meek and quiet, and I'll show you a home where there's pain.

Q: But what if it's not my personality to be meek and quiet?

A: Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5).

Tran: There's 2 thoughts going through minds right now.

1. Peter's been describing SOME KIND OF WIFE. What's a wife like this look like in real color? Peter gives us some illustrations in vv 5-6.

2. What about the husband? The wife's part is only 50% of the marriage!

What does God expect of husbands?

We'll tackle both questions next week.

### **III. The Illustrations of Submission (5-6)**

#### **Conclusion:**

We began with a question, "What's the best thing a wife can give her husband?"

Let's conclude with some questions...

First, for the wives...

--Does your husband know that you respect him? When did you last tell him?

--Do you speak respectfully of your mate?

--Do you follow your husband's leadership?

One thing that breaks my heart is to hear of couples where one partner wants to be sold out in living for Christ, and the other is a wet blanket. Illust:

For the husbands...

--Do you appreciate your wife? When did you last tell her?

--Some husbands here today have godly wives that model I Peter 3. But if you're honest, you'd have to admit that you don't have what your wife does. Jesus Christ is not real to you as He is to your wife. That could change today.