



Humility, Honor & Hope in Marriage

1 Peter 3:1-7

David Sunday June 21, 2020

So good to see all of you this morning, to be worshipping in a room with real people, and to know we're moving in the right direction. This is slow reopening and it's going to take some adjusting from each of us. We're thankful for your patience, your consideration of one another and for your eagerness. I hope you were feeling with the psalmist, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'" (Psalm 122:1). Praise God.

One of the ways God has sustained us in these past 14 weeks is through His Word, which is so precious. First Peter has been perfect for this time. We're going to jump right in where we left off last week, into a passage about humility, hope and honor in marriage. Let's worship God as we hear His Word together:

^{3:1} In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live ² when they observe your pure, reverent lives. ³ Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes, ⁴ but rather what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation.

⁷ Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner, showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

This is God's Word.

I want to begin with a couple questions I heard a British pastor ask: "When was the last time God disagreed with you?" When was the last time you heard something from the Bible and

thought, “No, that can’t be true. That’s not the way I think. That’s not the way I was taught. None of my friends think that way.” When was the last time God disagreed with you? And more importantly, how did you respond?

Nothing tells you more about where you’re at in your discipleship—in your following of Jesus—than how you respond to God when His Word disagrees with something you’re thinking. This passage before us is a great test. In our culture the words we just read are not just seen as outdated—they’re seen as outrageous.

I can imagine people squirming in their seats as a passage like this is read. By the time we move from “submit” to “obey” to her calling him “lord,” I can hear the objections. “That’s domineering,” says someone over here. “Oppressive!” says someone else. “Peter must be a misogynist,” says someone else. And someone else is thinking, “Poor Kate, that she’s married to a guy who actually believes in this stuff.”

But this is the Word of God. It’s the Word that Peter said in 1 Peter 1:23 caused us to be born again. It’s not a perishable seed; it’s imperishable. This is the living Word of God that endures forever. It’s good news, not bad news, as 1 Peter 1:24-25 says. This is the *“pure milk of the Word, so that by it we may grow up into our salvation, if we have tasted that the Lord is good”* (1 Peter 2:1-3).

Do you see that if these wonderful things Peter has been telling us about the Bible are true, then these same truths apply to what we just read in 1 Peter 3:1-7? This teaching is life-giving, not oppressive. It’s teaching that will stand the test of time, unlike the waves and winds of cultural currents. It’s teaching that’s good for us, not bad for us. It will bring growth into godliness and maturity in Christ, if we receive it as a good gift from a good, good Father. So let’s not be afraid to receive these words, remembering where they fall in the structure of Peter’s letter. It’s all under the umbrella of chapter two, verses 11 and 12:

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. ¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

This is how we are to live distinctively Christian lives in the world. We’re exiles here. We’re aliens here. Peter is telling us, “If you want to stand out as a Christian, there is sin to abstain from and there is beautiful conduct to cultivate.” He’s been showing us how that works out in different spheres of life.

Today, he's moving to the home. He's telling us as wives and as husbands, "There is sin we need to abstain from and beautiful conduct we need to cultivate." I don't want you to ever think that in God's world marriage is the gold medal and singleness is the silver medal. That's not true at all. Both marriage and singleness are good gifts from God. Both of them require hard work; both of them can bear good fruit in God's Kingdom.

If you're not married this morning, you can receive this teaching in a number of ways. You can receive it as help to know how to pray for and encourage the marriages of Christian friends in your life. You can receive it as teaching to prepare you—should ever God call you into a marriage—to know that as you go into marriage, this is not going to be easy. It's hard work and we shouldn't go in with rose-colored glasses.

And it can help all of us, whether we're married or single, to appreciate more what it means to be the bride of Christ, to be loved by Him and what it looks like to love Him.

The imperishable beauty of a wife who hopes in God

Let's first consider the imperishable beauty of a wife who hopes in God according to 1 Peter 3:1-6. What is God calling a Christian wife to do? It's stated very clearly in verse one: "*Submit yourself to your own husband...*" That word "submit" means to place under. We're all called to live lives of submission. We're all called to place ourselves under God-ordained authority. We've been hearing about that over the last couple weeks.

Submission means recognizing the God-ordained authorities in our lives and yielding to them as an act of obedience to God. There's an order that God intends for the home and it involves a husband lovingly, sacrificially, humbly leading his family and a wife gladly recognizing, supporting and yielding to her husband's loving leadership.

In order for us to really hear what the Bible is saying about this, we need to clear away some of the rubble of what it is not saying.

- It's not saying that all women must submit to all men. We read clearly in verse one, "*Wives submit yourselves*" to whom? "*To your own husbands.*"
- This does not mean you should submit when your husband asks you to sin against God or to abandon your faith in Christ.
- Nor does it mean you must always agree with your husband or never share your own point of view.
- And of course it does not mean that if your husband is unfaithful and unrepentant, or if he hurts you physically or dehumanizes you verbally, that you just have to stay in the home and put up with it at all costs. Great pastoral

guidance and care are required in these difficult situations. Never should we use these verses to justify such sinful, monstrous behavior.

If we go on listing exception after exception, we're going to empty the passage of its power and force. Submission does mean something and it does cost something. Peter has in mind some in his congregation who are facing a particular challenge. This teaching applies to all Christian wives, but some of the wives have husbands who "disobey the Word," as we read in verse one. These are men who have heard the Word, along with their wives, but instead of obeying and turning from their sin to trust in Christ, they choose to disobey the Word. They reject the gospel.

What is a Christian wife who is obedient to the Word to do in such a situation? Is she to keep on preaching to her husband? Is she to put gospel tracts in the toilet paper roll, so he's continually confronted with the truth? Is she to tell him every time he's sinning, "If you don't repent, you're going to go to hell"? No. She is to live with him in such a way that he realizes, "When my wife became a Christian, she didn't become a less devoted wife; she became a more devoted wife. She didn't start loving me less; she loves me better now. I actually enjoy her more, even if I don't agree with her."

The way she does this is in verse two: *"...when they observe your pure, reverent lives."* It's not submission just for the sake of the man to whom you're submitting; it's an act of reverence to the Lord. It's cultivating beautiful conduct that builds up your husband, even if he disobeys the Word, because God is able to save your husband without a word from you. That's how powerful He is.

This should greatly encourage people who are in marriages with a spouse who's not a believer—which is a very hard place to be. We should pray for friends and brothers and sisters in our church who are in this situation. The encouragement is that you don't have to bear the burden of continually preaching to your spouse or trying to cajole your spouse into the Kingdom. God can take care of that. Instead, live a beautiful, reverent life which can have a powerful evangelistic effect on your spouse.

Some of you know the name Lee Strobel. He was an investigative journalist for the Chicago Tribune and he's written the book A Case for Christ. When he was a teenager, he became a committed atheist who was hostile toward Christianity. When he married his wife, Leslie, they were both in this situation and were having a great time together as young marrieds—until she became a Christian. He writes:

I had married one Leslie—the fun Leslie, the carefree Leslie, the risk-taking Leslie—and now I feared she was going to turn into some sort of sexually repressed prude who would trade our upwardly mobile lifestyle for all-night prayer vigils and volunteer work in grimy soup kitchens.

That didn't sound attractive to him so he wanted a divorce. But he kept watching the changes that were happening in his wife. He writes, "I was pleasantly surprised, even fascinated, by the fundamental changes in her character, her integrity and her personal confidence." That led him into a two-year investigative deep dive into the facts surrounding the case for Christianity through which God converted him to faith in Christ. Now, decades later, he says that his marriage to Leslie is stronger than ever and their journey is a true love story.

So there's beauty in a Christian wife that can win her husband to Christ without her even needing to speak a word. In 1 Peter 3:3-4, the Holy Spirit through Peter makes clear what that beautiful conduct looks like. He starts with what it does not look like in verse three: "*Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes.*" Not that it's wrong to get a nice hairstyle or to wear jewelry or clothes. He's saying, "Don't chase after these things in an attempt to impress your husband or to look good in the eyes of the world. Don't make this your emphasis. These are externals and they won't last. They're perishable." This is a liberating verse for women.

In Peter's day, in the Roman world, women were under enormous pressure to look glamorous. They were fixated on their hair, jewelry and manicures. Aren't you glad our society has progressed so much in 2,000 years? I mean, every day women are still made to feel like they're never good enough, never pretty enough, never measuring up.

Isn't it ironic that Peter is actually more in tune with the dignity of women than our culture is? Far from being a misogynist, the apostle Peter speaks strongly against the physical objectification of women. He's freeing women from the obscene obsession our culture has of focusing on what's on the outside instead of what's on the inside.

Then as we read these words, we should be asking ourselves, "What do I treasure in a woman? What kind of desires am I cultivating?" If you're not married but would like to be someday, what are you focused on? Externals or what's on the inside? If you are married, how do you nurture the beauty that's in your wife? How do you express to her what you find beautiful about her? If you're a father of daughters, they need to hear often from their dads that

they're lovely, that they're beautiful. The way to do that is not just by focusing on their looks, but on their character.

If you're a father of sons, you need to be preparing them now for what kind of qualities they should cherish in a woman by teaching them what to be looking for and showing them what you cherish in their mother. Is your heart in tune with the heart of God on this? Do you consider precious what God considers precious? Do you encourage and praise the kinds of virtues that come from the heart, as verse four describes? Human beings often look at what is on the outside, but God looks on the heart.

Look at what God says your beauty should consist of in verse four: *"What is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."* I know at first glance this might not feel very encouraging. It might feel like God is just telling women, "Keep your mouth shut. Let the men do all the talking and make all the decisions." But that is not at all what this verse is commending. It's not arguing for a kind of mousy femininity. It's not saying women should be weak and wimpy. It's not about volume control. This is about the very character Jesus described in Himself.

There's one place in the New Testament where Jesus tells us what His heart is like. It's in Matthew 11:29, where He says, *"I am lowly and humble in heart."* Jesus is telling us that He has a quiet and gentle spirit. That's what He's like. So this isn't just a feminine quality; this is a Christlike quality all of us should want. You can be a very strong woman with a very forceful influence, yet have a gentle and quiet heart—because it's about contentment. It's about Psalm 131:1-2: *"Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty....I have calmed and quieted my soul."*

A gentle and quiet spirit is a spirit that does not insist on its own way. It does not demand its own rights. It's willing to lay aside objections and go along with what God's Word reveals, because it's a teachable spirit, not an argumentative or quarrelsome spirit. It's not nagging. Gentleness is strength under control. Instead of manipulating and demanding, a gentle person uses her strength to do good, both inside and outside the home. God says, "This is precious in My sight."

Why is that? It's because it demonstrates hope in Him. He gives us examples of this in 1 Peter 3:5-6. Let's look at verse five: *"For in the past, the holy women,"* and here's the key phrase, *"who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands."* So what's driving this beautiful, distinctively Christian behavior of wives submitting to their husbands? What's the heart motivation?

They have a living hope in God. They know, “We are heirs to an inheritance that’s imperishable, undefiled and unfading. We can keep our eyes on a future salvation that’s ready to be revealed when Christ comes. We can be content—not demanding our own rights, not searching for our own independent life. We can be content to immerse ourselves in the life of another without the fear of missing out.”

This FOMO—this Fear Of Missing Out—is a pitfall that’s ruining many marriages in our day. It’s the idea that “I need to hold on to my own independence. If I fully pour myself into building up my husband—or if I let my future and my interests be subordinated to what’s best for my wife—somehow I’m going to miss out on really being myself. I need to hang on to my own identity.”

This is a lie, suggesting that if we would put our hope in God we could find freedom. If you put your hope in God, you know that no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11). Putting your hope in God frees you from looking to your spouse to meet all your deepest needs, which is freight that’s too heavy for any marriage to carry. When you put your hope in God, you can entrust your life, marriage, future, wishes and desires to be fulfilled in God and by God.

So Peter is searching through the Old Testament, thinking about these holy women who put their hope in God, looking for a particular example. In verse six he lands on Sarah, the wife of Abraham. I’m glad he picked her because Sarah was not a pushover. She’s not a silent, fade-into-the-woodwork type of woman. Sarah was a force to be reckoned with.

Our culture says, “Women, if you submit to your husbands, you will lose yourself. Your life will be one gigantic, pathetic setback.” Peter says, “No, look at Sarah.” She wasn’t afraid to get into her husband’s face. She was a powerful and influential woman in her home and in her society. But her attitude toward her husband was honoring and submissive. Look at it in verse six: “...*Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, called him lord...*” That’s not the Lord, but “my lord” — kind of like British people say “my master.”

Where did this take place? It’s in the Genesis 18 story. When the angel of the Lord was talking to Abraham, she was overhearing this conversation at the tent curtain. She hears the angel of the Lord telling Abraham, “In a year’s time your wife Sarah will have a son in her old age.” She laughed to herself and said in verse 12, “*After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I have delight?*” The Lord heard Sarah laughing to herself. He knew what was going on in her mind and heart. His reply in verse 14 was, “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*”

In other words, for those who put their hope in God, they know all He has promised us He is able to fulfill. Nothing is too difficult for Him. As David Helm was giving an exposition on this passage, he made this searching comment:

The laughter of Sarah can still be heard behind the curtain of our tents today. The voices of many women who hear these words on submission are likely to exclaim, “You have got to be kidding me. That’s absurd. God will keep His promises to me? He will keep me safe in this relationship?” And Peter says, “Yes. God can be trusted.”

Look at Sarah. He will honor those who trust Him. Verse six ends like this: “*You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation.*” Don’t be afraid, thinking, “I’m going to lose myself if I pour myself into my husband’s wellbeing.” Instead, entrust yourself to God and obey Him by submitting to your husband, not fearing that you’re throwing your own life away in the process but trusting God to fulfill His promise to you and reward you. This is when God says, “This is a holy and honorable attitude. It’s precious and beautiful in My sight.” God rewards that kind of behavior.

This is God’s word to Christian wives this morning. Wives, if you want to know how you’re doing in embracing this good word from God, it wouldn’t hurt to ask your husband, “Do you see me recognizing your leadership, yielding to your leadership, supporting your leadership in the home?” Husbands, if your wife asks you such a question, do not be harsh with her, because that’s God’s word to us as Christian husbands in verse seven.

I know I would not be able to minister to you today if Kate had not, from day one, determined in her heart this is the way she wanted to live. God has given her grace to succeed wonderfully in that and I am so grateful.

The tender strength of a husband who is humbled by grace

Let’s hear what God has to say to us men. Peter gives one verse for the men, six for the women—and it’s not because he’s letting the men off easy. Verse seven is about the tender strength of a husband who’s humbled by grace. This is a very demanding verse. Maybe Peter realized men need it short and simple and to the point. So he gives us one verse—but this is not a lighter load by any stretch.

⁷ Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner, showing them honor

as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Notice Peter does not say, “Husbands, as you live with your wives, make sure they’re being submissive.” No. Their submission is to be voluntary, not forced. Your job is to be the kind of husband under whose leadership a Christian wife flourishes, so that she is delighted to submit to you. Encourage her. Build her up. Your job is to live with your wife in an understanding way—literally, “according to knowledge.”

The word “knowledge” in the Bible often refers to the intimate knowledge that takes place in the sexual relationship between a man and his wife. What Peter is saying here is know your wife intimately. Be considerate of her needs, concerns, desires, hurts. Be sensitive to her. Show her your most elevated and intimate care, concern, love and honor. Do that when you’re alone with her in the bedroom and when you’re out with her in public. Don’t be fixated on your own needs and desires. Don’t dismiss her feelings. Don’t downplay or minimize her hurts. Subordinate your own interests, desires, concerns and needs to hers, so that she flourishes in partnership with you.

Pour yourself into serving her interests, desires, concerns and needs. Lay down your rights and comforts for hers—not with passive-aggressive resentment or with manipulative expectations: “I did this for you, now you need to do this for me.” No, honor her, cherish her and treasure her as “with a weaker partner” or a weaker vessel. Now, that’s not the language of inferiority. That’s about preciousness. That’s about care. That’s about how you would treat a Swarovski crystal vase—which I looked up on Amazon and it’s selling for about \$1,200—compared to a plastic cup you bought at Walmart. You’re going to treat that vase with great care because it is precious.

Peter is saying, “Pour all your heart and diligence into protecting her, providing for her, preserving her physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially and spiritually—not riding roughshod over her, not domineering her. Treat her as your beloved.” Sing to her, in the words of the Song of Solomon, “*You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you*” (Song of Solomon 4:7 ESV). Not only say it, but live it.

So why do you honor her like this? There are two reasons. Number one, she is a co-heir of the grace of life. Right here we see in the Bible that order in relationships does not mean inequality. Order and equality go hand in hand. Just as in the relationship of Jesus to God the Father, He submitted His will to His Father’s will, but He is completely one with His Father.

If your wife is not a believer, that's should be what you long for her more than anything else. If she is a believer, your wife shares with you an imperishable inheritance in heaven. She is an equal partner and partaker of the glory that is to be revealed on the last day. On that day you will probably discover, if you haven't already, that she is your better half. So honor her and cherish her as one with you, who is the bride of Christ, bought not with perishable things like silver and gold, but with the blood of a precious and unblemished Lamb (1 Peter 1:19).

That's the first reason: she's coheir with you.

The second is so that your prayers will not be hindered. The word "your" there is a plural pronoun. In other words, husbands and wives should be praying together. Think about how difficult prayer is to begin with. It's not easy to humble yourself and come before a holy God and talk with Him. We need the Holy Spirit's help. To pray together as husband and wife is not easy, but if a husband is being harsh toward his wife, it's impossible. You cannot pray together when you're being harsh toward one another.

Furthermore, God will hinder the prayers of a harsh husband. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:12, *"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do what is evil."* It is evil for a Christian husband to be harsh toward his wife. It is evil to be inconsiderate toward her. The Lord will close His heart toward a harsh husband's prayers with discipline, unless that prayer comes from repentance for the harsh attitude and backed up with appropriate actions toward his wife. So men, this is serious. We want God hearing our prayers, not resisting our prayers.

Here are some questions from a biblical counselor named Dave Dunham. Evaluate yourself—the tone you're setting, the relational dynamics. Think about how your wife expresses herself. Today would be a good day to ask her some of these questions.

- Does she feel safe to disagree with you?
- Does she feel honored in disagreements?
- Does she feel her opinions are valued?
- Do you respect her views?
- Do you ask for her opinion and listen carefully?
- Can you identify your wife's greatest fears, desires and needs, then would she agree with your assessment?
- How do you handle conflict and disagreement?
- How do you respond when you are told no?
- Is your authority more important than your spouse?
- How am I doing in being considerate toward you?

As we look at these verses, we need to own our own responsibility. Don't wait for your wife to start obeying verses one through six before you get to work on verse seven, husbands. And wives, don't wait to see how your husband is doing on verse seven before you embrace verses one through six as God's call on your life. There is power for you to obey these words. There is power for you to live like a Christian, even if your spouse is not.

That power is hinted at in the first words in verse one and verse seven. Look at it again. The words are "*In the same way...*" As we see that, we should be asking, "In the same way as what—or whom?" The answer to that is to go back to 1 Peter 2:21 and see Christ. "*For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his step.*" Christ is our example of becoming humble and vulnerable. In the same way as Christ, submit to your husbands, wives. And husbands, live considerately, honorably and humbly with your wives. Jesus is not asking you to do anything He has not done Himself.

When we fail—which we often do—return to the cross and remember verse 24: "*Christ himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree; so that, having died to sins,*" so that having died to a rebellious, unsubmitive attitude, so that having died to a harshness and inconsiderateness of spirit, "*we might live for righteousness.*" Wives, honor and submit to your husbands. Husbands, honor, cherish and be considerate toward your wives, because He bore our sins in His body so we could die to sin and live a new life. "*By his wounds you have been healed*" (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24).

Whether you are a wife or a husband, God is calling you to surrender your freedom to live as you please, and instead to follow the way of Christ. If that feels vulnerable, like you're dying to yourself, just remember Jesus and how He surrendered His freedoms to make you His bride. Consider His tenderness, His consideration of your needs, His willing submission to the point of death on a cross so that you could become with Him a joint heir of the grace of life and be born again to an inheritance that's imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away, but is kept in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:4).

Put your hope in Jesus and all that is coming to you in Christ. Be tenderized by His love, humbled by His grace and filled with His Spirit, so that you can become like Christ to your spouse. That's His call to us in His Word today and in His gospel He gives us power to live it.

Let's turn our eyes now to the gospel, as we prepare for the Lord's Supper together. Let's confess our faith together and stand as we do this.

Pastor: Church, what is your only comfort in life and in death?

Congregation: That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watched over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to Him, Christ, by His Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

Pastor: What do you need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort? Three things.

Congregation: First, how great my sins and misery are; second, how I am delivered from all my sins and misery; third, how I am to be thankful for such deliverance.

Let's pray.

How great my sins and misery are. If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. We're standing right now in the presence of God because a sacrifice has been made. Forgiveness flows from the cross. In our homes, where we let our guard down the most, that's where we often become most aware of our sinfulness.

Some of you right now might be feeling great regret over a failed marriage, so a passage like this reopens a wound. Others might be really aware of ways in which you're disobeying what God's Word calls us to here. As we prepare to receive the Lord's Supper, right now is a great time to take our eyes away from our many sins and fix them on our Savior. But in order to do that, we have to be honest about our sins. We have to walk in the light. So let's take a moment to silently confess our sins to the Lord, then let's avert our gaze away from our sins to the cross of Jesus and His perfect sacrifice for us. Let's pray silently.

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