

**1 Peter 3.1-8**

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Wives submit and husband's honour, for the good of one another.

Maybe the Bible reading has already turned you off, convinced you the Bible is sexist, outdated and irrelevant to our lives today.

Maybe the instruction for wives to submit to their husbands, you find offensive and unacceptable; or you feel the pain and grief of a husband who has not fulfilled his role, or abused his role, or you.-----

Maybe you're not rejecting this teaching, but just questioning or struggling with what God's word says, or how to live it out, as a wife or husband.-----

Whatever you're thinking or feeling right now, I encourage you to not close your ears or your heart.

For as Bible-believing Christians we believe all of God's word, is true and trustworthy, inspired by God and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training us.-----

Yes we need to do the work of interpreting what the author meant to his original audience before applying it to us, but please don't think you don't need to listen.---

And if you're single there's still a word for you here too.

So please come with me as we grapple with these difficult things, and I invite you to talk with me afterward if you have questions.-----

Since ch2 Peter has been teaching what it means to live as Christians, God's chosen & holy people.

That involves doing good, as we pass through this life n' wait for our heavenly home.---

And part of the good we do, is submitting to governing authorities, slaves submitting to masters, and now wives to their husbands.

In each of these are relationships we might be tempted to withdraw, but the apostle says, hang in there and do good.-----

**3v1** says 'in the same way', indicating Peter is to talk about Christian conduct, and following the example of Christ in his submitting and not sinning.-----

And we read, 'wives **submit** to your husbands'.-----

When a man called **Ross** was a boy, his family would spend summer holidays down at Ocean Grove; and one thing that always happened was a beach wrestling match.

In true male masculine style, the boys would test their strength and wrestle each other on the beach until one submitted.

But Ross was the weakest and says, 'I hated it because, when I was pinned down feeling hopelessly overpowered, the question was asked, 'Do you submit?'

Even still today when words like 'submit' are used, Ross says, I picture myself being pinned face-first into the sand, and that voice inside saying, 'You are weak if you submit, you're defeated again if you surrender'.-----

Yet when the Bible speaks about surrender it's not in terms of being conquered.

Ross says, it is choosing to let go, let go of all that we hold dear; putting ourselves in God's hands, and serving Him.-----

For many of us too, when we hear submit, what comes to mind are thoughts, feelings, memories; of a loss of power, choice, freedom.

Many of you may hear submit, and you think doormat; and oppression.-----

But that is to misunderstand God's intention for marriage.-----

**My intro to 1 Peter and first point today is, Roles in marriage.----- (SLIDE)**

I want to say from the outset, husbands and wives are equal in human dignity, equal in value, equal in election - co-heirs of salvation, v7.

We are equal, but God calls us to take on different roles, which is why I wanted to begin with and to touch on Ephesians 5.(**SLIDE**)

I preached on this in July last year, and wanted to quickly set the scene for 1 Pet 3 with it. Which says wives 'submit to your husbands as to the Lord'.

So as part of your serving the Lord Jesus, and in the same way you would submit to Jesus.--  
Wives and husbands have different God-given roles in marriage.

Wives are commanded to submit and respect, v33, husbands commanded to love sacrificially, v25,-----

Wives are to submit as Christ did to his Father. Husbands are to love as Christ did. Christ loved the church and gave up his life for his people, to forgive and cleanse all of us who trust in him.-----

Likewise husbands are to die to themselves; lovingly serve their wives.

**Headship** therefore is about servant-leadership.-----

Men, whether you are married or may one day be, know that headship is not to be used for yourself, because that's not how Christ used His headship.

He didn't use say, "You know, I'm going to sit here and you're going to serve Me."

He stripped himself and washed His disciples' feet ,and said, "Look what I've done, and I'm the Master. I'm giving you an example".-----

And wives, submission in marriage is not about you doing whatever he says, whenever he says it, no questions asked.

It's about you choosing to give-in, as you place yourself under his lead.-----

Tim Keller is a preacher and author from the US, and in a 2012 podcast with Tim and his wife Kathy Keller, **(SLIDE) Kathy helpfully said this:**

If there are husbands out there that are saying, "Yes, I'm the head. This is good teaching. I like this head stuff." It's respectful submission between equals. Submission is something that a wife gives. It's not something that a husband can demand. Christ emptied Himself. He didn't grasp equality with God. It was a voluntary submission. This proves that headship does not imply superiority, nor does submission imply inferiority.

In marriage, the husband and the wife both take on the role of Jesus. The husband takes the role of Jesus as He's the head of the church. The wife takes on the role of Jesus as He is the Son, submissive to the Father, for the sake of our salvation.

A head's job is to use their authority to meet needs, and serve. A head does not get all the perks, all the privileges—you know, choose control of the remote, pick the color of the car you buy, etc. Your headship is expressed in servant-hood primarily.

Husbands are to be servant-leaders and wives, servant-helpers.

End quote.-----

And because Christian husbands and wives are both to be like Jesus, putting the other first, it will mean the husband takes the initiative in serving, but often both doing what the other asks.-----

He gives up, she gives-in.-----

With the aspect of, with mutual listening, communicating, praying, the wife following his lead.-----

Yet, as Tim and Kathy say, wives who have husbands who do not understand their role as servants can best help their husbands by gently but firmly standing their ground, and showing him a better way. She may be the most help by insisting on counseling (or going herself, if necessary). Don't wait for permission. Making your own changes is the best way to encourage the other to do the same.

I highly recommend their books, **(SLIDE) The Meaning Marriage**, and the Meaning of Marriage couples devotional, which Kirsti and I have just started.-----

Submission is to be her choice, to please Christ, not be coerced by a controlling, manipulative, sinful or **abusive** husband.-----

**Steve Hoppe** in his Gospel Coalition article, 'A hidden epidemic God hates', says you may be experiencing abuse in the name of Christianity if you are experiencing someone: physically harming you, pressuring you to engage in sexual activity, insulting you, isolating you from your family or friends, threatening you, sabotaging your friendships, restricting access to finances, forcing you to diet or exercise, preventing you from working, controlling your communication, telling you what you can or can't say in small groups, church or social gatherings, locking you in rooms, blocking contact with counselors, mentors, spiritual

leaders, or punishing you for your sins. And Steve, a pastor and counsellor says, Yes I've seen all of these. (May 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/hidden-epidemic-god-hates/>)

If you've been abused, please talk to someone, a friend or leader, or Fiona at our Safe Church Unit.

Speak up, because we and your God, want you to be safe.

And it is loving to get help to stop someone continuing in their sin.-----

Let's now return to 1 Pet 3 as we come to **our Second Point, Submit to win. (SLIDE)-----**

In 1<sup>st</sup> century Greco-Roman culture, husbands and father's had absolute authority.

If they gave orders, wives and children were expected to submit and obey.

And if a husband changed his religion, the family would be expected to follow.

So what Peter says to Christian wives married to non-Christian husbands is counter-cultural.

A wife is not an all-accepting doormat.

In her turning to Jesus as Lord, and following and worshipping him, she may be rebelling against her husband.

And to stick with Jesus against her husband's will was huge, and it was courageous.----

But Peter is also calling Christian wives to something great – to show how following Jesus, not another religion, actually blesses their marriage.----

She will not serve his gods, but she will serve him faithfully, and with kindness, and patience, and generosity.-----

Paul says in **1 Cor 7** that if your non-Christian spouse wants to leave you, let them leave, you are not bound to them.

But Peter says more than that here – he says to Christian wives, submit to win your unbelieving husbands.-----

**V1** If your husband disbelieves the Gospel and disobeys God's word, submit 'so that... they may be won over without a word', by the way you live.-----

A wife's life and behaviour is a mighty weapon that God can use to win her husband for Christ.-----

It's not that words are irrelevant, for one cannot know & trust in Jesus without words. But the point is about the power of a life changed by Jesus.-----

Peter highlights **v2**, a husband seeing 'your pure and reverent lives'.

Pure speaks of being sexually faithful, and free from fault.

Reverent speaks of your great respect for God [2.17], and for your husband.

Even when he doesn't deserve it and hasn't earned it.-----

Submitting to your husband is not yielding to them through gritted teeth begrudgingly, but willingly, to serve God and try and save them.

And it's a beautiful thing.-----

And it's your behaviour more than your looks that will be meaningful.-----

Rich women in the first century would be showy about their wealth and status.

Displaying elaborate hairstyles with braiding and curls, gold jewelry and expensive clothes.

And Peter is saying in **v3**, don't think your external **beauty** is going to attract your man to Christ.

Real beauty comes from the heart, **v4**.-----

Not much has changed, has it?

The Australian beauty and personal care industry was valued at over \$5 billion last year.

The fashion industry contributed \$27 billion to the Aus economy last year.

That's a lot of hair n' skin products, a lot of makeup, a lot of new clothes.

Australians spend a lot on their physical appearance, don't they?--- Don't we?-----

And lockdown sent online orders sky-rocketing, even if we had bad hair. 😊

I wonder if you'd be comfortable for others to know how much you spend on your appearance?-----

It's not wrong to care for your body or physical appearance, or buy new things.

Christians should not disregard their physical appearance.

But God is saying here, as we heard in the Kids Talk, that what matters more, is the **heart**.  
**1Sam 16** said humans look at what's visible, God looks at the heart.-----

Married, or single, young or old, we all need to remember, real beauty in the sight of God is what comes from inside.

And we need to teach our children to focus on the heart, and work on their heart character more than their looks.-----

Reminding our kids what matters more than the new clothes, the best shoes, the apple watch, or nice jewelry.

What matters to God is your faith in the Saviour & commitment to live for him.-----

And what matters in a Christian wife, **v4**, is your gentle and quiet spirit.-----

Gentleness, or humility, is a quality all Christians should display.

A gentle wife will be willing to submit and not insist on her own rights.

Same with a husband married to a non-Christian wife - gentle.-----

Quiet describes someone who stays calm.

Someone who seeks harmony in relationships, and not arguments and fights.----

A non-Christian spouse may ridicule n' insult your Christian faith, but a godly person will not bite back, or fight back.

As we heard last week, Jesus did not insult or threaten in return.

And godly wives, godly people will respond like that too.-----

And men if you seek to marry one day, faith, gentleness, calmness and self-control, are qualities to look for in a wife.-----

Peter then calls us to consider the **example** of holy women of the past, **v5**, who displayed hope in God and godly submission.

Hope in God, is to be something that fills your heart and shapes your life.

And in this covid pandemic, our Christian hope has been given an opportunity to shine forth to our family and others, hasn't it?-----

Peter focuses on **Sarah** as a particular example of submission.

Sarah calling Abraham 'lord' is a reference to **Gen 18v12**.

The word in that context just meant 'Sir', and was the conventional, respectful way of speaking.

Interestingly Sarah said that in the context of her laughing and doubting God's promise about having a child at her 90 years of age.-----

Peter seems to ignore the context and just focus on that one word, though it did show her willingness to show submission and respect.-----

We do struggle though with other things that Abraham expected of Sarah.

Twice Abraham asked Sarah to deceive a king about her being married to him, to save his own skin. [Gen 12.v11-12] and 25 years later, Gen 20]

In those moments, leaving his wife vulnerable to adultery or abuse, Abe failed to trust God and love his wife.----

It seems Sarah submitted to him in those requests, like **v6** says, not fearing terror, but trusting God.-----

However, I wonder in the light of Scriptures wider teaching, if it would have been acceptable for her to not do what he asked, to avoid sin.-----

So Sarah gives us a godly example of respectful submission, but that doesn't mean she wasn't assertive or had opinions.

In **Gen 18.6** Abraham asks or directs Sarah to bake; in 12.13 & 20.13 he encourages her to do as she desires. By contrast in 16.2 Sarah encourages Abe to do as he desires, then in 21.10 she asserts what she wants him to do – sending Hagar away, which he does.

There were two sides to their relationship, there was communication, and give-and-take.-----

V6 is an illustration and example of the submission principle, it's not saying wives must call their husbands 'lord'.

As Neil made clear in the Winter Teaching series, couples have freedom to work out the practicalities of submission and loving headship in their own way.-----

But please understand that a wife's submission is good in God's sight.

And God's plan is for it to be good for marriages, a blessing to marriage.  
God designed it to bring unity, Christ-likeness and goodness to marriage.-----

**And what is also good and right is that, Point 3, Husbands honour.(SLIDE)----**

Now husbands are told how to follow Jesus, and respect and obey God, doing good to their wives.-----

And what does that include?

'Live with your wives in an understanding way'

That's true in the home, in the bedroom; and in everything.----

Husbands are commanded to be understanding.

That requires that we know our wife, and that requires that we make time for our wife and family. That we listen and love, talk and care.-----

It means we ought not be at work all day and most of the night, or at work or day and church meetings all night.-----

Do you know the best way your wife feels and experiences love?-----

And are you expressing that?-----

Whether through quality time, words of affirmation, active listening, acts of service, gift giving, or whatever?-----

Peter says, show understanding to your wife 'as a **weaker** partner'.-----

With Kirsti and I, when it comes to pain thresholds, I am certainly the weaker partner. 😊

I am a wuss or weakling when it comes to pain. 😊

Wives can certainly be mentally, morally, spiritually stronger.

But Peter likely means when it comes to physical strength most wives are weaker.

And God is saying to us husbands here, don't use your physical strength to hurt or oppress.

In the face of weakness we are to be considerate and show love.-----

Strength ought to be used for service.-----

And we must model that and teach that to our sons – their strength is to be used for service.-

Working for, serving and protecting others, while showing understanding, kindness, compassion, love – to wife and family.-----

And ladies if you hope to marry one day, that's the sort of man to look for.-----

I recommend the book,(**SLIDE**) She's got the wrong guy, by Deepak Reju.-----

Also girls, women, only be with someone who will **honour you** as a coheir of the grace of life, **v7**.

Men honouring their wives is more than respect, but it includes respect.

The Greek word speaks of what you hold up as valuable.

As a husband was told to honour the emperor, so he is told to honour his wife.

To hold her up, lift her up, with his words, his service.

Honour her in your sexual faithfulness, your attitudes and actions.-----

Husbands, everything we want to say or do to our wives, put it through this filter:

First ask yourself, Will it honour her, and lift her up?-----

From Eph 5, Will it show love for her, seeking her good?-----

I confess I've not always loved and considered and honoured, and have needed to ask my wife's forgiveness often.-----

And I thank God for the forgiveness Christ gives through repentance and faith.-----

Husbands, if your wife follows Jesus, you're both co-heirs of the grace of life.

That means you're both receivers of his loving kindness, both saved by Jesus, both enjoying fellowship with God.

As equals you're both headed to a gracious heavenly inheritance to spend eternity with God, his people, and each other.-----

And if you have an unsaved spouse, **keep praying** that they will be saved and that God will use your life and witness to draw them to Christ.-----

If you're single, or single again, I know not much of this sermon has applied to you.

But we don't just come to church for what we can get, but also what we can give.

So I ask you to please pray for married couples to live this out.  
 And pray for your brothers and sisters unsaved spouses, to put their trust in Jesus and be saved, and receive life eternal too.-----

And speaking of prayer, that's where Peter finishes the section.

He says, if you husbands don't show understanding and honour to your wives, your **prayers** will be hindered.

On the one hand this affirms **Ps 66v18 and Isa 59v2,(SLIDE)** that God will not hear your prayers if you intentionally continue in sin.-----

But Peter also likely means that a husband's harshness, disrespect or dishonouring will hinder their prayers as a couple.

For what wife would want closeness and to pray with a husband who hurts her?-----

But couples who pray together will find their marriage preserved and strengthened.

So there's a spiritual motivation for the wife in her submitting, and the husband in his honouring.-----

As I conclude, if you are married what does God call you to?-----

Wives to submit and husbands to honour, for the good of each other.-----

And may our families and Bundy church family, be enriched by such marriages.

Where godliness, love and service, submitting and honouring flow from the heart.

Let's pray.