

Living In Relationship
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1 Peter 3:1-12

Opening Discussion: What's the best marriage advice anyone ever gave you?

Here's the BIG IDEA of this lesson in four statements:

- Our relationships with others say a lot about our relationship with God. When someone professes to love the Lord and they can't get along with others, it makes you wonder.
- God is honored when we have healthy relationships with others, and His word teaches us how to have them.
- If I want to have healthy, close relationships with others, it all starts a healthy close relationship with my Heavenly Father.
- The Bible tells us how to have a successful marriage. A marriage where both spouses honor each other and they both honor God.

This very practical section of Peter's letter is all about how a follower of Christ should live our lives under difficult circumstances. This week the focus is on the marriage relationship. Chapter three begins with eight words that strike fear into the hearts of Bible study teachers everywhere: *"Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands..."* Let's begin with the first two verses of this chapter.

Wives and Husbands

3 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ² when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

- Verse one begins with the word "likewise" or "in the same way." That refers back to Peter's discussion of the example of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21–25). Just as Jesus was submissive and obedient to God's will, so a Christian husband and wife should follow His example.¹

- In chapter two Peter taught us to submit to government institutions and to employers even if they treat us harshly.
- Now “in the same way” he calls on wives to submit to the leadership role of their husbands. Submit means voluntarily let the other person lead.
- This would be easy to do if the husband is living a godly life in close relationship to Christ. But Peter is writing about how a Christian lives in difficult conditions. In this case, Peter says a wife should allow her husband to be the leader in the family even if her husband is not living close to God, or not a follower of Christ at all.
- **Why would a woman do this? Why can't we be “co-leaders?”**
- **I would contend that no organization ever worked well with “co-leaders.” Why do you think that is?**
- It takes two to tango but one of them has to lead!
- Why not the woman as leader? Scripture tells us that God's ideal design for marriage is for the husband to be the leader (see Ephesians 5:22-33.)
- In this text, it's also a way to influence that husband to be a godly leader.
- As the NLT puts it: “...even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives.”²
- Peter, a married man, wrote from experience. When a man really loves and cherishes his wife, there is no greater influence in his life (for good or bad) than her. By respecting him and modeling the life of a Christ-follower she influences her husband to be a Christ-honoring leader in the home.
- She models “...respectful and pure conduct.” She is a wife who is reverent to God and respectful to her husband. The purity of her life honors God and benefits her husband.
- The Bible Knowledge Commentary: “*The powerful **purity** of a godly woman's life can soften even the stoniest male heart without a word*”³
- A nagging wife never leads to a Godly husband. A loving wife might.
- The beauty of a Christian wife is an “inside job.” Verses 3 and 4:

³ Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.

- It’s a fact; a woman who is stylish and attractive is admired by others and adored by her husband!
- It’s wonderful to have an attractive spouse but we’d better be in love with the person on the inside because the outside is going to change.
- True internal beauty is “imperishable.” It won’t fade with time.
- Peter is saying, you can’t “glam” your way to a happy marriage. A marriage that is based on physical beauty won’t last very long because no matter how attractive a spouse is if it’s all about looks, someone else will turn the other spouse’s head.
- How sad to see a lovely, elegant woman who thinks her only value is how she looks on the outside. Speaking as a husband, if you love your wife she’s just as attractive BEFORE she puts on make-up and jewelry!
- Some have taken this out of context as a command for godly women to be “plain Jane.” I don’t believe it! Peter is simply teaching Proverbs 31:30 (ESV) ³⁰ Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. (Might I add an AMEN!)
- Next Peter points to a role model from the Old Testament.

⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

- First, let’s be clear that Sarah called Abraham “lord” with a little “l.”
- Referring to him as lord simply means Sarah allowed Abraham to be the head of the household. Some might say, “*Easy for Sarah. Abraham was Mr. Perfect Father of Israel!*” **Well Bible scholars, why is that not true?** [See Gen. 12:1-5; 10-20; 13:1-11; 20:1-18; 22:1-19.]

- Sarah had her hands full, yet she modeled how to be a godly wife.
- Now, what about husbands? Peter has instructions for us too. Verse 7:

⁷ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

- Let me quote Chuck Swindoll's interpretation of this verse:
 - Living with your wife means "dwelling together in a close relationship – physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Husbands too easily substitute making a good living and providing physical needs for sharing their time, their words, their feelings."
 - "Husbands are to know their wives – a deep understanding and appreciate of one's wife...perceiving her most intimate desires and personal needs...her unspoken concerns and worries."⁴
- In summary, work every day to understand your wife! Study her to learn how to meet her needs and show her love. EVERY DAY, not just on your anniversary or her birthday! Remembering those dates is a good start.
- Husbands are also to "honor" their wives as the "weaker vessel."
- That word "honor" means *[giving] marks of respect, precious value*⁵
- Let's get this "weaker vessel" thing over with! This isn't meant to be demeaning to women.
- In that day people lived in a world of hard physical labor. The average man was USUALLY physically stronger than the average woman.
- If you've ever watched a woman give birth to a child you'd know that most women are "stronger" than most men. My mother used to say if men had to give birth there would never have been any children born.
- I agree with several scholars who interpret "weaker vessel" the way you think about a priceless treasure or a delicate vase.

- I bet you protect and care for an antique crystal bowl handed down in your family much differently than you handle your cast iron skillet!
- My wife should be such a prized treasure that I handle her with care.
- Peter makes it plain that husbands and wives are equal in God's eyes when he says wives are "heirs" with their husbands in God's grace.
- Men and women who are followers of Christ have totally equal standing in God's eyes.
- Peter gives another good reason for a husband to honor his wife.
- He says, if you don't honor your wife your prayer life will be a mess!
- Husbands, ever yell at your wife then try to have a quiet time? Spouses, ever fight with each other on the way to church then try to enjoy the worship service? Failure to honor your spouse will derail your prayer life!
- So, what have we learned about having a happy, godly marriage?
 - Wives, let your husband be the leader, even if don't obey God.
 - Husbands, honor and treasure your wife with love and respect.
- Any other thoughts on this lesson before we wrap up?
- Verses 8-12 shift us back to instructions for every follower of Christ who is living in difficult circumstances:

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

[Then Peter quotes Psalm 34]

¹⁰ For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹ let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For 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 evil."

- How do we live as Christians under difficult circumstances?

- Be agreeable, be sympathetic, be loving, be compassionate, be humble.
No retaliation. No sharp-tongued sarcasm. Instead...be a blessing and [you'll] also get a blessing. (Message paraphrase)⁶

So, What's the Takeaway?

- God is honored when we have healthy relationships with others. That's especially true when it comes to the marriage relationship.
- The Bible tells us how to have a successful marriage. A marriage where both spouses honor each other and they both honor God.
- I want to challenge every believing couple in our class to practice what I would call "Marriage Evangelism." Has it ever occurred to you that a successful marriage is not only an example to your kids and other young people, it can be a way to win unbelievers to Christ?
- Just as a godly wife can live with her unbelieving husband in such a way that she might win him to Christ, a godly couple can work at our marriage in a way that we might win others to Christ.
- A godly marriage can be not only a "slice of heaven on earth" for the spouses, but a sign pointing to heaven for unbelievers.
- If someone studied your marriage would they see Jesus? Are you willing to make that your goal as a couple?
- Your marriage is your personal love story. It can also be a ministry to those around you.
- This week and every week: Will you strive to have the kind of marriage that displays the love of Christ as an example to unbelievers?
- To paraphrase 1 Peter 2:12: Have the kind of godly marriage in front of your unbelieving neighbors that when they see how you love and honor each other they will give honor to God.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 407). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Pe 3:1–2). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

³ Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 848). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary) by Charles R. Swindoll - Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. (December 1, 2014)

⁵ Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

⁶ Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (1 Pe 3:8–9). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.