

Living Hope Part Six: “Jesus-Shaped, Winsome Conduct”

By Ben Froese

1 Peter 3:1-7

1 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³ Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴ Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

⁷ Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

I. Submit? Really?

“We must admit that great abuses have taken place and have led many to see in this passage some kind of moral subjugation of women by men... Our problem here is with the fundamental abuse this text has created in the hands of too many men who have forced their wives against their wills.”

-Scot McKnight

“Wives, *in the same way* submit yourselves to your own husbands...” (v.1)

Since Peter includes these words “in the same way,” we need to look at what comes before this passage:

“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human authority.” - 1 Peter 2:13

“Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters.” - 1 Peter 2:18

These texts show us that submission is (1) *for all believers*, not just wives, and (2) qualified by *ultimate submission and obedience to God*. So, when Peter tells wives to submit, he does not mean a blind submission of going along with anything and everything.

“To this [and here Peter is talking about suffering for doing good] you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” -1 Peter 2:21-23

II. A Reason for Submission

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands *so that*, if any of them do not believe the word, *they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives*, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives” (vv. 1-2).

Peter gives a concrete reason as to why this Jesus-shaped submission is so important. The reason is missional – and by missional, I mean for the sake of advancing the message of Jesus. Its submission is so that their husbands may be won over to Christ!

“A woman ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband’s friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Hence, it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the door tight upon all strange rituals and outlandish superstitions.”

-Plutarch (a first-century Greek philosopher)

Now, Peter tells wives to be the ones to influence their husbands!

III. Inner Beauty is what Really Matters

“Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (vv. 3-4).

Peter shifts our focus to what really matters: the inner beauty.

This inner beauty is “of a gentle and quiet spirit” (v. 4)

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with *gentleness* and respect.” -1 Peter 3:15

“Quietness” is also exhibited by Jesus in 1 Peter 2:23

A “gentle and quiet spirit” is not a posture of “proper womanhood,” it’s a Jesus-shaped posture of *missional winsomeness* for us all.

IV. Be Like Sarah

Sarah is an example of a woman who entrusted herself to God, just like Jesus did in 1 Peter 2:23.

“[In verses 5-6] Peter seems to extrapolate Sarah’s entrusting herself to the God who oversees human history and intervenes on behalf of his people, rather than Sarah’s fearing what might befall her, either from her husband or on account of her husband’s machinations. In this way, she

illustrates the very behavior that Christ provided as a pattern for his followers: ‘while suffering did not threaten but handed himself over to the one who judges justly.’”

-Joel Green

V. Mutuality in Marriage

“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (v. 7).

The words “in the same way” appear again. This means that husbands are also to exhibit Jesus-shaped conduct. It also means that marriage is to be viewed in terms of mutuality.

A more ‘literal’ translation of what Peter says to husbands here: “Live with your wives in an understanding way... and show her honour...”

In that culture, honour usually only flowed in one direction – toward the person in the authoritative position. But here, Peter says that honour should flow the other way too in a marriage.

“...so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (v. 7).

Paul Stevens, in his book *Marriage Spirituality*, says that in Christian circles we often assume this idea that couples who pray together have a healthier relationship. But Stevens says that it actually works the other way around: it’s that those who have a healthy relationship pray together!

VI. Jesus Wins Us Back through *His* Conduct

Jesus certainly provides the model for us to follow as we relate to others, and he’s the one who also empowers us to be people who are winsome in our witness to the world. But it all starts with Jesus’ work of winning us back to himself through *his* conduct.

On the cross, Jesus redeems us – he purchases us back for himself – and he wins us back with his love.

Life Group Discussion and Reflection Questions

Open Up

Who are the people in your life who you find it most difficult to share the message of Jesus with? Why do you think this is the case?

Dig In

Read 1 Peter 3:1-7

1. What are your initial feelings or your “gut reaction” to this passage? Does it disturb you or make you uncomfortable in any way? Or does it encourage you?
2. How do you think that men and women might hear this text differently?
3. Peter tells wives to submit “in the same way”. What do you think is significant about these words?
4. Peter tells wives to submit – and remember that this was no surprise in their cultural context – but then gives a concrete reason why: “so that, if any of [the husbands] do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior [or “conduct”] of their wives” (v. 1). Can you think of any stories where the conduct of a Christian person led another to receive Jesus? What might it look like in your life to display the gospel through your conduct?
5. Peter contrasts outward and inner beauty in verses 3-4. How might you define “inner beauty”? Why does the text say that inner beauty is more important? How might focusing on inner beauty rather than outer beauty reshape your perspective on life?
6. Peter presents Sarah from the book of Genesis as an example for wives to follow in verses 5-6. He closes this section by stating, “You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.” Elizabeth Elliot writes, “Fear arises when we imagine everything depends on us.” What might it look like for us to let go of fear in our lives? Where does trusting God come into this equation?
7. In verse 7, Peter turns to address husbands. Do you think his words to husbands are softer than to wives? Or perhaps not? If you are a husband, what might it look like in your life to “be considerate”, to “respect” or to “honour” your wife? If you are not a husband,

you're still to treat other people with consideration and respect! What might this look like in your life?

Reflection and Prayer

Finish your time together by refocusing on Jesus: read through 1 Peter 2:21-25. Then pray for each other – pray that the Jesus story would reshape our conduct for us all.