

Husbands, Wives and the Glory fo God

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[0 : 0 0] Now, we have our first Bible reading, which comes from Genesis chapter 18 and the first 13 verses.

And we're reading this because Peter in 1 Peter 3 makes reference to Abraham and Sarah. So Genesis 18 at the beginning.

The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby.

When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, if I have found favour in your eyes, my Lord, do not pass your servant by.

Let a little water be brought and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat so you can be refreshed and then go on your way now that you have come to your servant.

[0 : 5 9] Very well, they answered. Do as you say. So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. Quick, he said, get three siahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread. Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice tender calf and gave it to a servant who hurried to prepare it.

He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree. Where is your wife Sarah? they asked him.

There in the tent, he said. Then one of them said, I will surely return to you about this time next year and Sarah, your wife, will have a son. Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

Abraham and Sarah were already very old and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, after I am worn out and my Lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?

Then the Lord said to Abraham, why did Sarah laugh and say, will I really have a child now that I am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord?

[2 : 0 6] I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son. So there's God working out his covenant promises to Abraham and Sarah.

And there's that lovely picture of Abraham and Sarah as a family showing hospitality to those men who turn out to be angels sent with a wonderful message from God.

1 Peter chapter 3 and the first seven verses. 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 behaviour of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery 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. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves.

[3 : 18] They submitted themselves to their own husbands, 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.

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.

Amen. Okay, so if you have your Bibles, please have them open at 1 Peter and chapter 3.

As we think about this together, as we think about what Peter says about wives and husbands and the glory of God.

And I'm going to say that this is another challenging text to preach. Challenging for a number of different reasons. One, the topic of submission is hard because we know that men have abused this.

[4 : 27] There has been a problem of abusive leadership and misusing of truths like this. And then we think in society of things like the Me Too movement and we recognise it as a problem.

There is natural resistance to the topic of submission. Because we understand women are equally competent, equally valuable, and sometimes there can be misunderstanding.

For others it can seem to be against the notion that the Gospel breaks down barriers. We think, well, this is setting up barriers. And so there are questions.

And so it's hard. It's hard to teach. It's hard to teach from a distance like this. Also, there's a challenge because Peter is writing in a very different time and place than ours. So Peter, in a first century Roman context, is actually giving great dignity to women, recognising them as being morally responsible.

And actually, in his words, there's the potential for social transformation, recognising in spiritual terms that male and female are equal.

[5 : 40] But while it's really dignifying in the first century, we don't hear it necessarily in the 21st century. And we can oppose it. It's challenging also because there's going to be a temptation for some of us to switch off.

And in our digital age to switch off literally. Because we think this isn't relevant to me. I'm not a wife or I'm not a husband, as we get to the end of the text. So we need to show how the general principle of verse 12 is crucial.

Verse 12, which says, Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. So this is Peter giving another example of how that principle works itself out.

So there is a specific focus. But we need to show how it's also got relevance for all of us. And so I hope, stick with me, I hope that every Christian who is listening will see that we must give thought in our own context for how to bring God glory in our society, in our relationships, whatever that might look like.

Perhaps to help, I'm going to borrow from Rebecca McLaughlin's story. Rebecca McLaughlin, who wrote *Confronting Christianity*, which incidentally is an excellent book.

[7 : 07] If you want to think about some of the hard questions facing Christianity. She talks about coming to this point of view, Peter's point of view here, reluctantly. And especially as a woman talking with other friends about the gospel showing love across differences.

She found this teaching of submission very difficult. So what brought resolution for her? And maybe this will help some of us as well.

Well, the resolution came from Ephesians 5.25. That's where we began. Where do we begin? Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

In other words, it was the incredible demand that the gospel placed on husbands that then made the call to submission acceptable.

Love your wife to death. Sacrifice for her. Her needs before yours is the message to husbands as we pattern our relationships on Jesus.

[8 : 18] And Rebecca McLaughlin, she realised, well, marriage is about Jesus and the church. Marriage is a glimpse into the self-giving of Jesus.

The sacrifice of Jesus. The other-centred love of Jesus. And so 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 1 to 7 is built on the people of God responding to Jesus submitting to the cross for his people.

Wives, husbands, all of us. It's the sacrifice and the submission of Jesus that then shapes how we are to live for him and how we are to live in our relationship.

So let's begin to get into this. And let's ask this question. Why are wives called to submit? So let's think general principles to us now.

So to hear verse 1 as we should, let me read verse 1. Wives, in the same way, submit yourself to your own husband. So to hear that as we should, to not get any misunderstandings, we need to dig into the Bible.

[9 : 31] And I want to talk about three different patterns that we see in the Bible that can help to understand this. First of all, there's the pattern of creation. So you go to the beginning of the Bible, Genesis 1 to 3.

What do we find there? We find God creating male and female in his image, in his likeness. That we are equal in dignity and value as image bearers.

That's clear. Biblically, that's absolutely clear. But we also see that God made Adam first and gives him a role of authority.

And that then sets this universal, unchanging principle across times and cultures. Now that will look different across times and cultures, but the principle stays the same. So there's the pattern of creation.

And then we also need to think about the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus? Jesus is fully God. Jesus is absolutely equal with God his Father.

[10 : 34] And yet, Jesus submitted to becoming a man in order to represent humanity. Jesus submitted to death on a cross.

To be our sin-bearing, sin-forgiving saviour. And so the pattern of Christ tells us that submitting does not mean a person is inferior.

So there's the pattern of Christ and the pattern of Christ. And there's the pattern of the gospel. And it's back to Ephesians 5. And that reminder that marriage is about Jesus and the church. So when Peter calls wives to submit, he's making that first and foremost about responding to the reality that Jesus is Lord, that he has submitted to death for them.

When he calls on husbands to love and serve, he's calling them to do that in response to the loving service of Jesus for them and for the church.

And to be a picture of Jesus presenting the gospel in marriage to the world. So coming back to 1 Peter chapter 3.

[11 : 49] And indeed coming back to that wider passage that we're in from 2.11 to 3.7. The church is being called to submit. Submit to government.

Submit to their masters. Thinking about sort of workplace stuff. And wives are called to submit to husbands. And all of those are to be motivated by a response to the gospel.

And that's what we've seen in each different theme. In other words, Jesus has loved me. Jesus has submitted to the cross for me. He has suffered and died to save me.

And that then influences how I live in relationship to others. So in this very specific call for a wife to submit, we need to understand this isn't about traditional gender roles in Peter's mind.

And in the teaching of the Bible, it's about love and obedience to the Lord Jesus. That can never be said enough. That's always the motivation for the people of God in the Bible.

[12 : 54] Our obedience that flows from the love that Jesus has for us. And as we receive his grace, we are then called to obey to his glory and for him.

And when we understand that, that then allows us to draw some boundaries around this principle because we must recognise that this has been misused at times. So what does submission mean?

And what does submission not mean? It's also really important for us to address. So the Christian New Testament scholar Karen Jobes, she makes a great point in her book on 1 Peter when she says, We are called to live out our marriages in a way that honours the gospel in today's social order.

Her point is, first century Roman world is not 21st century Edinburgh. So the first century husband and wife, the 21st century husband and wife in Edinburgh, we are to relate to each other in a way that reflects the biblical view of marriage, that reflects the central place of the gospel.

But that's going to look different from place to place, culture to culture, even from household to household. We need to remember that we are image bearers as people, image bearers of God.

[14 : 18] And so we need to guard against the sin of misrepresenting what Jesus is like in our relationships.

So we need to give a lot of attention in all of our relationships to thinking about, am I reflecting and representing Jesus well?

And so when Peter comes to marriage and to husbands and to wives, he lays down principles, not specifics, but principles. And each husband and wife then must figure that out in their own setting.

So that's a reminder that it's not the role of the church to get into the nitty gritty of how your marriages put these principles into practice. It's our responsibility to lay down the principles.

But we dare not be overbearing and interfere and say, wives, you should live like this before your husband or husband, you should be like this. No, we lay the principles and then it's up to husbands and wives to work on how that looks for them.

[15 : 25] Now, five points on what does submission mean and what does it not mean? We need to do a good bit of work on this just so we're all as much as possible on the same page. And this is largely drawn from Femi Osunui, who works in Lagos in Nigeria.

It does not mean that women are inferior when we talk about submission. OK, we remember that from Genesis 1, equal value, dignity, image bearers of God together.

Here, we can show it from our text, verse 1. We recognise it's not inferior because women are given a vital ministry. This whole talk from Peter about living for Jesus in their marriage is a vital kingdom ministry.

This is evangelism, frontline evangelism going on. So they're given a vital ministry. And then in verse 7, we discover that they are heirs with their husbands in the gracious gift of life.

So they've got the same spiritual inheritance. There's no inferiority here. It also does not mean that women are called to submit to all men. Did you notice the limit in verse 1?

[16 : 38] Submit yourselves to your own husband. And again, let me say it again, each family unit is going to work how that looks in practice for their situation.

And we might take very different views on how that looks. And that's OK, so long as we're holding to the biblical principle. Now, it also does not mean that women are being called to put a husband's will ahead of the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember, this is speaking to Christian women. They're not being called to put their husband's will ahead of that of Jesus. Now, the example of Sarah is interesting. So we read a little bit of Sarah's and Abraham's story in Genesis 18.

Notice in our text, Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him her Lord. That's little L, Lord. That's a term of respect.

Sarah recognised God as capital letter Lord. Lord of all. Lord of their marriage. Lord of her life. And God the Lord came over Abraham, the little L, Lord.

[17 : 46] Now, this call to submit also does not mean there are no limits on it. Again, Peter's emphasis all throughout.

Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the one we are to revere and honour. So that means Christian women should not submit if they are asked to do sinful actions.

Should not submit if they are being asked to go against their conscience. Should not submit if they are being asked to go against God's commands. Remember, Peter is talking about suffering.

And that's some of the ways in this kind of marriage where one is a believer and the other isn't, where there might be suffering. Expectations where, in this case, a wife has to say no because of my faith in God.

That's what it doesn't mean. But what does it mean? Well, let's hear it again. Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands. It means being disposed to, agreeable to, follow the leadership of a husband in a family.

[18 : 57] However that looks in each case. It means being inclined to submit. So long as, verse 6, so long as you can still do what is right in God's eyes.

In other words, so long as you're not being led into sin and so long as you don't give way to fear. So long as the fear and loyalty goes firstly to Christ the King. So I hope that that maybe has cleared away some misunderstanding.

Perhaps it's also shown where Christians and the church have gone astray from Bible teaching by being heavy-handed or being abusive in the way that we've used this kind of thing. And I hope that we'll be able to see as we go on the positive nature of the command.

Now, let's get into specifics for a few minutes. So, first big theme from the first six verses. Wives, submit to your husband to the glory of God.

So we're being introduced, I guess, to what's been happening in the first century as Christianity is beginning to take hold in Roman society.

[20 : 10] There are wives who are converting to faith in the Lord Jesus with husbands who as yet have not. And so the behaviour of a wife then could add to or remove from those suspicions and those attacks that were being laid against this new faith.

You know, some people thought Christianity was a great social evil. It would create great disruption in society and in families. And Peter's saying that wives by their behaviour can either sort of add to or take away from that idea.

In view here, a specific category of wife, wives of non-Christian husbands. Now, what does Peter have to say to this group of women?

Let's think about three M's together briefly. First of all, what is their mission? Verse one. Submit so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over.

Look to win them over. In other words, look to change their hearts so they're not hostile to faith. Positively that they would come to follow Jesus as Lord.

[21 : 29] That they would come to see him as good news. As we have already said, this is then frontline mission for God in a person's own house.

And I imagine many of us can testify that our home situation can be the hardest to witness for Jesus if either a spouse or the extended family are not Christians.

And remember the context of 1 Peter, where he's often writing to a suffering church. Perhaps these wives are suffering insult or being rejected or marginalised because of this new faith.

I was reading this week an article on persecuted women within the persecuted church. And attacks are on the rise. Husbands or fathers disowning or attacking their wife for bringing shame on the family for converting.

And so perhaps in a much lesser way there is some of those pressures going on here. But that's their mission, to win them over. What about their method? Verse 1 again.

[22 : 41] That they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. So the emphasis falls on godly character and behaviour more than words.

Purity and reverence. How we live before God that then sort of flows out into the marriage relationship. There's wisdom calls involved in this.

You know, there are times for words. But there's also that reality, as Jesus said, Let your light shine so that men may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Peter no doubt has this in mind as he speaks to the church and as he speaks to wives here. He talks about an inner beauty that is to be compelling. In verse 4, the gentle and quiet spirit.

Again, as I read stories of persecuted women, there was one lady called Sozan in Syria. And she was converted to Christianity by hearing the words of Matthew 11, 29.

[23 : 49] Jesus, when he says, I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. And the gentleness of Jesus was what she found compelling.

And then here Peter is calling on Christians and Christian wives to have that gentleness. And like many Muslim converts, Sozan in Syria is finding that a real challenge in face of the barriers and the hostility within her family situation.

Peter gives the example of Sarah. Sarah, Sarah in verse 6, who obeyed Abraham. Obeyed in the sense of following Abraham's spiritual lead while all the time acknowledging that God was her covenant Lord.

So the method is about sort of inner beauty and character and good works. And the motivation is so important. And this is a radically new part of Christian teaching.

Peter isn't saying submit to your husband in order to keep the social order. Submit to your husband in order to keep the peace. Rather, it's clear that he says submit for the Lord's sake.

[25 : 00] Submit because it has great worth in God's sake. To live with that kind of godly character, submitting to your husband has great worth to God.

Submit, verse 5, putting your hope in God. Submit, verse 6, not giving way to fear of your husband, but being guided by that sense of fear and awe and wonder and love and loyalty towards the Lord Jesus.

So it's as those who have been set free in the gospel, they are then called to submit to their husbands for God's sake and for the spiritual good of their husband and by extension their family.

Now, let's draw out some teaching for all of us here. Let's think first if this directly relates to you, if you have a husband who's not a believer or a wife that's not a believer.

The first thing the Bible is saying to us is that your primary call is to live for God's glory. To put Jesus first.

[26 : 17] To build your identity in and on the Lord Jesus. And that's going to require wisdom and prayer and the help of the church.

There is a call to honour and respect your husband or your wife. To be considerate, to be compassionate. To seek their highest good.

Which ultimately we know is their salvation. So this is a call to a life of service. Where perhaps you spend much more time in prayer to God about your husband or your wife than you do talking to them about your faith.

Choosing carefully when to use words. But always looking to live shining God's light.

What does this have to say to any of us who are married? There is a call to love one another for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

[27 : 28] Remembering that marriage is a picture of the gospel and the love of Jesus for his church. Here too is an encouragement to pursue godly character that's pointing our family to Jesus daily.

Here is an encouragement to seek one another's spiritual welfare together to invest in eternity and what ultimately matters. To build a marriage on the foundation of Jesus and the gospel.

That his love would fill you with love for your husband, your wife, your children, for extended family. If you're unmarried, but considering it, and perhaps that's some of you listening in.

I appreciated the wisdom and honesty of a man called Scott Croft when he said marriage is both incredibly fun, and it is, and incredibly hard.

It will be your greatest act of ministry and service. Now that's not something that we discover from Hollywood or social media where it's perhaps much more about emotions and attraction.

[28 : 45] The Bible says it's an act of will. Of sacrificing oneself, of being a servant for another. So it's important to have that correct view of marriage and mindset.

Let me also say that we should never misuse this text to justify pursuing a non-Christian.

If you're a Christian and you're not married, marry a Christian. And if nothing else, this text is showing some of the suffering that comes when a husband and a wife don't share that same foundation of faith.

The Bible says don't be unequally yoked. Because it will bring pain. Not being able to share Jesus.

The most important thing to you, not being able to share God as your refuge and strength together. Of constantly being pulled in different directions.

[29 : 50] Of the pressures on family when there are those separate pulls. So don't misuse this to justify pursuing a non-Christian. Praise God if we are in this situation.

There is grace and there is help and there is strength for us. And praise God for the encouragement that there is redemption and salvation.

And Christian marriages can be established. And also, if you're thinking about marriage, begin preparing your heart now.

Think about what Peter is saying is most important. Grow in your knowledge and love of God. Make sure your life is built on putting Jesus first and serving the needs of others. And then look for a godly girl, look for a godly guy that shares those values.

All of us. Let's recognise. When we think about what Peter is saying here. Let's recognise the impact of what we might call lifestyle evangelism.

[31 : 02] Living for the glory of God in our relationships. Lots of people today are interested in Christianity true. But almost as many people and perhaps more are interested in asking, does Christianity work?

What difference does it make? And here's a reminder, positive reminder, encouragement. God can use our lives for his glory to save others. So, wives, submit your husbands to the glory of God is the dominant message.

And then very, very briefly, husbands, verse 7, honour your wives to the glory of God. Now, you might have the question, why just one verse for the husbands? Is Peter letting husbands off the hook?

Well, remember the context of 1 Peter. He's writing to those who are likely to suffer or to face oppression at the hands of others. And that's not really the case for husbands of the first century. The focus is on wives who are much more likely to face opposition from, in this case, their unbelieving husbands.

But nevertheless, he has an important truth to share. Husbands in the same way. He begins the same way as he talked to the servants, same way as he talked to wives. In the same way, same motive.

[32 : 13] Love for Jesus, submitting to him as Lord, is to define how we approach being a husband. Be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect.

Be considerate. This is back to the gospel, back to the example of Jesus. Put the needs of others first. Put the needs of your wife ahead of our own. And be respectful. Be respectful.

Why? Because, as Peter says, your wife is weaker. And remember, in the first century, they were weaker physically, but also weaker in their social position.

So be respectful. So be respectful. And recognise that they share equally in the gift of eternal life. So here's a reminder that Christianity is indeed a great equaliser.

And there's a warning at the end. Do this. Live this way. Be considerate and respectful. Show honour so that nothing will hinder your prayers. What's Peter saying?

[33 : 07] A breakdown in a relationship of a husband to a wife brings a negative impact on one's relationship with God. It will hinder our prayers. It will spoil intimacy with God.

So the basic message to husbands and to would-be husbands is, remember, we are servants. We're not consumers. We are to love and honour like Jesus.

Sacrificing for the wives and the women in our lives. Putting their needs first. Wanting above all their spiritual good. And for husbands and wives.

And for those looking in on marriage. Recognise that Jesus' love for the church is the ultimate meaning of marriage. We are called, if we were a husband or a wife, to live out that drama. To reflect the love of Jesus to one another.

To a watching world and before God himself. So let's finish with our big point that we had for our children. Live so that people in our lives see Jesus in us.

[34 : 10] You probably have people in your life who know you are Christian. And you pray for them. Perhaps over days or months or years you've shared the Bible.

You've shared your faith with them. But as yet there's been no change. As yet there's no interest. Peter is saying, take heart. He says, yes, that is a form of suffering.

Because we long for them. We long to share our faith in common. But take heart. But take heart. If they know that you live for Jesus. And if they see and feel that love and goodness in your life for them.

God may use that to win them for himself. So look around in your mind's eye. Pray for Christian marriages and families.

Pray for one another in our relationships. That the good news of the love of Jesus might be seen through us. You sebel have been speaking to.