

Christ-Centred Marriage - 1 Peter 3:1-7

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[0 : 0 0] The servant of the world now in victory reigning, lift your voices to the one who is seated on the throne. See him in the new Jerusalem. Praise the one who saved us. That's the reason we're here this morning, to worship in song, to worship in prayer, to the ministry of the word and in fellowship. So as we come to the Lord and as we come to continue in our worship, let's remember why we're here. We're here not as part of a club, not as part of an organization, but we're here to enter into the Holy of Holies and to commune with the living God. So let's continue that worship as we look at 1 Peter chapter 3 and we're going to look at the first seven verses. Peter writes, 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. 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.

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 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. Let's pray.

Father, as we come before your throne this morning, help us to cast our cares on you. Help us to remember that you are not a God who is distant and forbidding but you are close to the brokenhearted, that it is your natural condition and nature to come to those who are brokenhearted and to give them rest and peace. So wherever we're coming from this morning, Lord, if we're coming from a place of strength or a place of weakness, a place of peace or a place of tension, help us to put our burdens on your altar and offer them to you. Be with us as we continue to look at your word.

May what I have to say be glorifying to you and edifying to your people. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. In preparation for this sermon, I was thinking about my own wedding day and like many young husbands-to-be, I was quite nervous and my dad, sensing that this was the case, took me aside, took me out to the lobby of the hotel just to chill out for a little bit and calm down.

And this is it, I thought. This is the moment where my father passes on his years of wisdom to me as I embark on this new journey. The man I look up to the most will give me sage counsel and wise advice and so full of expectation for what I was about to hear, I settled in for a lesson of the profundities and the practicalities of marriage. Imagine my sense of anticipation being deflated like a cheap balloon when leaning in and putting his arm around me, my father says, you know, Dan, they say a man is incomplete until he's married and then he's finished.

[3 : 5 1] Now, of course, he meant that as a joke. He was happily married to my mother for 41 years before he passed away and it certainly lighted my mood and it certainly put things into perspective that I was focusing on all the wrong things on that day.

Is the minister going to show up on time? Is the music all going to go okay? What happens if they don't cut the cake the right way? All of these sorts of things. But it helped me to focus and eventually on the biblical idea of marriage, not being something that finishes you or completes you, but rather that it's a new beginning.

It's taking one sinner, putting them together with another one so that they can figure out life together. Different personalities, different roles, different people.

And as the journey starts, and speaking for myself and I'm sure the married couples would agree, you start to learn a lot more about grace, about mercy, about gentleness, kindness, perseverance.

Now, the sermon isn't just about marriage, so if you're not married, don't worry, hang in there, I'll get to you. But first, let's just have a look and see where the text takes us. Sam drew the short straw this morning because normally when the leader comes and says, what's the theme of your sermon, I can give two or three points.

[5 : 14] And my response is, well, I don't really have one this morning. We're just letting the text take us where it'll take us. But if you want to think about one thing as we go through this text, think about gentleness.

How we're gentle to one another. Verses 1 and 2. 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.

Remember that time last week when I was talking about Bible verses that were unpopular? Well, we hit the jackpot this morning for modern Western society. Let's clear up a few things before we get started.

Very important. Peter is not talking about men versus women. He's not talking about the general interaction between men versus women. This is not a pretext for a male-dominated society.

Look at verse 1. Submit yourselves to your own husbands, he says to the wives. And likewise in verse 7. Husbands, as you live with your wives.

[6 : 24] So Peter is talking about this specific relationship that he has in mind between an individual man, an individual woman, marriage. One man, one woman, in a covenant relationship for life.

It's not talking about women being inferior to men, or men having authority over women by virtue of gender. Because a man is no more superior to a woman than he is to another man.

Because of any reason. And we know this, and I think this is in your notes, because Paul said in Galatians 3.28, there is no longer Greek or Jew.

There is no longer slave or free. There is no longer male or female. For all are one in Christ. And men and women have distinctive characteristics and identities, but both of them have the same standing in God's eyes.

And not just this, but Peter isn't just talking about marriage in general. Most immediately, he's talking about a marriage where one spouse is a believer and the other spouse is not.

[7 : 30] This would have been common in the early church, just like it's common now. And sticking to the context of this letter as a whole, as we've been finding out, Peter is saying your best way to witness to somebody isn't always necessarily to go point by point through the biblical narrative of sin and redemption.

But rather, still in verse 1, in this case, that a wife might win over their unbelieving husband without words, by the behavior that the wife exhibits when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

In other words, if that's your situation, don't worry about saying the right thing all the time, but having the right words. Instead, concentrate on your conduct, because that's the whole point of Peter's letter, your outward behavior.

Focus on that. It's pretty good life advice in general, isn't it? Think about the way people perceive you. Think about how you come across to people, what your attitude is like.

Because they say a picture is worth a thousand words, and there's no bigger picture than that which your life gives to other people. So Peter is saying, let your life be a picture that shows your godly character.

[8 : 44] And not just this, but look at verse 3. Did you know there's fashion advice in the Bible? We're about to get some this morning. Verse 3, A wife's beauty shouldn't come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and jewelry and fine clothes.

Some of you were going to go to Matt and Point later. And now you're wondering, is Peter up there scowling at you for thinking that? Well, fear not, sisters, because just like in our day, in Peter's time, they were obsessed with image.

Obsessed with outward appearance. So really, there's nothing new under the sun. It's all about flash. It's all about image. And Peter is saying, don't get all caught up in the need to get recognized for your external beauty.

Competing yourself or putting yourself against another woman, a different wife. Don't get caught up in this. Your hair, your jewelry, your clothes. There's nothing wrong with looking nice. Just speaking personally, I happened to have married a woman who was just way out of my league in the looks department.

There's nothing wrong with that. But maybe, what Peter was thinking of, was Samuel, the prophet, when the Lord said to him, Samuel, man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

[10 : 11] God looks at what it is that is the source of what comes out of your mouth and the way you live your life. Not something external, but something internal. And that, Peter is saying, is what the Lord is concerned with.

That's the way that you win over your husband. Not by something on the outside, but by something on the inside. This beauty that will never fade, Peter calls it. And I was thinking about how to illustrate this, and I don't want to overshare, but this might help you with the application.

Peter is talking about marriages like how mine was in the early years. Seneca grew up in a believing household. Went to church at a young age, heard the gospel at an early age, responded to it, became a faithful disciple.

And then when we were dating, and eventually got engaged and then got married, I said I was a believer. I really thought I was, because I said most of the right things, and our wedding had a minister that presided over it, so that's a good start, right?

You know, we said prayers in our wedding. Must mean I'm a Christian. And I was even broadly interested in the Bible and church life. But my life was completely without fruit.

[11 : 22] I loved money. I loved my career. I had a horrible temper. I was just not a true believer. And Seneca would have been well entitled to just give up on me.

Not walk out of the marriage, necessarily, but just forget about me. Discount my opinions and my goals and my input and make decisions without consulting me.

Having an attitude towards my leadership at the home that was saying, well, I don't need him. He's not really a Christian. Trying to assert herself over me at every opportunity and generally just giving up on me as a husband and as a potential believer.

But of course, she didn't do that. She was gentle. She was gracious. She was kind and loving. And she kept being a faithful wife.

She kept supporting me in my role as our family's particular breadwinner and being a positive influence in how we shaped our family life and our goals and our dreams.

[12 : 33] And of course, she prayed for me every day. And then sometime in our third year of marriage, the Lord saved me. Somehow, in the great mystery of how these things work, the Lord used Seneca and her patience and her humility and her loving kindness to win me over for him.

And nothing particular happened. There was no moment. Nothing stands out. There was no formula. But I just know I wouldn't be standing here in front of you preaching the words if it hadn't been for Seneca's inner adornment, her inner beauty, what Peter calls the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit that is of great worth in God's sight.

If it's of great worth in God's sight, you can imagine how I feel because it's how I got saved. So your unbelieving husband might not read the Bible but he reads you every day.

So when he reads you, let him see gentleness. Let him see kindness. Let him see love. And verse 5, look, this is how the holy women of the past adorned themselves.

There's that word again. Holy. Set apart. Something visible to mark them out as belonging to God. They adorned themselves, dressed themselves up. That means like Sarah, verse 6, who obeyed Abraham and called him, and here's the controversial bit, her Lord.

[14 : 09] Temperature just went up in here. I think when the ladies read that. It's fiery stuff, isn't it? Some of you are thinking, really Peter? I mean, I can stomach things like love or sweetheart or honey or things like that, but Lord, come on.

But it's important. Let's unpack this. If you know much about Sarah, you know she wasn't a shrinking violet. She was a strong woman, an independent, fiery character, and she was more than a match for Abraham.

And frankly, and I'll use the vernacular here a little bit, there were times where Sarah thought her husband was a bit of a tool. And she would have been well within her rights to just assert herself in that situation.

But even though she saw Abraham's weaknesses, her life pattern was this general life pattern of deferring to his leadership. Not in a way that's fearful, being afraid of the man, but Peter says, in a way that's gentle and kind and peaceful and respectful.

And his point is, if you do these things, if you have these evidences in your life of peace, kindness, and gentleness, you're a daughter of Sarah.

[15 : 24] Now what on earth does that mean? Well, we all know today even the Jews still call themselves children of Abraham through Sarah. So they call themselves the children of Sarah, his wife. But the New Testament teaches us that those who believe are the children of Abraham and Sarah.

Not being Jewish, not coming from Palestine, not being brought up in a certain way, but those who believe. And Peter is not talking to Jewish women. He's talking to Gentile women, just like those of you sitting here in this room.

The Gentiles who Paul says were once cut off outside the dividing wall of hostility and partition, but you've now been brought near by the blood of Jesus.

And the point is, you don't need to be a member of the right club. You don't have to have the right last name. You don't need to speak the same language or have the right history.

Because, sister, if you put your faith in Christ, and then that faith overflows in a way that demonstrates the fruit of meekness and gentleness, even when your husband should be doing better, Christ is at work in you.

[16 : 36] And by bearing with your husband and pouring yourself out for your husband, even when he's undeserving of your love and mercy and gentleness, focus on that word, undeserving.

You're channeling Christ. Because Christ came, and even though none of us deserved it, none of us deserved that the Son of God, as we just read in Philippians 2, would empty himself, make himself nothing, like one of us, and then die on a cross for us.

Even though none of us deserved that, he came, and he did that. And by bearing with your husband, and we'll come to some other people later, who don't deserve it, just like I didn't deserve it with Seneca, by doing that, Christ is imitated, and Christ is channeled.

Paul said that the love of God was made manifest to us, was made visible to us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Didn't wait for us to get our act together.

Seneca didn't wait for me to get my life together. She just kept loving. And through that love, the Lord saved me. So sister, when you persevere, and out of love, and honor, you defer to your husband, you mimic Christ, and you sacrifice yourself, and you serve as an example that points people to him.

[18 : 09] Now, just when you were thought we were done putting out fires, Peter starts another one. Verse 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.

Weaker partner? Our liberal sensitivities are taking a hammering today, aren't they? Peter's kind of on a hiding to nothing here. But this is the word of God. So again, let's think here.

Now on the face of it, if you read the word weaker, you might think that Peter is talking about how women, or the wife, is the physically weaker partner, just in terms of physical strength.

And there might be truth in that. At the end of the day, Peter was writing at a time where your livelihood generally depended on your muscles, working with your hands. Jesus called fishermen.

He was himself a carpenter, that kind of thing. Undoubtedly, in that time where you worked with your muscles rather than your mind, the husband was the provider. And much of that is broadly true now, although speaking as a civil servant, I'm glad I can use my mind and not my muscles to earn my living.

[19 : 29] But there's something else here. It's not just about physicality. We husbands, we're told, this is us now, lads, we are told to be considerate and respectful with our wives as the weaker partner.

Brother, you might not be a pastor, you might not be an elder, you might not be a preacher or a deacon or anything like that, but you have a ministry in your life and your main ministry is to your wife, is to lead her, to shepherd her, to love her, to protect her.

And in our drive, because we're conditioned to be the alpha type, in our drive to provide and protect, sometimes we can be a bit too direct, a bit too on the nose.

In our desire to get things done and to lead our households, we can sometimes be harsh and unloving and unkind. And Peter is saying, basically, lads, cop on.

Don't you know that your wife is the weaker partner, that she's going to be more sensitive to how you communicate to her and how you lead her than you might be to her, that if you're belligerent and if you're cruel and you're authoritarian, you'll actually damage how she views you, that your words and your attitudes, that they'll hurt her much more than any bruises ever would.

[21 : 02] So do we think about things like this? Are we harsh? Do we set our expectations of our wives so high, so impossibly high, that they will never meet those expectations?

When the house doesn't look the way we want it to look, are we resentful? Do we lose our temper? When we're frustrated and we don't get our own way with whatever, anything from what we spend our money on to who gets the remote that afternoon, do we talk ourselves up?

I do so much for this family. I go to work for 10 hours a day and they don't respect me there and so the very least is I can come home and get the remote control and watch what I want to.

Do we do that? Do we focus on us? Because brother, can you think of anything that's farther from the love of Jesus Christ than that?

This gentleness, this meekness, this kindness of the one who said, I did not come into this world to be served. I came to serve.

[22 : 18] Brothers, if you do this, if you anchor yourselves to this gentleness and this kindness and this grace of Jesus and how you talk to your wife and live with your wife and lead her and protect her, you honor your wife and you honor Christ by echoing his example.

people. And Peter says, if you do this and look at it, your prayers will not be hindered. If you can channel Christ in the way you deal with your wife in love and in patience and kindness, then you can approach the throne of grace with confidence and pray that the Lord would touch the heart of your wife just like he touched yours, just like the Lord touched mine when Seneca lived that way.

Be gentle with your wife because Christ was gentle with you. And now maybe you're thinking, sitting here going, all right, that's granddad but I'm not married.

Don't plan on getting married, whatever your situation is. Or actually first, we'll deal with this. Maybe you're already married and both of you are believers. So you say, okay, that's fine.

We're both believers. So some of you ladies might be thinking, well, he already knows Jesus. I don't need to worry about my character reflecting the Lord. I don't need to maintain my inner beauty to point him to the Lord.

[23 : 47] Or some of you lads, you might be thinking, well, she's already a believer. I don't need to be kind and considerate and patient and gentle and all that kind of thing. I can be as harsh and as brutish as I want to be because at the end of the day, she still got to submit to me.

I'm still the man of the house. Sounds like nonsense, doesn't it? Well, that's because it is nonsense. Paul tells us, we won't go there but look at Ephesians 5 sometime.

Paul tells us marriage is a picture or a sign that points to how Christ loves his church. Marriage is intended to illustrate and to demonstrate the love that exists between Christ and the church.

So wife, when you submit to your husband by deferring to his leadership, you're actually encouraging him in his role to shepherd and to protect and love you because he ought to be looking to Christ whose example was set for him.

By living your life based on this inner beauty that you have, this gentleness, this peace, this mercy, what you're saying to your husband is, I really am yours. Just like the church is really Christ's.

[25 : 01] And husband, when you submit to your wife by being considerate of her sensitivities and bearing with her when you're frustrated, you're encouraging her because you're demonstrating the patience and the grace and the sacrificial love of Jesus that made him die for his church.

you're saying, I really am yours. Sister, do you submit to your husband as the church submits to Christ?

Are you ever ungrateful for his efforts? Are you argumentative towards his leadership? Or do you simply trust him? Brother, do you love your wife?

And here's the standard, lads. Do you love your wife as Christ loves his church and gave himself up for her? Are you harsh with her when she displeases you?

Are you unmerciful to her in her weakness? Or do you lay down your life for her and demonstrate your love for her in ways that often are painful or disadvantageous to you, in ways that you don't get something out of it?

[26 : 15] Is that us? Is that our marriage? Now, I promise I'll get to you. What if you're not married? What if it's not on your radar?

What if you're not thinking about it? Is the text irrelevant to you? Well, you could pretty much remove all references to husbands and wives and marriage and all that kind of thing and it would still apply to every single person in this room.

You might not be married. You might not be thinking about marriage. But the question is still the same because as we've been looking at in recent weeks, when we're around our unbelieving friends and relatives and colleagues, what are we like?

Are we always trying to get our way? Are we harsh with people? Are we using our efforts to bring glory back onto ourselves rather than to serve other people?

Are we being gentle and kind and loving? How about when our unbelieving teacher or unbelieving lecturer sets what seems like an impossible deadline for a complicated assignment and they won't agree to an extension?

[27 : 25] Do you grumble and moan and gossip to the other students, complain? Or do we just respect their position and model out the relationship we have with the great teacher of love and patience and gentleness?

Maybe you've got a parent who's not a believer and you think, well, if they're not a believer, I don't need to honor my mother or my father. They might think, well, you're getting mixed up with a bunch of religious weirdos.

I don't know what's happened to you. You're not acting like my child. Do we act like we don't need them? Or, do we honor our father and honor our mother the same way we honor our heavenly father?

How about this? This applies to all of us. When your unbelieving friends are starting to treat you differently because you're now a believer or because you're getting more involved in the church, maybe they're starting to think that Dan really thinks he's better than us.

You know, he goes to church and his life is all together. as if that's true. Do I shy away from my friends? Do I withdraw from them?

[28 : 45] Or do I continue to pour out my life into my friends and love them and say to them, I'm not better than you. I won't reject you because Jesus came and died for the ones who rejected him.

What about when we believers are all together? Do we bear with one another? Do we persevere?

Do we keep going on this journey together even when we annoy each other and frustrate each other and changes happen in the church whether it's who's coming to preach on Sunday or removing the chairs from that side over to this side?

Do we love each other as Christ loves us? When your elders make decisions you don't like that would of course never happen in this church just like it never happens in my church.

When that happens do you drop out of church life for a while? Do you disappear? Do you have difficulty attending a church where you don't agree with 100% of everything that's done whether it's Sunday school doctrine the music the layout outreach pastoral care do you do that?

[30 : 02] Or do you pray for the leaders of this church? Do you encourage them? Are you hospitable towards them? Do you offer them feedback in a way that's kind and gentle and loving?

And likewise elders and I say this as an elder in Middleton when we're feeling impatient with how the church is growing or not do we get resentful?

Do we want to call it quits let them figure out this stuff oh they don't appreciate me anyway or do we persevere in our daily sacrifice for these people whom God loves and for whom he sent his son to die?

In other words brothers and sisters are we faithful to one another? Are we faithful in the way the Lord Jesus Christ is faithful to us? Are we going to keep at it whether it's you with your wife or your husband or your dad or your colleagues or all of us together in this room?

Are we going to keep going? Are we going to keep walking this journey together and being faithful to one another? Love one another warts and all and there's a lot of warts we all have them.

[31 : 20] Do we keep our covenant with each other? Do we keep our promise to one another the way the Lord Jesus keeps it with us?

So let's not change like the shifting sands of time and culture and politics and all the other stuff that's out there and what the world calls right and wrong which seems like it's changing every year.

Instead let's be gentle let's be kind let's be gracious let's be merciful and let's be faithful faithful to the word of God faithful to one another and faithful to the Lord Jesus because his blood was shed not mine not the elders not Johnny Jesus' blood was shed for you and for me because God is faithful to his people.

Amen. I'm going to call the musicians back up as they're coming back up I don't know if you've never heard any of this stuff before I don't know if you're not a believer I don't know if you've never given God a second thought and I won't lay out a full thing for you here but I'll just say what do you have faith in?

Is it your own efforts? Is it your own energies? Is it your own strengths? Or will you come to the faithful one to the rock of ages who never changes?

[33 : 00] Let's pray. Father what's been said this morning I pray that if any of it has not pleased you or has offended you that you would blot it from our minds and that you would simply help us to recall that which would give you glory and honor.

Help us Lord when we're weak and we stumble and we're ungracious and unloving and unfaithful to one another. Help us to focus our minds on your son who came so that we might live that we might have abundant life.

Give us confidence that you who began a good work in us will bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus. So be with us we pray. Be with the marriages in this church where there is one spouse who does not believe.

Give the believing spouse the patience and the humility and the kindness to just keep going even when it seems fruitless and hopeless because we know that you work through these means to save your people.

Touch the hearts of those who don't believe. Soften their hearts and break down their barriers so that they might approach your throne and call on your name. Be with all of us Lord in our work, at school, in our homes, wherever we have loved ones and friends and colleagues who are not believers.

[34 : 23] Help us to simply love them as you loved us and to show them what that love looks like. And be with us Lord as we close in song this community of believers.

Help us to elevate our voices and our souls and our souls to commune with you and to give you glory because ultimately you are the faithful one.

That you will not let anything pluck us from your hand. We pray all this in Jesus name. Amen. Would you please stand and we'll sing Faithful One. Amen.