

Distinctive at home and at church

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[0 : 00] The reading today is in 1 Peter chapter 3 and it's verses 1 to 12 and you can find that on page 1221. So it's 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 1 to 12.

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.

When they see your respectful and pure conduct, do not let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold or the putting on of clothing. 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.

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

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour 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.

[1 : 23] Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless to this you accord, that you may obtain a blessing.

For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good.

Let him seek peace and pursue it. 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.

Great, thanks very much. Does following Jesus really make any difference? Christians talk a lot about Jesus, don't they?

But what about their lives? Does Jesus actually make a difference to how they live? Or are they just like everybody else? Perhaps you're here this morning, and you're not sure what to make of Christians.

[2 : 35] Maybe some of them are sitting all around you, but you're not really sure. Are they for real? Or is all this Jesus talk, is it just a religious game that Christians play?

Perhaps you've seen people who say they're Christians, but their lives say otherwise. And you think to yourself, if that's what it means to follow Jesus, forget it. Because it turns out it doesn't really mean much at all.

Or maybe you think Christians are different. There is something different about them. They might seem slightly strange, but their lives show that they're not the same as everyone else around them. That they've got integrity. That there's something slightly, strangely attractive about them. They're living for something different. The lives of Christians can either point people towards Jesus or away from Jesus.

I wonder what your friends, people who know you, would say about your life. For the last few weeks, we've been looking at the book of 1 Peter in the New Testament.

[3 : 45] And if you've missed any of the sermons, do listen to them online. Peter's writing to Christians who were living in a world which had turned its back on Jesus. A lot like 21st century London.

They were being persecuted for following Jesus. They were strangers, exiles. They were being rejected by the culture all around them. And Peter says, even though the culture thinks you're a bit weird and maybe even dangerous, it's your lives that will convince them that you're for real.

Your lives will convince them that your hope really is set on the world to come and not on this world. Now, if you've got a Bible, do turn back to 2 Peter with me.

And have a look at 2 Peter 2, verse 12. 2 Peter 2, verse 12. Peter writes, Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

In other words, people will complain about your views on sexuality or the uniqueness of Christ. They'll call you bigoted and hateful even.

[5 : 05] But they won't be able to deny that the way you live is different from the culture around you. They'll see your good deeds. They'll see how much of a blessing you are. And they'll be attracted to Jesus as a result.

They'll see something of Jesus in you. I guess most people today in London are probably not going to pick up a Bible and read it. But they'll see Jesus in you.

So, Peter says, Be distinctively Christ-like in every area of your life. Not just on a Sunday at church, kind of keeping up appearances to look good. No, every part of your life filled with Jesus' grace and love.

As the saying goes, If he's not Lord of all, he's not Lord at all. So we saw, didn't we, different parts of our lives.

Chapter 2, verse 13. Christ-like citizens. Or chapter 2, verse 18. Being Christ-like servants or employees. Being a Christian, it affects your attitude towards the government and towards your boss.

[6 : 10] And today, we are looking at being Christ-like in marriage and when we meet together as a church. Not just necessarily on Sundays, but also during the week.

So there are two things I wanted to see from this passage this morning. Firstly, point the world to Christ in your marriage. And that's in verses 1 to 7. And secondly, point the world to Christ in your life as a church.

That's from verses 8 to 12. So firstly, Peter says, Point the world to Christ in your marriage. Verses 1 to 7. Peter starts our passage today, verse 1, with the word likewise.

Likewise, wives. To link back to verse 2, verse 13. And chapter 2, verse 18. Citizens and governments. Employees and employers.

Likewise. Now, submitting to authority is generally a good thing, isn't it? It's good for citizens to submit to the government. Keep to the speed limit. Pay your taxes.

[7 : 17] Follow the COVID regulations, even if you don't agree with them. It's generally a good thing. And it's generally a good thing if employees submit to their bosses. If employees turn up on time.

They do the work they're paid for. Or they obey their boss, even if they don't really want to. But there's nothing wrong with submitting to authority. It's generally good for society. But also, as Peter shows it last week in chapter 2, verse 21, it's also what Jesus did by dying on the cross.

He was the ultimate example of submission to his heavenly father. Do you see, chapter 2, verse 21, that Christ also suffered for you. And verse 23, he entrusted himself to, well, to his heavenly father, to him who judges justly.

So submitting to authority is not just kind of generally good, although it is. It points people to Jesus as our ultimate example. But what about marriage?

And many people, as you know, have completely given up on marriage. They think it's outdated, overly restrictive, and misogynistic. And it's true, isn't it, isn't it, that marriage has been a terrible cover-up, an excuse for terrible abuses over the centuries.

[8 : 36] But like corrupt governments or exploitative workplaces, that doesn't undermine the idea of marriage itself. The marriage is God's idea, isn't it?

In Genesis chapter 1, verse 27, God made man and woman equal but different. And I guess even the most kind of staunch advocates of gender fluidity have to accept the basic biological differences between men and women.

We're supposed to be different. That's how God made us. And in marriage, God created husbands to take a leadership role and wives to follow their leadership. Now, that doesn't give husbands a license for abuse or exploitation.

It gives them the task of taking on leadership responsibility for the good of their wives and their family. They're to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church, as Paul says in Ephesians

5, verse 24.

And Christ gave his life for the church. Husbands are to give their lives for their wives. Now, I'm very aware that I'm a man. And it may be better to hear this from a woman.

[9 : 43] So perhaps afterwards, find a woman, particularly if they're married, and talk to them further about it. It might be easier to hear it from them than from me. But have a look for now at 1 Peter 3, verse 1.

Peter says, Notice this is not submission to men in general, but only the specific situation of marriage.

And in particular, Peter has in mind, if your husband isn't a Christian. I'm aware this is a difficult area, of course. But Peter's main point is, if your husband's not a Christian, don't give up being a Christian yourself.

I guess it's the same if your wife isn't a Christian. In Roman society, it would be quite common for the wives to follow their husband's religion. But Peter says, No, don't give up following Christ, even if your husband has given up listening to you about him.

Why? Why keep following your husband's leadership? Verse 1, have a look at what he says. So that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

[10 : 56] In other words, your life shows if you're for real. Is your hope set on the world to come? Or on this world? Your husband will know.

And your friends will know too, won't they? Because the way you relate to your husband either points them to Christ or away from Christ. I guess at this day and age, many people would consider leaving, getting divorced, or perhaps just living separate lives, or stopping following Jesus completely.

Why stay married? But Peter says, No, staying married, following your husband's leadership as far as possible, shows the world you're living for something different. You have an even greater husband in Christ.

Peter goes on in verse 3. Have a look with me at verse 3. Do not let your adorning be external, the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing.

But let the adorning be the hidden person of a heart, with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. Now these verses in particular are written to wives, but in an image-obsessed world, I mean, they're relevant to all of us, aren't they?

[12 : 15] In Roman culture, just like ours, image was everything. Braided hair, fine jewellery, was there to impress, just like Instagram or TikTok today. It's not that Peter's against braided hair or jewellery, because otherwise he wouldn't say, or the wearing of clothes, otherwise he'd be saying that you shouldn't wear clothes.

No, his point is, don't let them be where you find your self-worth and value. Instead, Peter says, value character, the hidden person of the heart.

It's not very fashionable today, is it? You know, valuing character. Because on Instagram, you can't really see someone's character, can you? But what you're like on the inside is far more important than on the outside, particularly in marriage.

Because after the outward beauty of the wedding day, the inner character of your husband or wife is what you see for the rest of your life. As we get older, our beauty will fade.

As Simon said earlier, I've got plenty of grey hairs. If my worth is in my appearance, I'm in big trouble. My worth is going to go downhill fast.

[13 : 30] It's perishable. But, Peter says, what's imperishable, the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, a bit like our imperishable inheritance in chapter 1, verse 4.

It's a gentle and quiet spirit which is very precious in God's sight. Now, Peter's not talking about introverts and those who are just silent, that don't want to speak or say anything.

He's talking about being content. Think of the people that you know who are gentle. Have you got them in your mind? People you know who are gentle. They're probably people who are content. Because if you're gentle, you don't need to kind of keep striving all the time. Peter says, let go. Let go of the rest and striving, the constant desire to look good. And instead, be like Jesus.

I don't know how many of you read this book by Dane Ortlund, Gentle and Lowly. But it describes the heart of who Jesus is. As he says, Jesus has done all kinds of things.

[14:37] But who is he? What does his heart beat with? Well, Matthew 11, verse 28 says, doesn't it? Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, for I am gentle and lowly in heart.

If Jesus' very heart is fundamentally one of gentleness, then so should ours. I wonder if you really value Christ-like character rather than outward beauty.

Because people can tell, can't they? What does your Instagram account say? What does your wardrobe say? It's not wrong to have an Instagram account or a wardrobe, but what do you find beautiful?

As Proverbs 31, 30 says, charm is deceptive and beauty is vain or fleeting. It disappears. It will fade. But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

And Peter goes on to use the example of Sarah, doesn't he, in verse 5. Have a look with me. This is how the holy woman who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by submitting to their husbands.

[15:47] Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him Lord. And you are her children if you do good and do not fear anything that's frightening. Sarah called Abraham Lord in Genesis 18, verse 12.

It's not a slavish submission, but a respectful following of his leadership. And Abraham wasn't perfect, was he? Do you remember? He lied at least twice.

Once to Pharaoh in Genesis 12, once to Abimelech in Genesis 20. But Sarah still followed his leadership because, verse 5, she hoped in God.

If your hope is not in this world, but in the world to come, you don't need to fear. You can still seek to follow your husband's leadership because you have a greater husband in Christ.

Okay, that's what Peter says to wives. What about husbands? Have a look at verse 7 with me.

Likewise. Likewise. That is, in order to point the world to Christ, likewise husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.

[16:52] Showing honour to the woman as the weaker vessel since their heirs with you of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be hindered. Now when Peter says that the woman or woman is a weaker vessel or weaker partner, he's probably referring to physical strength.

Obviously there's plenty of physically strong women. And in fact, the women of Proverbs 31, verse 17, dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong. But, on average of course, men are stronger than women.

And in particular, in marriage, Peter's point is that the husband shouldn't use his strength in an exploitative way. Rather to protect his wife and family.

But he should also be emotionally intelligent. Do you see? He says, live with your wives in an understanding way. That means knowing how best to love your wife, treating her as precious.

In contrast to the prevailing Roman culture, Peter says that wives are not the property of their husbands. No, they're heirs of the grace of life. That is eternal life. The world to come.

[18:02] And Peter says, honour them so that verse 7, your prayers may not be hindered. Now husbands, I don't know how well you think you know your wives. Whether you think you understand them.

Whether you show them honour. Whether you pray with them. But that is what God calls us to.

Love her as Christ has loved the church. Love her when it's hard.

Honour her. That points people to Jesus. If your work colleagues or friends talk about their wives or partners in a sexist or patronising way, don't sit by and say nothing.

Be different. Now if perhaps you're here and you're not married and you kind of think what do these verses have to do with me? Well these verses show you two things I guess.

Firstly how to support Christian marriages. But also if you do get married in the future what sort of a person you should look for. That is someone whose hope is in God in the world to come and not ultimately in this world.

[19:04] So firstly Peter says point the world to Christ in your marriage. Secondly Peter says point the world to Christ in your life as a church and that's from verses 8 to 12.

Have a look at verse 8 with me then. Verse 8 Finally Peter says all of you have unity of mind sympathy brotherly love a tender heart and a humble mind.

So Peter calls us to be radically different from the world to be Christ-like in the way that we relate to each other particularly when we meet together. Instead of pulling in different directions some over this way and others over this way about where we should go as a church how we should do things Peter says have a unity of mind get behind the leadership of the church ultimately be united in

Christ that's who you are.

Now sure you won't agree on everything of course you won't agree on everything but the good news of Jesus is too important to squabble or fall out over small details. I mean the world has no end of disunity does it?

Obviously the last few years that's become all too obvious from economic sanctions to international war political infighting to railway strikes I mean it's all over the place and the church can be just the same grumbling complaining criticising that's not going to point the world to Jesus is it?

[20 : 30] That's going to point the world away from Jesus. But if your friends see you Christians united around Jesus in the way they do life together they'll see something different.

Next Peter says that we should have sympathy that is we should be gracious with people assume the best of them don't assume the worst of them try and understand where are they coming from don't jump to conclusions.

Peter says we should have brotherly love and a tender heart. In Christ we're family together and families don't always get on do they? But in their heart of hearts they do love each other.

I don't know how many of you went to the women's wreath making event before Christmas I wasn't there but I was told it was a great opportunity to talk not just to talk about Jesus but to show Christians loving each other in how they work together in how they related to each other how they spoke to each other a great way to point the world to Jesus through our lives.

finally Peter says be humble or have a humble mind. Now being humble it doesn't mean kind of having a low opinion of yourself woe is me I'm not worthy it means focusing on others rather than yourself.

[21 : 47] You might have heard the phrase humility is not thinking less about yourself it's thinking about yourself less. You know humble people they're great to be with because they don't need to prove themselves that they can take a genuine interest in you without making it all about them.

Now our culture is all about self isn't it self self self getting as many social media likes as possible getting praise but if you're secure in Christ you don't need to make it all about you in Christ you have all the worth you could possibly need what a relief and Peter goes on in verse 9 doesn't he to say don't 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.

The human desire to get even is incredibly strong isn't it I mean just look around the world we want justice we want to take matters into our own hand we want to get them back for what they did to us but imagine a world where no one repaid evil for evil crime would plummet international conflicts would grind to a halt bitterness built up over generations would disappear overnight don't repay evil for evil how can we how can we do this when it's so so strongly inbuilt in our hearts well instead of looking for revenge remember what we saw last week in chapter 2 verse 23 look at Jesus he's our example isn't he he did not repay evil for evil he didn't revile in return Peter says why not why did Jesus not do the same thing that we're tempted to do because well because he was not living for this world but for the world to come he entrusted himself to his heavenly father who judges justly on the contrary

Peter says bless bless this is what you were called to you're blessed eternally you've been given chapter 1 verse 4 an imperishable inheritance so you can be a blessing to others God's grace is so huge it overflows to bless the whole world now imagine it's your birthday and you've been given a whole sack of chocolate cream eggs hopefully not in anything like the temperature we are in today but let's say you've got a whole sack of cream eggs and there's literally thousands of cream eggs all neatly wrapped up and they're yours you take one out and you start wrapping one of them to take a few others out but then your brother runs in from nowhere and he's got no idea about the stack of cream eggs which you've put over in your bedroom but he steals one of the eggs from you out of your hand and runs off with it what are you going to do are you going to chase after him pin him to the ground hit him until he gives you that egg back of course not you've got a whole sack of cream eggs you can give him another one it doesn't matter does it you've got thousands you don't need to repay evil for evil instead you can bless him and following

Jesus means we've got a whole sack of chocolate cream eggs an imperishable inheritance there's a world to come so in this world we don't need to get even we don't need to repay evil for evil however tempting it is we can be a blessing to others because we're truly blessed and Peter quotes Psalm 34 verses 12 to 16 to show that those whose hope is in the world to come are truly blessed I guess Psalm 34 is not that familiar to most of us but Peter seems to really love it doesn't he spends

a number of verses quoting on it in 1 Peter 3 verse 10 to 12 Psalm 34 was written by David in the Old Testament to celebrate God rescuing him from Abimelech the king of Gash in 1 Samuel 21 verse 13 and Psalm 34 is fantastic in verse 8 of Psalm 34 it says taste and see that the Lord is good in other words don't just don't just look at your sack of chocolate cream eggs taste them get them out enjoy the relationship with God that you were created for enjoy the inheritance that you have forever you're truly blessed and so

[26 : 11] Psalm 34 12-16 Peter's point is this if you want to enjoy God's blessing not just in this life in eternity it's quite simple follow him be a blessing to others don't repay evil for evil verse 14 he says turn away from evil and do good because verse 15 the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous no it's not that you won't have suffering in this life I mean Peter's readers were suffering in all kinds of ways but ultimately just as God rescued David from Abimelech he will also rescue you as Psalm 34 verse 8 says blessed is a man who takes refuge in him in the Lord so how you live matters your lives will either point people to Jesus or away from Jesus both in your in your church in life as a church and in your marriage if you're if you're married the world will speak against us but when they look at our lives what will they really think

I don't know what you think of the hostility towards Christians today but I think the world has become increasingly hostile in the last perhaps 10 10 years in the West you know Christians used to be seen as basically slightly weird and a bit pathetic and that was kind of it but now Christians are seen often as the bad guys narrow-minded bigoted and even dangerous and in the next 20 years it'll probably only get worse but of course it's nothing new nothing new at all in the second century AD Christians in the Roman Empire were being persecuted to death but the writer and theologian Tertullian commented on the one thing which surprised all the kind of pagans around them who were trying to kill them that they couldn't tolerate anything loyalty to anyone but Caesar but about the Christians they said look how they love one another but they couldn't kind of get their heads around it look how they love one another they couldn't deny that could that be said of you this morning could it be said of us see how they love each other as Peter says keep your condyles among the Gentiles honourable so that when they speak against you as evil doers they may see your good deeds and glorify

God on the day of visitation make your marriage point people to Christ you have a better husband and a greater marriage to come make your life as a church point people to Christ however much evil you are spoken of against the genuineness of your life will be self-evident people will know that you're for real and they want to know what it is about Christ that is so worth living for let's pray father God thank you that in Jesus we are eternally blessed we pray that this blessing would overflow to others in the way that we live both in our marriages and in our life as a church family together we pray that the world would look at us and see what it means to follow Jesus with all of our lives and that they would be drawn to him amen