

1 Peter 3:1-7 “Wives and Husbands, Honor and Beauty”

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 March 2023

Preacher: Will Spink

- [0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- I have a new joy in getting to preach this passage, having worshiped with y'all. Thank you. Sarah, thank you for that encouragement.
- I want to add my personal invitation to that two-way conversation tomorrow. To everyone, this passage says things that are beautiful but challenging to men, women, married, single.
- You're all welcome. But especially to my sisters, whom I love. I really want to avoid adding to hurt this morning.
- And as I've talked with some of you already, I've realized how absolutely capable I am of doing exactly that. What I don't want to do.
- [1 : 06] How blind I can be at times to what you're feeling or hearing. So I want to listen. That's what tomorrow's about. And let you listen to one another.
- And let us together seek to hear God clearly. I think especially this week, there is noise in many of our heads and hearts. And just like any other week, what we most need is to ask God to help us hear His voice clearly.
- Because we so need that, don't we? His voice is the one we need to hear. So will you pray with me to that end? God, we just sang that we love your voice.
- We do. You've called us to yourself. We've heard you call us, your children. We've heard your voice say, do not fear. But we have so many voices around us.
- The world is screaming, crying out about gender and marriage. Our own flesh is telling us that we know best and we should listen to that inner voice alone.
- [2 : 21] Our enemy, the devil, is whispering persistently that you, God, don't really have our best interest at heart. And that's a lie.
- You're good. So good. Holy Spirit, speak. Through the very word of God, that we might hear His voice and follow our good shepherd.
- That's our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Let's turn to 1 Peter 3. I'm going to read first the section addressed to wives.
- We'll get to husbands later. Since we're trying to hear God clearly, let me remind us of something that we may easily forget. God has been speaking to wives already for two chapters of 1 Peter.
- He addresses all of the people in these churches that Peter is writing to. He's been telling the men and the women, and we all need to hear this reminder, that our value doesn't come from what we do, how well we perform.

[3 : 42] Rather, it comes from who we are. So when God now begins talking to specific groups of people about being subject to others, about living such beautiful lives that those who don't yet know God will actually come to follow Him, He's talking to people that He's already told many gloriously precious things about who they are and their value.

So by way of review, when chapter 3 verse 1 says, Likewise, wives, let me help you hear God's voice from the first two chapters of this letter alone.

Here's what He's saying. Wives, beloved daughters of the Lord of the universe, chosen by God the Father before the world began, set apart by His Spirit, brought into the family by the precious blood of Jesus, given specifically for you, you who have a new life, a living hope, an imperishable inheritance, an inexpressible joy, in whom God determined to dwell Himself, giving you unparalleled access near to Him, because He delighted to make you His very own treasured possession, the object of His great mercy, an indispensable part of His eternal family, with the dignified purpose of manifesting His glory everywhere to everyone.

By the way you live, the words you say, your precious faith in Him, valuable, blessed, precious, dearly beloved, blood-bought 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.

[6 : 07] 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 hurt children if you do good, and do not fear anything that is frightening.

After all the things God has said, to both men and women, there are now within a marriage, different directions given to spouses of different genders.

This happens in nearly every case that marriage is addressed in God's word. Marriage, we see, is another in this series of authority relationships, a different kind, certainly, from the others in this series.

But husbands and wives are addressed separately with unique roles. And for wives, that begins with being subject to their own husbands.

Biblical submission, clearly not reflective in any of these relationships of inherent value, but rather of a willing choice to defer to someone else's leadership.

[7 : 23] In that sense, like two cars of equal value merging onto the parkway, and it's tough, and you don't know how, and one decides it's best to give way and slide in behind the other.

This verse helps us see quickly some things not meant by submission, because it's clearly not absolute, is it? It's not assuming that the husband is always right, or closer to God, or more spiritually knowledgeable or capable.

In fact, Peter urges this submission in the context of the evangelism of the husband, in hopes that a wife's attitude and actions will have a powerful impact on him in the most significant area of his life, his relationship with God.

Far from giving up her agency, she is serving a significant purpose here, right? See, in the world of Peter's day, it was assumed that wives would take on and follow the religion of their husbands.

That's just how it worked. Of course, if Jesus is Lord, that's not so simple all of a sudden. Wives would not be able to follow Jesus and then turn around and follow their husbands after some other God.

[8 : 43] Some of you know the struggle of that situation quite well. You long to share the relationship that is most important to you, most formative to your life, with the person you most love and are committed to.

That is a challenging place to be, right? So Peter gives encouragement and direction not to bail out of that relationship, but to remain faithful in your marriage.

Submitting, being subject to it, it means taking on a posture of respect, an attitude of honor, a disposition to trust.

Now, willing submission does include the idea of seeking your own good. It may require a lot of faith in God's goodness to believe that is so when he calls you to place yourself under an imperfect husband, specifically here, one who doesn't claim to follow Jesus with you.

But like placing yourself under shelter in a storm, many of us did that this weekend, right? Sirens in the middle of the night. It's designed to be a relationship in which you find blessing.

[10 : 10] But while the design is for you to benefit too, submission means your focus is actually on his welfare, more than your own, that you would delight in your husband's honor, that you would seek his thriving in every way, including spiritually.

And y'all, what a gift that is to any husband, right? To receive honor beyond what he earns.

Not just one who may come to faith in Jesus through the way your life preaches the gospel of grace and seeing the way Jesus impacts you.

Wow, wouldn't that be amazing? But that gospel continues to impact Christian husbands too, right? It's not just the evangelism of it. You might disciple him by the way you love.

Sarah and Abraham, for example, Christian husband. Helping him see the worth of Jesus, right? As you sacrifice. Helping him taste the grace of Jesus as you honor him beyond what he earns.

[11 : 18] We're going to come back to that. But next in this passage, Peter points out that this spirit is where true beauty comes from.

Not just for married women, by the way. Verse 4, 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.

Let me try to explain what this gentle and quiet spirit is and then talk about how absolutely valuable it is, okay? Those two things. The word for gentle means not self-promoting, seeking another's honor first, right?

Not a contentious spirit but rather patient when correcting, Galatians 6.1. Not harsh. It's a word actually that Jesus uses of himself.

In Matthew chapter 11, Jesus says, I am gentle and lowly in heart. Far from meaning weak by that, gentle Jesus does what?

[12 : 33] He provides rest for others. This gentleness is a fruit of his spirit. Quiet also is a word used as a virtue for all Christians.

1 Thessalonians 4.11, for example. A gentle and quiet spirit, y'all, is not merely ladylike but truly Christlike. That's a big deal.

Oh, humble, yes. Not constantly turning the spotlight on oneself. But quiet doesn't mean soft-spoken in a whisper all the time or just a shy personality, but rather it's talking about the inner spirit, the heart.

It's a peaceful heart. A spirit that trusts in God is not anxiously self-absorbed, self-obsessed. Because of that, I assure you that these women, Peter's describing, are strong women in the best sense of the word.

They're not doormats or shrinking violets. Proverbs 31.25 says of the godly wife, what are her first characteristics? Strength and dignity are her clothing.

[13 : 51] And she laughs at the time to come. Her gentle strength hopes in God. And therefore, like Sarah, can laugh at the days to come.

In other words, fear nothing that anyone could do to her because of that hope and trust in God. This godly woman is quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry, but she can still be passionate and strong while gentle and quiet.

See, both of those at the same time. I dare say, when, for example, you raise your voice to defend the voiceless, you are reflecting God's image.

You're sharing God's heart. Just don't be raising your voice to make much of yourself. Right? Inner beauty, a gentle and quiet spirit.

Now I want you to see how valuable it is. If someone has told you that this passage belittles or demeans women, I want you especially to listen right now, okay?

[15 : 08] I want you to hear God's word. This blew me away this week. There's so many. I can't even tell you all the different ways. What word has Peter used throughout this letter when he wants to tell you how valuable something is?

Can you think about a word that sticks out over time? Imperishable, right? Think of all the imperishable things he's highlighted. Our inheritance, God himself, our faith, the blood of Jesus, more valuable than silver or gold, the word of God itself, the gospel.

Now Peter says, this gentle and quiet spirit has an imperishable-ness about it. Its beauty is lasting.

It's eternal. In fact, in God's sight, it is very precious. Are you hearing this? He treasures your inner beauty forever.

It's contrasted with the beauty that we know all too well, right? This is what we think of when we hear beauty. Verse three, it's the external, right? The kind you put on to try to make yourself look good or impressive or alluring.

[16 : 33] And he says, it doesn't last. Proverbs 31 again. Charm is deceitful. Beauty is vain. It's empty.

It's fleeting. But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. A woman who fears the Lord, right? And like Sarah, fears nothing else.

Even submission in marriage, not fearing anymore. That beauty, fearing the Lord, never fades. Which is why it's so valuable.

It's like the godliness mentioned in 1 Timothy 4, 8. Where physical training has some value. Those things matter. We're not disconnected from our bodies.

But spiritual training, the internal, holds value for this life and the life to come that lasts forever. That's why it's so much more valuable.

[17 : 30] In God's sight, that is precious. Women, you're a tabernacle of the most high God.

His spirit dwells in you. You are precious to him. Your beauty is not up for debate by the kids in your class. It's not. It's not going to be established by some guy who comes along and tries to tell you that he's the one that makes you beautiful.

It's not. He can't be. It's established by the God who made you in his image and says you're precious to him.

So much so that that inner spirit is exactly the place he would like to create as his home to dwell in you, a vessel for his majesty.

Can you believe that? We know what God sees as beautiful. Dear sisters, will you care more about what God values or what other people value?

[18 : 45] In an image-obsessed world that is not your home, will you spend more time and money and emotion on your outward appearance or your inner character?

For that party coming up, will it be more important to prepare your body to look good or to prepare your heart to live godly, to love others?

There's a place for both. There's a priority on one. Men, before I even read the husband part, I want to suggest there's something we need to listen to here too.

We are visually sensitive people by God's good design. What kind of culture are we contributing to as we steward that?

Which values of beauty are we promoting for our sisters, for our daughters? I'll tell you, they are already swimming upstream to care more about the inner beauty when their friends and the men in their lives and the magazines on the stands care more about the external, what they're wearing, what they look like, and every time we gaze at pornography, every time we give attention to the outwardly attractive over the inwardly beautiful, every time we make comments that belittle or make fun of someone based on physical appearance or performance, we reject God's value, God's definition of beauty.

[20 : 38] We sin against Him and against His image in the women around us that we're called to love and we make these countercultural priorities that much harder for our sisters for their sake.

Stop. Repent. Reorient your values to God's. We must. If we're to love.

Wives, you are precious in God's sight, close to His heart of imperishable beauty as you humbly seek the honor and flourishing of your husband before your own.

Husbands, perhaps this passage hasn't wounded as many of us, but I'll tell you it's been really convicting to me this week.

We too need to remember that God has said so much about us before we perform or fail to perform as husbands. Our value comes from who we are.

[21 : 52] So the same reminder for us. Verse 7, Likewise, husbands, beloved sons of the Lord of the universe, chosen by God the Father before the world began, set apart by His Spirit, brought into the family by the precious blood of Jesus given specifically for you, you who have a new life, a living hope, an imperishable inheritance, and inexpressible joy in whom God determined to dwell Himself, giving you unparalleled access near to Him because He delighted to make you His very own treasured possession, the object of His great mercy, an indispensable part of His eternal family with the dignified purpose of manifesting His glory everywhere to everyone by the way you live, the words you say, the precious beauty of your faith in Him, valuable, blessed, precious, dearly beloved, blood-bought 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.

husbands, as those called to love our wives, in fact, to love as Christ loved the church with a towel wrapped around our waist, all the way to death if need be to see them flourish, live with them in an understanding way, seek to know what she loves what hurts, what helps, what makes her tick.

I realized this summer as I got time on sabbatical to reflect on my marriage that I'd been neglecting to pursue getting to know Christy more deeply, something that 17 years in you can sometimes take for granted and get lazy.

you. Sometimes it was simple self-love that cared more about understanding my own perspectives and preferences more than hers.

Sometimes it came from avoiding potentially hard conversations because my ideal home and evening is conflict free and very peaceful. and at that altar I was missing the chance to understand her better for the sake of my comfort.

[24 : 49] I'm trying to make time to ask more questions to listen more. Our job is to understand our wives not make sure they understand what we think and want.

Then we're told to show honor to them as the weaker vessel. I know that is a sensitive phrase. The words are simply referring to the physical differences between genders typically there by God's design.

The words mean nothing further. If perhaps you could be physically overpowering, controlling, or abusing, instead treasure your wife.

Value her as precious. Seek her flourishing in every way. Since she is called to be subject to a function that may appear weaker to some or that others will deem less valuable, so you all the more as you lead and love show honor to clarify any confusion that might come up about value.

See, honor is even beyond respect. You have been blessed to live with, to lead, even to love one who is so precious to God that he gave his life for her.

[26 : 25] And he now dwells in her. You remember also she's a tabernacle of God. So far from abusing or lording strength over her, honor her, learn her wonderful strengths, bear patiently with her imperfections and struggles.

Maybe confess with me that you are way too focused on making sure you get honor and respect and you look good. Guys, you want something to do?

We like something to do, don't we? This afternoon, I'll make it easy. Learn one thing about your wife and lift her up in one way. After all, she is physically weaker perhaps, but she's spiritually your equal before your heavenly father.

You are joint heirs in a culture, y'all, don't forget, that was not a thing. There were no such thing as joint heirs, brother and sister.

No, no. But here, the women, your wife, receives like you the gift of life that none of us could ever earn.

[27 : 45] Honor her not because she's done something to earn it, but because she is an heir of the king because he has honored her. honor her so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Of course, you knew that was an obvious connection. We all saw that one coming. Best I can tell, this is telling us that husband and wife have a shared spiritual life.

And while they are spiritually equal, the husband has a specific responsibility toward their spiritual health, if he's not treating her as the treasured heir of grace that she is, he's out of whack in relationship with God somewhere.

His prayers for her probably implied his prayers with her will be a struggle. Husbands, pray for and if at all possible with your wives.

When you honor her as precious as God does, you will be driven to your knees for her good. Right? When you think of how precious she is and how God has put her hand in yours to love and to lead to him over and over, you'll be praying because you're not enough for that.

[29 : 12] Did you notice in this passage that mutual honor beyond earning? Husband and wife have different functions, different instructions here, no question.

But they both are commanded to seek the honor of the other before their own, to be more delighted in the honor of the other than their own.

Marriage is to be, if you will, a race downward to see who can be below and lift the other one up the most. And husbands, it's your responsibility to say, ready, set, go, and make sure that race starts.

And you're both running it. It's so beautiful when this happens in a marriage. I watched a beautiful picture of it for several years when we first moved to Huntsville.

In our very first small group here at Southwood, we met John and Betty Bates. If you didn't get the chance to meet John and Betty, they're both with Jesus now, but they used to sit right back there on that center aisle every Sunday.

[30 : 25] The last few years of their nearly 65 years of marriage together, John began to suffer from dementia increasingly.

He was always such a kind and thoughtful man, but he began being confused, feeling out of place, coming still to the small group meeting where he loved to participate and talking just as much, just usually completely off topic.

And Betty had plenty of opportunities sitting next to him to belittle him, to mock him, to save face for herself perhaps.

And she would smile up at him and listen patiently, occasionally add a word of clarification without exposing him as confused.

Every day she woke him, bathed him, dressed him, held his hand while he slept so that he would both feel secure and still feel that she needed him.

[31 : 36] And then she'd show up in public and honor him when she'd earned way more honor. So beautiful. She gave us all a picture of Jesus' love with a strong, passionate, gentle, quiet spirit.

Isn't honor beyond earning after all the way Jesus works? Isn't that the good news of the gospel of Jesus?

Isn't that the way he loves us? Jesus submits himself to his father's will. Jesus humbles himself from heaven.

Jesus becomes obedient to the point of death because he delighted to see us honored, to see us spiritually thriving, to see us valued and treasured more than himself and way more than we'd earned.

Amen? Jesus was engaged to an unfaithful bride. She earned his disdain, his rejection over and over.

[32 : 58] That is the story of Scripture from beginning all the way through God's people. and yet he chose to pursue us persistently and patiently, didn't he?

He chose to wash us clean. He chose to hold us in his hand so that we would be secure forever.

That's the kind of love, love that is patient and kind, that does not insist on its own way, that never fails, the kind of love that honors the beloved way beyond earning, that we, his precious bride, men and women, have the privilege of receiving from him and then have the high honor of sharing with one another in lots of ways and especially in our marriages.

Jesus, may all of us believe how precious you are to him.

May God give all of us grace to know how wide and how long and how high and how deep is the love of Jesus for you and then to love as he first loved us.

[34 : 24] Let's pray. Jesus, to know your love is something that fills us with that inexpressible and glorious joy.

you love us right now and we didn't earn it. You've loved us at our lowest and our worst.

Jesus, you faithfully pursued us, served us, sacrificed for us. Would you give us delight in the privilege you've given us to pass that love along?

Might we rest in your love? Might we rejoice in sharing it today with our friends, with our neighbors, and especially for those of us that you've called into marriages?

Might we give all around us a picture of love that honors another way beyond what has been earned?

[35 : 38] we need your help. Holy Spirit, give us your grace to that end. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.