

Wives and Husbands and The Way of Christ

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[0 : 00] 1 Peter chapter 3. I'll just begin reading. I'm not going to read the whole section we're looking at, but just read bits of it.

Chapter 3, from the beginning, 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.

In verse 7, that you may obtain a blessing.

I suppose it's true to say we have more information on marriage today than we've ever had. And I'm sure it's also true to say there might be more problems in marriage than there's been for a long time.

I always say to a couple when they're getting married, make sure you read your Bible, because God has so much to say about marriage. A lot of people don't realize that, but God has so much to say about marriage.

[1 : 33] Now, I don't intend to say an awful lot today, but as we're working through this letter, it's quite interesting that I know that on Sunday nights you've been going through Ephesians with Ivor, and again you have come across the whole subject of the role of men and women in marriage.

And that shows us that it's very hard sometimes to go through letters or any of the teachings in the Bible when you won't come across this great theme.

Now, I know that for some people this might be in some ways difficult, and what we're looking at today is we're looking at the principles that have been set out in God's Word.

Some people have experienced the loss of a marriage partner, and I understand that the likes of what we're doing today might be painful and difficult because when you lose somebody who is precious to you, it's one of the greatest losses that you can ever sustain in life.

For some people, they will be single in life. For some people, it's a choice that they have made. For others, it isn't. But it's one of the crosses that they've had to bear.

[2 : 50] And I know that throughout this world there are many people, and their singleness is a burden that they've had to bear. And often God's way, and particularly for the Christian, sometimes that can be a great mystery to them and for them.

And I think it's something that we've always got to be sensitive about. But that is for some people. As we say, some people's singleness is a choice that they've made.

They feel that marriage is not for them. But there are some who would love to have been married and maybe still hope to be married. But the thing is that when we come to God's Word, we're realizing that God is setting out particular principles here for us.

And what Peter is highlighting here, and we'll just run through this, is that often you will find that in a marriage, one couple, and this is what Peter is in this particular beginning here, is that one person, and it's particularly here, the wife, that one is a believer and the other isn't.

And Peter is highlighting, and the instance, the example he's setting out is that the wife is a believer and the husband isn't. And he's saying the great importance that is placed upon the wife is her life, that her lifestyle is more important, really, than what she will say.

[4 : 10] When Peter says here, Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husband, so that even if some do not obey the Word, I do not believe that that is the Word of God, because it is ultimately the Word of God, obeying the Word of God, coming by faith to Christ through the Word, that they are eventually saved.

But that they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure conduct. The loving, gracious spirit, a Christ-like spirit, where that gentle and quiet spirit is more powerful than any word that could be spoken.

We mentioned last week, just as we were tying up the other section, Monica, Augustine's mother, and the awesome impact that her life had upon her home.

And it was through her witness of life that eventually broke her husband, who was somebody who was completely opposed to the Christian faith.

But before he died, he came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And it was through the everyday, ongoing, Christ-like witness that faced him in the home.

[5 : 34] And so we see that there's a tremendous impression and impact made. A Christian wife may think that she must become as like the world as possible in order to have any chance of getting to her husband.

But the very reverse is through. It's not by becoming like him, but by becoming like Jesus. That is where she is most likely to be victorious.

And it could be the other way around. It could be a husband and wife the other way. And so Peter is saying to the woman to cultivate a gentle and quiet spirit.

And it goes on to say in 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 your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.

Now, some people think that Peter straight away is against women in any way using jewelry or trying to make themselves attractive or nice.

[6 : 41] Peter is not saying that. And we must never think that that's along the lines Peter's talk. If that were true, it would mean if women weren't to try and make themselves attractive with external adorning, braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, it would mean that they weren't to put on clothes either.

Because that's what it says. Or putting on of clothing. So straight away you can see right from the very start that Peter is not saying that it's wrong.

Peter's emphasis here is that the eternal must take priority over the external. That's really what he's saying.

He's not saying that women are not to spend time, if they so desire, to make themselves even more attractive in all these kind of things.

But what he's saying is, make sure that the priority in life is to the inward spirit. Make sure that this is what you're seeking above all.

[7 : 48] It's the same as Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all the other things will be added unto it. The Lord isn't saying at any point, don't get involved in this world.

Don't work. Don't get involved in any of the things. If you're a Christian, you've got to stay away from everything. The Lord doesn't say that. We are to be involved. We're to be working. We're to be involved in everything.

But the main priority must always be the kingdom of God and his righteousness. That first, the other things in their own place.

And that's basically what Peter is saying here. That the main priority is that we become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

That the main priority towards beautifying is the beauty of the soul. And Peter mentioned Sarah, not because she was perfect, but because she's an example of a good wife to Abraham.

[8 : 52] And then, again, sometimes people get a wee bit hit up with the whole idea about submission, because it says at the beginning, likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands.

Now, in God's sight, there is equality in every relationship in the home like that. The two become one. And we've got to remember that.

The two become one. Before a person is married, it's mine and it's yours. When a person gets married, it's ours. So there is an equality.

We must never lose sight of that. However, God is an order in everything. Everything has an order. And God's order, whether people like it or not, is that the husband is the head of the home.

There is even an order in the Godhead. There is equality. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal. But there is still an order. And God has produced an order in life.

[9 : 53] And we've got to realize that. Headship is not dictatorship. Some people have this idea. Not at all. It's not. Because the headship of the husband has to be exercised in love.

You've been hearing about that on the Sunday night. Husbands love your wives how? As Christ loved the church. And how did he love the church?

He gave himself for it. All the way to death. So you see, it has to be a complete, total, self-sacrificial love. So you cannot have dictatorship if a heart is exercised in sacrificial love.

So you see, you have the wisdom of God in all his dealings. And I think, really, that at the bottom line, if we were to sum up what this passage is saying, two husbands and wives, is that the relationship should help.

The other person become more spiritual. Help each other to become better Christians. That really, I think, is the bottom line.

[11 : 04] You see, marriage is about, it's about completion. As we say, where the two become one. It's about giving and sharing. It's about developing and bonding. But then Peter goes on and he says to the husbands that they are, in verse 7, likewise husbands, live with your own wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as a weaker vessel, sincere heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Some people, just by the way, have wondered why Peter gives more emphasis to the teaching towards the women rather than to the man. And I don't know, but it's been suggested that back at the time when Peter wrote, women had absolutely no place.

Women had no voice, they had no place. And that it's the Christian faith. You know, it's amazing how blinkered people are. But it's the Christian faith. It's the Bible that actually is the most liberating truth for women.

And that the New Testament, and there are people who so misunderstand the teaching of the New Testament that they actually think that New Testament teaching suppresses women rather than the fact is it liberates women.

And that's what was happening through the Christian teaching is that women received a liberation that they didn't have under the pagan systems. And maybe that is why Peter was putting more emphasis upon the teaching to the women.

[12 : 40] But he's saying to the men as well here that they have to, he's teaching the men. And the first thing that he's saying is likewise husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.

The one passion that every husband has to come to understand is the wife. You know, sometimes you'll hear men say, you know, I just can't understand women.

And we accept that men and women are different. But can I say, myself included, the one person, the one woman, every husband has to come to understand is their wife.

That's what the Bible is actually saying. Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way. Because if not, it will cause problems.

It will cause difficulties. Because we're different. Men and women are different. We have different needs and different moods and different things.

[13 : 42] And it's important because if we don't come to understand, if a man and a woman think that they're exactly alike, then they're heading for disaster. Because we're not. And that's part of God's purpose, how one compliments the other.

And so, it's one of his purposes for the enrichment of life. So there has to be this understanding. Marriage is meant to bring fulfillment.

It isn't meant to be a burden. It isn't meant to be something to bring people down. It ought to, as it were, be liberty. And it says, likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as a weaker vessel.

Now, that doesn't mean that the women are weaker mentally or spiritually or emotionally. I believe, simply here, that it is meaning, by and large, in the mean that they're weaker physically.

And I think that is true. There are exceptions to the rule. There are some couples here. And you know that the wife is stronger, physically, than the husband. But by and large, you would say that that is the general rule, that men, by and large, are stronger than women.

[15 : 00] So there's this sense of a duty put upon the husband. Understand your wife. Understand her makeup. Understand the way God has made it.

If you go back to Genesis, we see God taking of the dust to the ground and making man. And then from the man, from the rib, he took out a rib and he made woman.

And the actual word that is used for the making of woman is that he built her. He fashioned her. It was like there was, he took care. It was like a delicate work in preparing her and making her.

And so, it catches a whole idea here that giving honor to the woman. It's got the idea of being courteous, of being kind, of seeking to understand.

And so, we find that this warning comes to the husband. And it's a very serious thing. Likewise, husband, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as a weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

[16 : 14] Here are a couple and they're journeying together. And they are both heirs together. They are both spiritually on a par. They are both spiritually equal.

And, I must say, and I'm sure it's true, many women are spiritually ahead of the men. That was certainly true when Jesus was alive in this world.

The most spiritually minded follower that Jesus had wasn't John, the disciple that Jesus loved. It wasn't the Peter who was saying, I'm ready to die for you.

It was Mary. Mary understood more about the mission of Jesus. Mary anointed the feet of Jesus in light of his burial. The disciples at that time hadn't understood.

They hadn't grasped. They hadn't laid hold of this great truth that Jesus was just about to lay down his life as a sacrifice for sin. They hadn't grasped it. Mary had.

[17 : 15] So you see, what we're saying here is you cannot say that men are spiritually, that they've got a greater spiritual understanding than women. Many women have a tremendous spiritual knowledge.

So the men and women are heirs together, joined, they're joined, they're traveling together to glory.

But here's the warning. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, giving honor to the woman as a weaker vessel.

If we went back to the name Sarah, what does Sarah mean? Sarah means princess. She was highlighted. Now you might be saying to yourself, hold on, does that mean I've got to treat my wife like a princess every day?

Well, in a sense, I suppose, yes. You might be saying, that's hard. But in a sense, that's kind of what it's saying. because if we don't seek to understand them, if we don't give this honor to them, then our prayer life is going to be hindered.

[18 : 28] And I can't think of a much worse thing for a Christian than to have their prayer life hindered, where you're not connecting with God. Because it's all about, your life is all about connecting with God, isn't it?

If you're a believer, the most precious, the most important thing for you is that your relationship is right with the Lord, that you're living in an active fellowship with Him.

That you know the smile of His face upon you. That you're aware that your prayers are being heard. You're seeking the Lord constantly, aren't you?

For guidance, for grace, for forgiveness. You're seeking the Lord all the time. And if you, whose prayers are hindered, it means you're not connecting.

And life for a Christian who's not connecting is going to be difficult. So you see, it's a serious thing. And that's why Peter is laying out the importance of having this relationship lived in the right way.

[19 : 37] And so, really at the bottom line is that husbands and wives have to be open with one another. And I would go as far as to say, and I would take this even further than simply husbands and wives.

And I would take it into all the different relationships and friendships in our Christian life. if, for instance, if you're finding that your prayer life is just not working, that your prayers are not being answered, that you are feeling like the heavens are brass to you, and that you're getting nowhere, I think you've got to speak, and I would put it immediately in its first context of husbands and wives, and you've got to be open and say, and you say to your partner in life, I don't know, I don't know what's happening.

They might know, they might be able to put the finger on it right away, and they'll be able to say, well, I'll tell you. I know what's wrong with your life. And they've got to tell, and you see, there's got to be an honesty, and there's got to be this openness.

There's got to be, you've always got to keep the communication lines open. But even if somebody here today is not married, even within your circle of friends, even with those who are closest to you, you've got to have this ability.

This is part of what fellowship is, where we can have this honesty with one another, and they might be able to say, well, actually, I have an idea. There is something in your life that needs to be dealt with.

[21 : 06] Other people may be able to see it. Or else you go to the Lord and say, Lord, please, because it's all about relationships. Lord, show me what's wrong.

Open my heart to understand just what is wrong here. But at the end of the day, the whole thing is that we ought to be growing and growing as believers.

bush. Now, just moving very briefly here because the time is going, Peter then moves on and he says, 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, for to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing. You know, as you're listening to Peter writing, you're so aware this is a very different Peter to the Peter we meet in the Gospels.

This isn't the Peter jumping out of the boat. This isn't the Peter pulling out the sword right away as somebody threatens Jesus. This is a mature Christian. This is a Peter who has had to learn the hard way.

[22 : 16] The Peter who was broken hearted and went out with his heart smashed that night after he denied Jesus.

The Peter who sat on the shores of Galilee with Jesus hearing him saying, Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me, Peter? Well, feed my sheep.

Shepherd my sheep. Feed my lambs. And Peter over these years has learned just something of that. And we find this maturity and we find this love. And Peter is then moving out here from the home into the community.

And he's saying this attitude and this spirit should be in the community, in the workplace, in the community, all the different places where we interact with people. And so we see that he says, finally, all of you have unity of mind.

Now, that doesn't mean when it says unity of mind, that we're going to agree in every single aspect of life that we all absolutely love the same thing and we're all together in it. For instance, if I was told when I go home just now that it's macaroni and cheese for dinner, I would be going somewhere else.

[23 : 27] Because I don't have unity of mind with regard to that with others in the house. Because it's one of the things, there's not many things I don't like, but that's one thing I don't like.

That's not what it's talking about here. We don't operate in that way in life that everybody thinks exactly the same thing. But unity of mind in this context, we believe, is speaking about all that we are in Christ.

We have this, we're absolutely united in the fact that we believe totally in God as creator, in the exclusiveness of Christ as our savior.

And the fact that salvation in Christ is the only way that we can find this new life. We believe in heaven and hell and God's judgment.

We believe in all these things. And we believe in the outworking of all these things. In the witnessing, in the testimony, in the testimony, in the outreach, in seeking to bring and live for the Lord in this world.

[24 : 30] So there's this unity of mind. Sympathy is very simply feeling in our heart for others. It's the idea of weeping with those who weep.

Rejoicing with those who rejoice. Then you have brotherly love. And love, as we know, is always seeking the betterment, the good of the other.

Seeking that they'll be, they'll develop. The tender heart, that's a compassionate heart. The humble mind. And then, Peter, and with this we conclude, Peter says, do not 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. You know, we can operate at three different levels in life.

Maybe we can operate at more, but there are three distinct levels that we can operate on. The first is that we can return evil for good.

[25 : 37] That, I would say, is the way of hell. Where somebody does good to you, and in return you do evil to them.

That's what happened in the life of Jesus. Jesus did nothing but good. How was he repaid? He was repaid with evil. And as the crucifixion drew closer, Jesus said, this is your hour and the power of darkness.

It's when hell was unleashed to do evil against all the good that Jesus did. That is an awful way to go.

And we need to pray that we will never, ever go down that road where we would return the good that somebody did to us with evil. The second way is what we would term probably the way of the world.

Where we repay in like. It's kind of tit for tat. We use that expression. If somebody does good to you, you do good back to them. If somebody does evil to you, you repay them with evil.

[26 : 49] That's what we might often term the way of the world. But there's another way, and this is the way that Peter is highlighting. It's a Christian way. It is a way that Christ set up before us.

You repay evil with good. It's a very opposite to the first, where you repay good with evil.

Here, you repay evil with good. Somebody does something bad to you, you in turn do good to them. And that's the way that Jesus operated.

That's how he lived. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And when he was reviled, he blessed. And you know, the amazing thing is that the Lord says here, through Peter, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling.

But on the contrary, bless. For to this you were called. This is part of your calling. Sometimes people say in life, what is my calling as a Christian?

[27 : 54] Well, this is one thing that you're called to. Is to operate in this completely different way. Where it's not a reflection of hell that has been shown on earth.

It's not a reflection of the world's ways and standards. But it's a way of Christ. And we need grace for that. It doesn't come naturally. The way of the world is the natural response.

It's straight away. Somebody hits you, you retaliate. But you're called to a different way. And see what happens if we live that way.

That you may obtain a blessing. And God will see to it. It's not us that give ourselves a blessing. But if we repay those who have wronged us in any way with good, God will bless us.

That's what he's saying. And we've got to believe that. And what a different world it would be. This is the way the Christian is to live. And that's why I say we need grace. It doesn't happen naturally.

[28 : 56] It's not something that we just say one day, well, this is what I'm... It's something we've got to learn. It's something we've got to be molded into. But may we seek by God's grace to display Christ in our life by living in this way.

Because this is what we've been called to. Let's pray. Lord, our God, we pray to bless us again as we've come under the word.

Give us a spirit that is teachable so that we may learn to understand. O Lord, guide us as we go along. And may our ears be constantly open to thy word.

And that we might be prepared and willing to follow thee all the time. Watch over us, we pray, and take us to our home safely. For giving us all our sin, in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Our final singing is Psalm 133 from...