

Beautiful Wives and Understanding Husbands

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[0 : 00] Now, let's turn together to the second passage we read in 1 Peter 3, verses 1 to 7. 1 Peter 3, and the passage beginning at verse 1 and through to verse 7.

I did mention this morning that there are some passages in the Bible that perhaps we'd rather, we didn't have to preach on, and this is, well, possibly when I get home tonight it might be one of those as well.

But in any case, we have to take every part of God's Word with us. And really, one of the benefits of this kind of consecutive study that we're doing in terms of looking at 1 Peter, one of the benefits of that is that you do need to take these passages and all they contain with you as we go through the whole of the letter and see how they fit into the whole emphasis of the apostle and what he's saying to those he's writing to in this letter.

And it's the same here when you find a part of the letter that's now addressed particularly to wives and to husbands. And you can see that although what he says to the wives is longer than what he says to the husband, that's not in any way an indication of the importance of the one against the other.

It's simply that what he wants to say fits into the context in which he's dealing with the whole matter of being in subjection or in submission. Remember, we saw that all the way through from chapter 2 and verse 23 and read away from verse 13.

[1 : 43] In fact, be subject to the Lord's sake, to every human institution. And then in verse 18, servants, be subject to your master with all respect.

We saw how that was then particularly set forth in Jesus himself, who is near the end of the second chapter there brought before us as one who is our example, that we might follow in his steps in regard to this matter of a due subjection, wherever that is called from us to perform.

So the passage is really addressed to wives and husbands. But if you're single here tonight, there's much in the passage for you as well. If you're a widow here tonight, there's much in the passage for you as well.

Because the passage is really dealing with principles of conduct in regard to subjection and to humility and how we relate to those not only married to us, but those out with that as well.

So the passage has an application to the wider context, although it's particularly addressed to wives and to husbands. And let's face it, in the world in which we live, this actually itself is a hugely important topic.

[2 : 55] Because the whole issue of marriage and what marriage is about and what marriage should be like and why God instituted marriage and what kind of relationship marriage is, all of that is really in our society pretty much up in the air and indeed has been overturned.

And the whole gender issue has had a huge impact upon people's understanding of what marriage is. It's more and more necessary for us to come back to the Bible, to have our lives anchored in the Bible in respect to our relationships as much as in our lives individually.

And that's the benefit of coming to this kind of passage as we're doing this evening. And he is saying here, likewise, wives. In other words, he's following through with the same emphasis as previously on being subject to.

Here it's to be subject to your own husbands. But although he's saying likewise, it doesn't obviously mean that in every single respect, they are to be like the people mentioned previously.

For example, servants. We saw that these would be slaves. And be subject to your own masters with all respect. It doesn't mean that people are to treat, husbands are obviously not to treat their wives as their property to do with them as they please.

[4 : 09] So likewise, there simply means following on in the same line of thought or in a similar fashion, wives be subject to your own husbands.

So there is a correspondence, but it's not exact in every detail. Let's look at what it says because we divided it, as you can see from the bulletin, we've divided it into two headings.

First of all, he speaks about beautiful wives and secondly, understanding husbands. Beautiful wives.

Now he sets the context for us in the first two verses. 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 other words, he's addressing it very particularly and specially to wives whose husbands are not believers. And you can imagine in those days, although it's in principle the same today as well, but in those days in a culture of paganism and pagan religion, that you would have one part or one partner in a relationship of marriage coming to know Jesus, coming to be converted, coming to be part of the church and incorporated into the church, while the other partner remained pagan.

[5 : 42] Nowhere do you find a suggestion that that meant that they should instantly separate or divorce. Rather, as here, the apostle, just like the apostle Paul too, is giving his counsel and advice as to how they are to live together in that context.

And what he's saying is, if there be some that do not obey the word, some in other words that are, may very well be hostile, because that's really, it's really built into the language that's used there. It's not simply that they don't obey the word in a kind of ambivalent or a way that doesn't really show any antagonism. He's dealing with a situation where certain husbands, not by any means necessarily the majority, but where some are like this and where some wives are facing this. He's saying, if they don't obey the word, if they are actively hostile against Scripture and against God. Well, he says, this is how you must respond to that or should respond.

Be subject to your own husbands. There would be some, I'm sure, who would be abusive of their wives in terms of their conversion to Christianity.

[6 : 59] And of course, we do remember that in certain cultures and in certain religions today in the world, for someone to be converted and become a Christian and come to follow Christ, that's going to mean instant disownment by their family.

It's going to mean not only a husband disowning his wife or a wife disowning her husband, it's going to mean the whole family will really, in many respects, say, I don't want anything more to do with you. You're no longer part of this family.

They're ostracized. They're just exiled from the family completely. And we really find it very difficult sometimes to think prayerfully of these circumstances that people face in the world when we ourselves enjoy such freedom and liberty.

Well, he's saying that's the context in which he's writing to these wives. But he's saying, be subject to your own husband. The fact that he's still a pagan, the fact that he's still converted does not mean the marriage is annulled.

It does not mean that he is not still in a biblical sense in leadership in the relationship. And he's saying, when he's using these words, be subject, it really essentially means accept his ongoing leadership in the marriage.

[8 : 14] Because marriage, as God ordained it, has given a certain leadership to the husband in the relationship and given to the wife a certain relation to that as his helper, as his companion, in a way that nobody else can be but herself.

And that's really something always to remember when you come to the Bible and the way that God, first of all, set up marriage in Genesis. You read in Genesis 2 there that God gave an instruction to Adam to take all the animals in the world and to give them names.

And there was a purpose to that. There was a reason why God asked him to do that. Not just so that these animals would come to have names, but so that in naming these animals, Adam would actually discover there was nothing and no animal amongst them that could provide companionship and support to him.

And that's why God provided him with a wife, which he formed from Adam's own side. Adam then very significantly said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

She shall be called woman. She was taken from man. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they too shall become one flesh.

[9 : 36] That's the context in which you find marriage, first of all, mentioned in the Bible and established by God. So there's a certain leadership element to the husband's role.

There's a certain companionship and support role to his wife. It doesn't make her inferior. It doesn't make her anything less than being the person no one else can be but herself.

And Peter is saying when things change and the husband is unconverted and the wife has come to be a Christian, be subject to your own husbands. Recognize that the marriage is still valid in the same relationship that God set up in the first place.

Now, being subject and accepting his leadership, Peter didn't mean in any way that the wife should see herself as an inferior person. And despite what you might read in certain contexts in terms of what the marriage relationship is nowadays, you mustn't think that the wife in a relationship where the husband has a leadership role according to the Bible, that that makes the wife second rate, that it makes her inferior, that it makes her something of a lesser status spiritually than the husband possesses, that in some way affects her dignity.

Nothing of that. You can see here in verse 7 that they are together heirs of the grace of life. Every woman, every wife in a relationship of marriage in terms of being a Christian is on the same level exactly in God's sight as her husband.

[11 : 15] The same degree to which she is justified, the same privileges under God in salvation, nothing of that changes. All of that is exactly the same level in possession for husband and wife.

But in terms of the role that God has actually appointed, there is that leadership, and there is also the companionship and support that a wife has to her husband.

Now, the end in view, of course, here is very obvious. So that they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

In other words, Peter is saying there are occasions, there are contexts in which it is better rather than to try and keep speaking out what you believe and trying to actually encourage the person who is still unconverted to come to place their confidence and trust in the Lord.

Sometimes it is better, especially if there is an antagonism and hostility on the part of the unconverted husband. The Lord applies to wives too. But it is here saying it is without a word.

[12 : 21] It is by seeing your respectful and pure conduct. And he goes on to enlarge on that in verse 3 and 4. So he is really saying sometimes it proves to be more antagonistic to speak than to be silent.

Sometimes it is more effective. This is where this has an application beyond the relationship of marriage itself. When you are dealing with hostility in a wider sense, when you are dealing with it, as nowadays we sometimes have to deal with it in a public way, it is important that we try and establish well where do I draw the line with this?

Am I actually better just in, especially when you are dealing personally with people, I am not talking just now about online which is very impersonal, but rather when you are dealing personally face to face with people or at work with people or even in a marriage relationship itself.

Peter is saying that very often it is more effective to act a part of a wife for a husband in Christian conduct in a quiet and respectful spirit so that they may be won without a word by that conduct.

Now, something else we should say at this point that is that this doesn't actually mean that a wife has to constantly put up with a relationship in which there may be violence and danger to her life from an antagonistic husband or indeed the other way around as well.

[14 : 02] There is nowhere in the Bible that we find that people in a marriage relationship or any relationship should actually face such danger to themselves and such violence done to them as to remain just as they are in that relationship without any change.

That is another whole area of study but Peter is nowhere suggesting that if these pagan husbands of these Christian wives are seriously violent towards them they may still regard the marriage as not annulled but doesn't necessarily mean they continue to live with them as if nothing is happening that's dangerous to their lives.

And we have to remember today that there are refuges for husbands and for wives particularly when they are in an abusive relationship and where the stress of that places them in severe danger. And we do have to remember that these circumstances are part of the society we live in and part of the society we reach with the gospel and with these biblical precepts as well.

So he goes on to amplify this in verse 3 he says 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.

[15 : 29] That's really very much one of the important points which in God's sight is very precious. It's what it is in God's sight that's ultimately important. Now he's talking here about adorning and you'll find in 1 Timothy chapter 2 verses 8 to 12 the apostle Paul is dealing with a very similar context and similar language there so it's not just Peter you find Paul giving the same kind of counsel.

What he's dealing with here is inward beauty. That's why we're entitling this beautiful wives. It's an inward beauty that is very precious in the sight of God.

This inward beauty of heart of soul this inner spiritual and moral beauty he says is what especially wins through to the conscience of the person that is still not converted.

And when he says here adorning let your adorning be not external and so on adorning really there means what a person uses to make oneself beautiful to others.

And here in the context would be what a wife would have in order to make herself attractive or beautiful to her husband even if he is an unbelieving husband. And he tells us what it's not.

[16 : 52] The adorning what you have to make yourself beautiful is not the braiding of hair the wearing of gold or the putting on of clothing but rather the hidden person of the heart.

Now ladies in case you get rather worried he is not actually saying here that the braiding of hair and the wearing of jewelry and going to the hairdresser and wearing designer items is absolutely banned.

That is something that must not be engaged at all by Christian women. Some will be quite relieved about that. Others it won't make much difference to. But the point is Peter is not here saying that he is banning the wearing of jewelry for Christian women.

That he is actually denouncing the braiding of their hair or taking care over their appearance or even the wearing of clothes even if they are designer clothes. There is obviously a modesty and a limit to all of that as well in a Christian sense.

But what he is doing is really contrasting the making of oneself beautiful by external means with the beauty of an inner spirit. And he is contrasting them so that the emphasis will very much fall upon the inward.

[18 : 07] Upon the beauty that comes from our inner soul. The beauty of our character. The beauty of our moral conduct. The beauty of how we live. Rather than what we put on or what happens to us externally.

You see he is saying that that is the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. because gold, jewellery, the braiding of hair, the wearing of clothes, it's very short lived.

It's temporary isn't it? You've all heard people exclaiming when let's say older women dress up as if they were still in their teens.

And you'll find all kinds of descriptions mostly from other women I'm sure about that that it's inappropriate which in many cases it is. And what Peter is saying here is that these are things which are perishable.

Not only do they go out of fashion but they very soon perish in any case. But the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit is what is really precious in the sight of God.

[19 : 19] What God finds attractive, what God finds precious, what God commends, what God himself is drawn to if you like, is what is commended for those women that would seek to win their husbands without a word by this conduct of a gentle, this beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.

How important that is in the society that we belong to. Because not only has that society really lost sight of what marriage is to a great extent and has corrupted the whole idea of marriage, a society where you find so much given to the idolatry of fashion, of physical appearance, of an emphasis on the physical, even to the point of emphasizing matters in terms of sexual attractiveness, all of that is simply a physical emphasis at the expense of the spiritual, at the expense very often too, of the moral.

And in that context, God expects you and me, whether we're in a marriage relationship or single, whatever our circumstances are, that we are a conscience to the world, that we show the world this is the beauty that God approves of.

And what God disapproves of, what God finds distasteful, we have to show that not just by speaking about it, but by living its opposite, by valuing marriage for what it is, by cultivating that

gentle and quiet spirit, that imperishable beauty of a holy character, of a Christ-like character, of the kind of thing the Bible calls holiness, which is itself commended by God.

And that, of course, applies in the wider context too. It's there for husbands as well as for wives, it's there for those who are single, it's there for those who are widows, or have been widowed, it's there for those who are younger as well as older, it's there for every human personality to cultivate what is Christ-like, what is contrary to the ideology of the world, what is contrary especially to the kind of society that we live in.

[21 : 39] So there is the first thing, beautiful wives, beautiful in the sense in which that inner beauty is commended. And then he moves secondly to understanding husbands.

We're not going to go into the example he gives there of Sarah, obeying Abraham, calling him Lord. Lord, they might be misleading, but it is the word that's used, but it means really simply accepting his leadership and calling him sir if you like or whatever, but it's accepting that leadership as appointed by God.

Likewise, in verse 7, husbands, the word likewise again, following the same emphasis, saying, husbands live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel.

In an understanding way means, it's literally saying in accordance, according to knowledge. So the ESV translation there is actually as good as any, in an understanding way, according to knowledge. In other words, the more you get to know God, the more you get to know your wife, the more you get to know the circumstances of your marriage, the things that you face, according to knowledge, according as you glean the knowledge that you get as you go through life.

[22 : 56] Well, he's saying, live with your wives in an understanding way. Understand where she's coming from, understand what she's facing, understand the difference between her role in marriage and yours, understand the different things she faces from day to day compared to what you face yourself.

Understand how she is in relation to family, if you're blessed with family. Understand how she feels at times if she feels that that is itself being threatened.

All these things in an understanding way, he says, live with your wives. But he goes on to say, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel.

Now, showing honor is very important. It's not just saying, treat her with respect. That comes into it, but it's not really strong enough.

That's not going far enough. It's not the words that Peter is actually using. He is actually literally saying, showing honor. And if you go back to chapter 2 and verse 7, you find the same word there translated a different way.

[24 : 04] So the honor is for you who believe. Sometimes the preciousness is a translation you find. But it's preciousness. It's talking about there's a preciousness to believing.

There's a preciousness because you find salvation through it. There's a preciousness in coming to own Jesus himself as your Savior. It's a preciousness that belongs to you.

Now he's saying, husbands show honor to the woman. There's preciousness in regard to her. She is precious to you.

And because of that preciousness, you treat her in an understanding way. You honor her. You give her that honor that preciousness really demands.

And in fact, again, he's not using the normal, usual word for woman in this context that you find elsewhere in the New Testament. He's using a less well-known word which really emphasizes, at least some interpreters who know the language tell us, that it emphasizes something like the woman-ness or the femininity of the woman.

[25 : 17] In other words, there's a femininity that belongs to her that does not belong to the husband and for which the husband is to honor her, for which he is to see in an understanding way that in her femininity she is actually there to be his helper, to be his support, to be his companion, that she in her femininity is there to provide something that nobody else can, which is why the invasion of a marriage by a third party is such a serious issue.

That's why you find the Bible denouncing that. And that goes back to the beginning of marriage established by God in Genesis as we say. She is to be honored by the husband as Adam honored his wife when the Lord brought her to him after creating this, fashioning this woman, as we know from Adam's side.

He brought her to the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman.

He gave her that name, a name that wasn't found anywhere else in the creation. As he had discovered, he honored her. He treated her as precious.

He realized, God has given me something profoundly important, profoundly precious, something I can find nowhere else in the whole creation.

[26 : 51] Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to them, treating them as precious. as the weaker vessel.

That's often been regarded somewhat amusingly, hasn't it? Over the years, the wife as the weaker vessel. What does that mean? Well, it obviously means in terms of physical ability, that by and large, wives are the weaker vessel, but then so are women in general, without necessarily taking things into the marriage relationship.

relationship. So, the weaker vessel could also, and I think we can certainly say that this is part of what Peter meant as well, weaker in the sense of an emotional weakness.

And that's, in one way, it's not a weakness, because we realize that women, by and large, have the ability emotionally, sometimes, to handle things much better than we men can.

But, in one sense, although that's a strength, what that affords a woman and a wife in a relationship is, it gives a greater affinity or closeness of spirit to her, because she has really a deeper emotional sensitivity, if you like, than most men have.

[28 : 12] It gives the ability to really come alongside someone and show an affinity of spirit and an understanding and a compassion. And that's really a great strength.

But it also means this, that she's the weaker vessel in this sense, because the man doesn't necessarily have that deep emotional sensitivity, it means that he is not as deeply hurt very often as a woman can be.

And the husband has to remember that his wife can be deeply hurt. in terms of her emotional state, because she is in her femininity, in her woman-ness, although providing him with support no one else can.

Nevertheless, because she has that emotional sensitivity, she can be more deeply hurt than any male companion or even himself.

and so he's saying, as you find there in verse 7, live with them in an understanding way. Don't cause such deep hurt.

[29 : 29] Be careful always not to intrude into that area where she will come, to be wounded emotionally, deeply, simply because she is as sensitive to things more than you are as a husband.

husband. And that's where Ephesians, of course, also comes before us, that passage we read dealing with husband and wife relationship. You know, in many ways, people think that the most difficult aspect of that relationship is the wives.

She is to obey her husband even as the church is obedient to Christ. In actual fact, I think it's the opposite. I think it's a greater challenge by far to the husband, because what the husband is to be, is to love his wife even as Christ loved the church.

The husband is to actually be the very example of the love of Christ to his wife. Where is there a challenge like that? And that really is what's behind this emphasis on living with your wives in an understanding way.

Treat them as Christ treated the church. Love them as Christ loved the church. None of us is going to be perfect, of course, to the level in which Christ loved the church. But in principle, it's the same because Christ loved the church by giving himself for her.

[30 : 54] And that's what love does. That's what a loving husband does in an understanding way as he treats his wife as someone precious to him.

So precious that no one else can take her place while she lives. He is to regard her as someone that can be very deeply hurt and he's to be very careful in not causing that.

And he finishes by saying, since they are heirs with you of the grace of light so that your prayers may not be hindered. That seems to indicate it's your plural, but he's addressing husbands and he's addressing the husband in these relationships or any relationship.

I think it's verse 7 in actual fact. He's addressing Christian husbands. He's moved from unbelieving husbands who live with their believing wives, just simply saying husbands, live with your wives.

So the emphasis seems to be pretty much on a Christian husband, especially since he's saying, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life. But he finishes by saying, so that your prayers, your prayers as husbands, although they may pray together of course, but the emphasis really on the prayers of the husbands.

[32 : 13] Husband and leadership prays for the relationship, prays for the family, prays when he's praying to God, he prays for his wife, he prays for the relationship, he prays for the family, he prays for all of these things that are in the passage and more.

What Peter is saying is, if we are selfish as husbands, there's a spiritual price to pay, it will affect our prayers, we will not be as near to God, we will not be as conscious of God's presence, of God's blessing, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Beautiful wives, understanding husbands, the principle of being subject, as it widens out beyond the marriage relationship, but it's particularly for us who are married and have that privilege, for wives and for husbands, whether living with an unbelieving partner or otherwise, we are to be Christ-like as Christians in that partnership, showing forth the love of Christ himself in our life together.

Let's pray. We give thanks, O Lord our God, for the relationship of marriage, and we give thanks, too, for the gift of singleness that you enable people to live out, and we give thanks for the instruction that your word gives us to both, and we pray that you would help us to follow all that we find in your word, whatever situation in life we face, and whatever context you place us.

Help us, Lord, we pray, to apply your word in all its counsel to us. Bless us, we pray now, as we come to the singing of your praise and the conclusion of our worship here.

[34 : 16] Grant these mercies to us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, our concluding praise this evening is Psalm 18.

Psalm 18 and sing Psalms version, that's page 21. We're singing verses 27 to 32.

And the tune is Duke Street. That's on page 21 from verse 27. 4 verses, you save the humble and the meek, but bring the proud down from their height.

You, Lord, will keep my lamp aflame. God turns my darkness into light. So on to the end of verse 32. Let's sing these four stanzas to God's praise.

verse 27. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

You save the humble and the meek, but bring the proud down from their height.

[35 : 24] You, Lord, will keep my lamp aflame. God turns my darkness into light.

With help from God I can advance against a troop and right them all.

And with it my God will give. I can leave both at any all.

For perfect is the way of God. No flaw is found within His word.

To all who put their trust in Him, a shield and refuge is the Lord.

[36 : 43] For who is God except the Lord? Besides our God who is the rock, He is the God who gives me strength.

He's strength and He perfects the path I walk. Oh, I'll go to this side or to my right after the benediction.

Let's also give thanks for the food received at the fellowship. Oh, Lord, our God, we give thanks for all your provision, both spiritually and physically.

We pray for your blessing to accompany the food provided for us to enjoy fellowship together.

Father, we pray that you bless our speaker this evening. We ask that he may carry to us in the power of your Spirit that testimony to your grace in his own life and the context in life in which you have placed him.

So bless us now, we pray, and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us now and evermore. Amen. Amen.