

Renewal Ministries of Colorado Springs

Hope and Healing Through Christ Centered Ministry

The Wife's Responsibilities

1 Peter 3:1–2, Verse-by-verse, Part 1

Pastor George Stahnke, 10/03/2004



The biblical teaching of submission on the part of the wife to the husband may be the least popular and most misunderstood concept in society today. The bible does not teach the general suppression of women under men. Nor does the principle of submission require a woman to become a doormat.

1 Peter 3:1—6 (NIV) ¹Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, ⁶like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Submission does not mean inferiority.

Biblical submission does not mean that a woman is in any way inferior to a man. Both have equal value and standing as God's children. One is not superior over the other!

- There is equality in Christ: **Galatians 3:28 (NIV)** There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus
- Mutual submission to each other: **Ephesians 5:21 (TMNT)** Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another.
- Humility is the key to submission: **Philippians 2:3-4 (NASB)** ³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

"Pursue excellence as a mother, but pursue it also as a person, a wife and a woman gifted by God."
—Diane Mandt Langberg, Ph.D., Marriage Partnership, Vol. 9, no. 1.

Submission has its limits in marriage.

"Christianity Today did an extensive study of battered Christian woman, and they found that two-thirds of these women believe that it was their Christian responsibility to endure their husbands' violence and that in so doing they would be expressing a commitment both to God and to their husbands. Fifty-five percent noted that their husbands had said that if they would only be more submissive, then the

violence would stop. And one-third of these women believed their husbands, believing that their submission was the key to resolving domestic violence. It is not. It is not the key."

—Marlin Vis, "Battered into Submission," Preaching Today, Tape No. 134.

A word about living with an unbeliever.

1 Corinthians 7:12—16 (NLT) ¹²Now, I will speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command from the Lord. If a Christian man has a wife who is an unbeliever and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her. ¹³And if a Christian woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him. ¹⁴For the Christian wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the Christian husband brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not have a godly influence, but now they are set apart for him. ¹⁵(But if the husband or wife who isn't a Christian insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is not required to stay with them, for God wants his children to live in peace.) ¹⁶You wives must remember that your husbands might be converted because of you. And you husbands must remember that your wives might be converted because of you.

Wives submit to your husbands.

Peter is describing a divided home. This is a marital situation where the wife has become a Christian and her husband remains a non-believer.

1 Peter 3:1a (AMP) IN LIKE manner, you married women, be submissive to your own husbands [subordinate yourselves as being secondary to and dependent on them, and adapt yourselves to them], so that even if any do not obey the Word [of God], they may be won over not by discussion but by the [godly] lives of their wives,

"When a Christian wife interacted with an unbelieving husband, she needed to be submissive according to cultural norms in order to save her marriage and sometimes even her life. But she ought not participate in her husband's pagan religion or submit to actions that dishonored God. ...Submission does not mean inferiority or blind obedience. A wife who accepts her husband's authority is accepting the relationship that God has designed and giving her husband leadership and responsibility." —Life Application Bible Commentary

Ephesians 5:22 (AMP) Wives, be subject (be submissive and adapt yourselves) to your own husbands as [a service] to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:33 (AMP) However, let each man of you [without exception] love his wife as [being in a sense] his very own self; and let the wife see that she respects {and} reverences her husband [that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates, and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly].

Colossians 3:18 (AMP) Wives, be subject to your husbands [subordinate and adapt yourselves to them], as is right {and} fitting {and} your proper duty in the Lord.

"The command does not require women to be subordinate to men in general but to their husbands as a function of order within the home. A wife is to accept her place in the family under the leadership of her husband whom God has placed as head in the home."

—The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament

Your words alone will not persuade him.

1 Peter 3:1b (AMP) ...they may be won over not by discussion but by the [godly] lives of their wives,

1 Peter 3:1b (NIV) ...they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,

Peter in trying to give hope to the wife says that the unbelieving husband may be won over (yielding his life to Christ). It is not by her persuasive conversation, compelling arguments, frustrated pleading or nagging words but by how she quietly lives her life before him. Actions speak louder than words.

The testimony of pure & reverent conduct.

1 Peter 3:1b — 2 (NASB) ...they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

The unbelieving husband needs to observe (look upon or inspect) the behavior of his believing wife.

1 Peter 3:2 (AMP) When they observe the pure {and} modest way in which you conduct yourselves, together with your reverence [for your husband; you are to feel for him all that reverence includes: to respect, defer to, revere him--to honor, esteem, appreciate, prize, and, in the human sense, to adore him, that is, to admire, praise, be devoted to, deeply love, and enjoy your husband].

Chaste: **G53** ἄγνός *hagnos hag-nos'* properly *clean*, that is, (figuratively) *innocent, modest, perfect*:—chaste, clean, pure. From the same as **G40** ἅγιος *hagios hag'-ee-os*; (physically *pure*, morally *blameless* or *religious*, ceremonially *consecrated*)
—Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

Titus 2:3—5 (NASB) ³Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵*to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

Sensible: **G4998** σώφρων *sōphrōn so'-frone* —Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

Curbing one's desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate —Thayer's Greek Definitions

1 Peter 2:12 (TMNT) Live an exemplary life among the natives (pagans NIV) so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they'll be won over to God's side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives. (note added)

1 Peter 2:12 (AMP) Conduct yourselves properly (honorably, righteously) among the Gentiles, so that, although they may slander you as evildoers, [yet] they may by witnessing your good deeds [come to] glorify God in the day of inspection [when God shall look upon you wanderers as a pastor or shepherd looks over his flock].

Ruth Graham said it was a great day in her life when she realized it was not her job to change her husband. She said "It was my job to love Billy and God's job to change him."

—Robert Russell, "Releasing Resentment," Preaching Today, Tape No. 136.

The wife's Responsibilities

Verse-by-verse, Part 2

1 Peter 3:1—6 (NIV) ¹Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, ⁶like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.



The drive for outward beauty

1 Peter 3:3 (AMP) Let not yours be the [merely] external adorning with [elaborate] interweaving {and} knotting of the hair, the wearing of jewelry, or changes of clothes;

“The apostle refers here to a propensity which exists in the heart of woman to seek that which would be esteemed ornamental, or that which will appear well in the sight of others, and commend us to them. The desire of this is laid deep in human nature and therefore, when properly regulated is not wrong....The apostle does not say that she should wholly neglect her personal appearance, for she has no more right to be offensive to her husband by neglecting her personal appearance, than by a finical attention to it. Religion promotes neatness, and cleanliness, and a proper attention to our external appearance according to our circumstances in life, as certainly as it does to the internal virtue of the soul.” —Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

1 Timothy 2:9—10 (GWT) ⁹I want women to show their beauty by dressing in appropriate clothes that are modest and respectable. Their beauty will be shown by what they do, not by their hair styles or the gold jewelry, pearls, or expensive clothes they wear. ¹⁰This is what is proper for women who claim to have reverence for God.

The value of inward beauty

1 Peter 3:3—4 (NASB) ³Your adornment must not be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; ⁴but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

“Instead of only adorning themselves on the outside, Christian women should let their adornment (the center focus of their beauty) be the inner self. In other words, their beauty should come from inside—the inner nature and personality, the attitudes, thoughts, and motivations that are revealed in words and actions. For believers, this inner self has been transformed by the Holy Spirit.”

—Life Application Bible Commentary: 1 Peter 3:4

While a man may be sexually aroused by outward beauty it is short lived at best. It is the inward beautiful of a woman's spirit that will command admiration and respect and win him over.

Ornament of a meek and quiet spirit—Of a calm temper; a contented mind; a heart free from

passion, pride, envy, and irritability; a soul not subject to the agitations and vexations of those who live for fashion, and who seek to be distinguished for external adorning.

—Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

A meek and quiet spirit—*That is, a mind that will not give provocation to others, nor receive irritation by the provocation of others. Meekness will prevent the first; quietness will guard against the last.*

—Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

The holy woman of history

1 Peter 3:5 (NIV) For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands,

These women were characterized by steadfast trust or hope in God.

They adorned themselves with a meek and quiet spirit

1 Peter 3:5a (GWT) After all, this is how holy women who had confidence in God expressed their beauty in the past.

1 Peter 3:4 (AMP) But let it be the inward adorning {and} beauty of the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible {and} unfading charm of a gentle and peaceful spirit, which [is not anxious or wrought up, but] is very precious in the sight of God.

Respecting the husbands authority

1 Peter 3:6 (AMP) It was thus that Sarah obeyed Abraham [following his guidance and acknowledging his headship over her by] calling him lord (master, leader, authority). And you are now her true daughters if you do right and let nothing terrify you [not giving way to hysterical fears or letting anxieties unnerve you].

Peter is referring to Genesis 18:12 where Abraham and Sarah are told by the angel that they will have a son in their old age. Peter is not saying that woman are to be dominated or lorded over.

Genesis 18:12 (NASB) Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

"First, it is not being implied that this submission extends to giving up the practice of the Christian faith or compromising the standards of holy living laid down by Jesus. These women are to continue to "hope in God" and "do what is right." Their husbands, being unconverted, may in fact threaten them with punishment or divorce, demanding that they not go to the church gatherings or that they practice something Christ has forbidden, but these women are not to "give way to fear." Suffering for the name of Christ is honored in 1 Peter. Yet like all of those to whom 1 Peter is written, they should suffer because they are committed to Christ, not because they have broken cultural standards of which Christ would approve. In other words, what we see here is that the submission of these women is not to be absolute. They have submitted to Christ first of all. That is the one absolute submission. Now they follow him and submit to their husbands. Their culture demanded absolute submission to their husbands, including in matters of religion. This epistle is calling for them to take an independent stand on religion and morality, but to be model wives in every other way, which means that Christ would not be blamed for what was not truly the result of obedience to him." —Hard Sayings of the Bible