

As monogamists we think we only marry one mate, but the fact is we all marry a number of people because our mates keep changing, and we have to adjust to these changes and learn to love a different person than the one we married. Through the years all mates change, and sometimes it can be hard to adjust, for your mate may not be the person now that you expected them to be for life. You have to fall in love again with a new person. Those who cannot adjust to changes in their mate often get divorced. All couples go through what is called divorce periods where they are in the process of deciding if they love the new and different people they have become.

This is where love is again the power that keeps them together. If love is allowed to fade, and there is no effort to rekindle the flame of passion, there is a danger that they will part. Those who make it through these periods do so because they work at rekindling the flame. Those who neglect love and just drift tend to drift apart completely. Divorce is a refusal to remarry the new person your mate has become. Long-range marriage is a commitment to keep on marrying the mate you have no matter how often they change.

I pray for - Wisdom - to understand my husband;
 Love - to forgive him;
 Patience - for his moods;
 Because, Lord if I pray for Strength, I'll beat him to death. Amen.

In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over² by observing your pure and reverent lives.

³ *Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes.* ⁴ *You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.* ⁵ *This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful.*

They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands. ⁶ *For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do.*

⁷ *In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.*

1 Peter 3:1-7 NLT

In the year 397, an aging saint of God wrote an amazing and compelling autobiography. It's entitled, The Confessions of Saint Augustine. Deep within this writing is a moving tribute to his mother and her influence in bringing her unbelieving husband to faith. It is written in an ancient style yet it is profound in its words:

“She served her husband as her master, and did all she could to win him for You, speaking to him of You by her conduct, by which You made her beautiful . . . Finally, when her husband was at the end of his earthly span, she gained him for You.”

I would like to believe that Monica, Augustine’s mother, relied on the promising and hopeful words of our text. She was a living example of these words being lived out. There will be some men/husbands who will enter heaven some day and they will owe their salvation to the honorable and conduct and good works of a godly wife. This is not a promise for an easy life. This scripture does not suggest that wives will always be treated fairly or that men will always respond in the biblical way that we are instructed. If you are married you know it is difficult. It is not easy.

So here we have the heart of living submitted lives to Christ. We submit to governing authority, our bosses and leaders at work, and now we find this very direct instruction given to the most personal of relationships.

This is really tough in today’s society because very subtly the roles of men and women have changed. Boys have been allowed to become passive and girls have been encouraged to become aggressive. Universities are filled with female graduate students who have the drive to further their educations in much higher numbers than men.

Intro: Submission is not a dirty word!

Submission is the key theme of Peter’s letter. This principle is repeated in every scenario that Peter presents including the one we look at today. Peter’s admonition to wives in this chapter once again relates to being like Jesus Christ. We present ourselves to a watching world as people who emulate Jesus. Submission is not a dirty word.

In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over² by observing your pure and reverent lives. 1 Peter 3:1-2 NLT

Here is what submission does not mean. It does not mean that if your husband asks you to abandon your faith in Christ that you should do it. It does not mean that if your husband asks you to sin that you should do it. It does not mean that you should always agree with him and never present a differing view. It does not mean that if he is unfaithful to you that you are left without a biblical recourse and response. It does not mean that if you are abused physically or are abandoned through non-stop verbal humiliation and abuse that you should remain silent at all costs.

1. The hidden person of the heart!

The Emphasis

I love the fact that Peter takes the heat of ladies who will listen to what he has to say. We live in a world that defines women and what makes them truly desirable. I would ask you at the end of this message today to ask yourself where your self-worth and confidence comes from.

³ Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. ⁴ You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. ⁵ This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. 1 Peter 3:3-5 NLT

Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— ⁴ rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. ⁵ For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 1 Peter 3:3-5 NKJV

Every woman ought to pay special attention to Peter's words here. The culture we live in has most of us convinced that everything Peter says you are not to be concerned with is really very important. Peter is saying quite simply that there is something for the godly woman much more important than external beauty. You need to know that in Peter's day women were just as obsessed with external beauty. The big difference is that they were not bombarded with media. One of the greatest barriers we face to godliness and holiness is a total lack of awareness at how much we are affected by the culture instead of the word of God. This bombardment leaves many women feeling that they never look good enough, they are never pretty enough, they never measure up. You are made to feel inferior, ugly and unlovable but Peter is trying to free women from the obscene obsession of looking good.

He calls women to focus internally instead of succumbing to the pressure of the external.

Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— ⁴ rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

Let me just make this suggestion. Spend as much time on your inner person as you do on your outward every day. Now I know that not all of you may need this as much as some but there is something to be said for working on inner beauty that is lasting in nature. In other words, don't rely or spend all your time and money putting on a face that isn't really you outwardly (or one that will wash off and reveal the real you) instead of investing your time in your heart and soul.

The motivation for women investing in their souls and spirits is found in the last phrase of verse 4: "which is very precious in the sight of God." In other words when God looks at you He finds you precious because of your inner beauty. You can dress yourself on the outside and look like a movie star but there is something better and more attractive than all of that and that is a gentle and quiet spirit; a spirit that runs deep in faith and walks close to God. A lady that knows Christ intimately and loves unconditionally is what God finds precious. Your beauty will be found deep in the hidden person of your heart.

I want to insert a thought here because often the internal is affected by un-forgiveness.

Recently, a survey was made of 200 married adults in regards to forgiveness (1). The researchers were wondering how one's ability to forgive others would affect their marital satisfaction and

personal well-being. The results were astounding! This research suggests that there is a huge relationship between marriage satisfaction and forgiveness. In fact, it appears that as much as one third of marriage satisfaction is related to forgiveness. Not only does the ability to forgive impact the marriage relationship, it was significantly related to personal emotional distress. As forgiveness ability went up, individuals reported fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety, and fatigue! These results are powerful and suggest that all counselors, both secular and faith-based, should be helping people develop the skill of forgiveness. 1. Peter J. Larson, New Forgiveness Research Jan 27, 2003

You can't hold on to things that happened in the past and expect to be healthy internally. When you walk around and remember every injustice and every blunder you are hurting yourself and your marriage.

Let's press on. Peter does not leave you without a model.

2. An historic role model.

An Example

⁵ This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands. ⁶ For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do. 1 Peter 3:5-6 NLT

Sarah was not weak nor was she a wallflower kind of lady but she did possess a gentle and quiet spirit. I cannot imagine how foreign this call must seem to many of the women here today. Everything around you would suggest that this is a call to walk back to the dark ages. But I beg to differ. Sarah even got into her husband's face a time or two but she models for us the heart of the matter.

3. The heart of the matter.

The Endurance

a. Sarah laughed

Sarah lived out God's principle of submission when she called Abraham "lord." Now before you throw tomatoes and eggs or walk out let me show you something. When she said it she was laughing. Not sarcastically or in derision or contempt but pleasantly. Here is what her "lord and laughter day" looked like.

Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent"¹⁰ And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son."

(Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.^[b]¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

¹³ *And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’* ¹⁴ *Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”*

Her laughter here was a nervous laughter. Some of you listening today may have been feeling a little nervous yourself and thankful that no angels have come to visit you at your age. Sarah refers to Abraham as her lord but it is not said with some “walk ten paces behind your husband kind of attitude.” It was spoken in casual conversation and used as a term of respect. I am not suggesting nor do I ever want to be called this. But there is an attitude of respect that she showed which is very rare in today’s world. She doubted that God could do what He said and for that she was reprimanded. The question is asked of her, “is anything too hard for the Lord?”

b. Sorrowful laugh

There is laughter in many women today but it is not the same as Sarah’s laugh. She was comfortable in her God-given role as opposed to women who can’t compete with the demands of the culture. The laugh that is more than likely to be heard today is one of derision. There is a doubting that God can keep you and your spirit from being harmed in your relationship. You can’t imagine submitting to God’s authority in your everyday life and relationship. It is frightening and unconventional. It goes against everything you are told on a daily basis.

Those who entrust themselves to God will find that He will keep His word then. What’s His word? *“Now we live with great expectation, ⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.* 1 Peter 1:3-4 NLT

I realize that there are women who have to deal with some really tough situations. I realize that husbands have often not fulfilled their biblical roles or even just men in general have lost respectability for a lot of reasons. No matter the situation you find yourself in, Peter wants you to know that God can be trusted. You may have to deal with an overbearing employer, an unjust politician or a very difficult husband, but when you live according to the biblical principle of submission and you trust yourself to God’s word, you will be living a life modeled after Jesus Christ.

c. Strong laugh

Sarah could be the example for the Proverb writer as well. In Proverbs 31:10 we read these words: *“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not harm all the days of her life.”* This passage goes on to talk about “strength and dignity” being her clothing.

Listen carefully. The biggest dilemma that you face today is the notion that power is the end of all things. But the Bible clearly teaches that your goal should be strength and dignity and that is achieved with a gentle and quiet spirit. It’s just amazing and another example of the hidden power of the Bible and its principles. In Proverbs 31:25 the writer says this:

“She laughs at the time to come.” The power and strength that is lasting is found in a quiet and abiding faith in God that never wavers. Sarah laughed nervously and couldn’t bring herself to believe God. Modernity has produce a lot of women that totally disbelieve God’s word but let me give you one of the last few verses of Proverbs 31. *“Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. . .”*

And that leads us to the most difficult part of this message: ☺

4. A husband’s role.

An Encourager

I thought maybe we would run out of time before getting to this point. But look at what the scripture says.

⁷ In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.
1 Peter 3:7 NLT

A couple had been married for 35 years. The wife gave her husband a grapefruit for breakfast every day of their married life. One day, she ran out of grapefruit and apologized passionately to her husband. The husband replied, "That’s okay dear. I never liked grapefruit anyway.

Peter offers several strong principles and reasons for man to act in a godly way toward their wives. We are to honor our wives. We are to be understanding. We are to know that she is our equal partner, (joint heirs)

The focus of this sermon has been on women but guys there is much for us to pray about as well.

I want to go back to Peter’s underlying theme in some of what he wrote. While submission is the theme that we have looked at for the last two weeks, let me recap Peter’s thoughts. There is a twofold plan: Let your emphasis of adornment be internal before making such a big deal about the external. There is a three fold reward: possible salvation of your spouse, your preciousness in the sight of God, and a reward for entrusting yourself to God.

Let me give you one testimony of a wife that lived this out. Her daughter wrote these words:

When my mother and dad were married she was a new believer and he had recently gone forward in a church service to receive Christ as his Savior. It became evident, however, that my dad had no interest in anything spiritual. So throughout the years he would drive us to church and some years attend at Christmas. My mother faithfully lived for the Lord and taught us from the word.

When I was thirteen she found out that my dad had been unfaithful. I can still remember a few days later sitting at the kitchen table as she read to us from 1 Corinthians 7:13 (KJV) “If the unbelieving husband wishes to remain let him remain.” That settled it for her. Theirs was not a “happy” marriage but we were a family. Twenty nine years later in a morning service in a small church on his 72nd birthday my dad stood at the invitation and truly accepted Jesus as his Savior.

We were all there and tissues were passed up and down the row. He was a changed man. He prayed, they had a Bible study in their home, and six years later he went to be with the Lord for His faithfulness and for my mother's obedience to Scripture and faithful witness through the years.