

1 Peter 3:1-6, Part C

1Pe 3:1 (NKJV) **Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear. ³ 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, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.**

As we continue in this study, we have seen so far based on [Ephesians 5:18-21](#) that each partner is to be “**filled with the Spirit**”, or to be living under the control and influence of the Holy Spirit, as well as to be willing to be “**submissive to one another**”. These are two fundamental principles that are the foundation for a healthy and intimate marriage. To diminish the importance of either one would be a tragic mistake.

In the last study, we looked at the first principle relative to the marriage relationship from the perspective of those things that the wife is to understand about her husband. The first overarching principle was that she has to allow room for her husband to fail simply because failure is one of the major components of how God teaches a man. To always be demanding an unrealistic perfection is really to put herself in a position where she is probably opposing God and His ways.

The second principle that we want to reiterate that we previously stated in another study is that **the husband and wife are spiritually equal**. The husband is not spiritually superior to the wife and the wife is not spiritually superior to the husband. [1 Peter 3:7](#) says that the wife is a “**weaker vessel**”, but that is only implying weaker physically. In my estimation, women are just as strong mentally and intellectually as men, and in many cases much stronger emotionally. However, what Scripture clearly teaches is that the husband and wife simply have different physical and functional roles in the marriage. If I can say it this way, if one partner is more responsible for and more physically and intellectually built for a particular functional area of the marriage, then they should have the greater influence and impact in that area of the marriage. Why is that? It is because God designed that partner for that functional role. However, if a couple just reaches a kind of gridlock and impasse in making a decision, then ultimately the husband may have to make the decision, and that is where the attitude of willing submission has to come into play. Just as the pastor and elders are forbidden by God to “**lord over**” God’s flock ([1 Peter 5:3](#)), I believe that principle is just as valid in the home that the husband is never to “**lord over**” his wife. If he does, that is a completely irresponsible and spiritually negligent response to the spiritual equality of their relationship. In fact, in the [1 Peter 5:3](#) passage, the word “**lords**” also means “**masters**”. I am not my wife’s master. I am her husband and her supporter, and her opinion and her input is just as important as mine is.

What the “imperative sense” of this present tense verb for “**be submissive**” in v1 does is that it adds spiritual weight and importance to what God really desires for the marriage. It is God’s way of adjusting the wife’s perspective so that she will be inclined to develop a godly perspective on her marriage. Ladies, it will be the same for the husband in [1 Peter 3:7](#) which says,

1Pe 3:7 (NKJV) **Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.**

Both the verb for “**dwell**” and the verb for “**giving honor**” are participles in the present tense and imperative sense, but not the imperative mood. However, as we saw previously, in [Ephesians 5:25](#) it says,

Eph 5:25 (NKJV) **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,**

The word for “**love**” in that verse is the word “*agapao*” which comes from “*agape*” which is the highest kind of biblical love possible, and it is simply in the imperative mood, present tense, active voice. So, the demands on the husband are even greater in terms of the actual spiritual requirements with how he is to treat his wife. In my mind, the husband has the greatest spiritual role on the planet – to “**love his wife as Christ loved the church**”. The spiritual demands of that simple statement cannot be underestimated as to its importance in creating a godly marriage.

The third principle is that it is critical to understand that **our personal attitude towards someone will always have a tremendous impact on our relationship with them**. There is no place where this simple principle is actually underscored and amplified as much as it is in marriage. If I do not love and respect my wife, and if she does not honor and respect me, our marriage has no chance of survival - none. At that point we are destined to failure. Just think of someone towards whom you may have a bad attitude and how that affects both you and the other person. That mindset is magnified in the marriage because of the constant amount of time that we spend together as marriage partners. Just assume that you just do not like someone that much. You do not like something about their personality, and you do not like things about their behavior towards you. Do you know what the result of that attitude will ultimately be? The result will be that you will never be able to have a godly influence on their life – never.

The best way to gain someone’s respect and approval is to treat them with respect. So, the goal is to simply and sincerely maintain a godly attitude of love and respect towards people. Treat them with respect and love. Sometimes you just have to swallow the bitter with the sweet. It is just a normal part of the Christian life. It is similar to what [Galatians 5](#) says when it addresses that conflict is a normal part of the Christian life. In fact, **the conflict is what creates the choices that we have to make** – good or bad. So, in a conflict willingly choose to be godly and to both love and respect the individual no matter their ongoing indifference to you personally. Having a gracious attitude towards that person will have a greater impact on them than his or her negative attitude towards you personally.

Our fourth principle is that in any relationship that we have with someone, we must understand the very simple principle that **we cannot change anyone**. I have taught this over and over and over. Only God can change a person’s heart. Obviously, we may be able to influence and impact another person’s life (good or bad), but still only God can actually create meaningful spiritual changes in a person’s life. Spiritual changes require spiritual life, and only God has that kind of life. This is utterly critical to understand in a marriage because it is not one mate changing the other mate, but it is God working **through** the partner that is yielded to Him and to His sovereignty over that marriage that makes the changes. Please appreciate that God can break anyone, anytime. So, if either partner tries to dominate,

change, and ultimately control the other partner, it will only create marital tension and relational distance between them. We have trouble changing ourselves, nevertheless someone else.

The last principle and the best thing that any of us can do is to **simply do our part – just do what God wants us to do**. That is what [1 Peter 3:1-7](#) is about. Just figure out what God has said about my personal and unpleasant situation, and then just go do what He asks me to do. Just commit yourself to His ways and forget about your ways. God has clearly defined what His roles for marriage are in His Word, so the best thing for us to do is to simply do what we know God wants us to do. The husband is to “**love his wife like Christ loved the church**”, and the wife is to willingly “**honor**” her husband and “**be submissive**” to his overall leadership in the family. Whenever we are yielded to those principles and they are operating as God intended, neither partner will ever take advantage of the other. However, if we violate these biblical principles, all we can expect is marital tension and pain. If I always have to have my way in every area of the marriage, the marriage will most likely fail and I may very well be the primary cause.

Now, what we are addressing as precursor to this passage is what we have called the spirit of a marriage. It is similar to a team sport where the unity and oneness of that team has to be developed and maintained for them to be successful. If several of the players begin to become disgruntled with the coach or they start feuding among themselves, then the whole team suffers. In a marriage when the spirit of one of the partners is wounded in some way, then the spirit of the marriage is damaged and will impact every area of the marriage – and especially in the area of intimacy and oneness. Now, in every marriage, each partner can do things that cause their mate to react to them in a negative way. The following is just a few of those areas that create conflict. Because [1 Peter 3:1-6](#) is addressing the wife, I am going to look at what she may do to cause the spirit of her husband to react negatively to her. We will address what the husband can do to cause the spirit of his wife to react negatively to him when we get to [1 Peter 3:7](#). Both husbands and wives, please take all of this an encouragement because each one of these that I have listed can equally apply to both partners. So, this is not just for the wife, but can easily be just as applicable to the husband.

The first area is when the wife **develops an attitude of ongoing resistance to her husband’s will**. Some of the resistance may be justified, but when the wife is always questioning everything that happens - every decision, every idea, every choice, then the husband will generally react in a very negative way towards her. Unfortunately, many husbands may become emotionally and physically aggressive to break her will. However, what happens when he does that is that her spirit may be broken, but not her will. She continues to always disagree, and therefore continues to resist. The ultimate result of that is that she reaches a place where she no longer cares at all what happens and actually resents her husband. At that point, the marriage is in the ditch and may never recover.

The second area is directly connected to the first in that the wife simply **lacks confidence in the husband’s decisions**. The reason I have separated these two is because there is a difference between the husband’s will and the husband’s decisions. If the wife is always expressing her disapproval and displeasure with her husband’s decision, he will become very defensive and reactionary to his wife. The wife has to recognize the benefit of allowing her husband to go through failure and to be supportive of him in that failure. She cannot say “I told you so!” If you want to create a reaction, then just say that. For the wife, her focus is on developing the personal character qualities that she innately develops in her

life when she helps her husband during his bad decisions and failures. Women, listen very carefully. Your husband wants your admiration and he does not want to fail. So, if you keep reminding him of his failures, it will mean that you do not really have any admiration for him at all – and he will know that. However, if you are supportive of him when he does fail, it will be his way of recognizing your honor and respect for him, and ultimately he will come to you more often when decisions have to be made so that he can have your input.

Thirdly, wives **be aware of your husband's priorities**. Very often they are different from yours. Your priorities are more related to your frame of reference and what you have to do in the family. You are concerned with the immediate health of your children, the daily needs that are required for the family, home repairs, and the like. His frame of reference is very different and often times involve things like his job and providing for the finances for the present and the future. He struggles with all of the little details because his frame of reference is often times larger. Both frames of reference are completely different, while at the same time fully necessary for the stability of the family. It would be like a football team that has an offense and a defense. Each player is either an offensive player or a defensive player. Their roles are completely different, but neither can be successful if the other part of the team fails in their responsibilities. So, you must be willing to see life from your partner's perspective and develop an attitude of respect for your partner.

Fourthly, **a wife cannot become resentful for her husband's past failures**. He interprets this as an unwillingness to forgive him when he does fail – which he certainly will. A wife who responds without forgiveness will use her husband's failures as a way of trying to gain her own way. She will use his failures as a means of justifying her own wrong responses to him, and the divide in the spirit of the marriage will become even greater.

Fifthly, and I think this area is so critical to the overall family, but if the wife continues to respond incorrectly and just react to her husband's failures, **the children will develop an attitude of resistance to his leadership** as well. They will begin to show favoritism to the mother, and in that process the seeds are being sown for discontent in their marriages.

Then sixthly, the spirit of the marriage will be damaged when the **wife corrects her husband in public**. Just some small cutting remark in public to emphasize some area in which the wife has been trying to change her husband will be an embarrassment to him, and he will assuredly react to that public correction.

Now, I want to give some very broad brush conclusions to these kinds of things that damage the spirit of the marriage. Let us just assume that your husband for whatever reason has reached a place where he is disregarding your input into his life. That may be saying more about you than it is of him, but at that point as a godly wife, you can be assured that God has larger lessons of eternal value for both you and your husband to learn. Please remember the overarching principle that you do not have the power to change people, and that includes your husband. So, the conflicts become God's way of forcing us to trust Him rather than our trusting all of our personal solutions that involve complaining, bitterness, and unforgiveness. Listen very carefully. The wife's spirit of quiet confidence in God's sovereignty over her marriage is more beneficial to the marriage and to her children than the right or wrong decisions of the husband. God is greater than the husband is and is able to bring about His results when and as He

chooses. All of this is reinforced in Peter's encouragement to the wife in v4 and is so strategic to this entire passage when it addresses the wife's spirit,

1Pe 3:4 (NKJV) 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.

That verse is not at all intended to demand of the wife to never say anything or to never be able to respond to areas of her husband's life that do need corrective input – not at all. However, it is there to reinforce the critical nature of her attitude when so doing. One lesson that must be appreciated in all of this is that God always uses people in our life that do things and make decisions that are contrary to our expectations – and this certainly includes our marriage partner. Listen very carefully. It is God's way of perfecting His qualities in our life, and that aspect of the marriage relationship is so critical that it simply cannot be overstated.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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