

# A STUDY OF 1 PETER

## Wives and Husbands (1 Peter 3:1-7)

The following section must be understood within the context of the previous chapter. Peter has written about the necessity of submission to every human institution and address specifically the need of individuals to submit to the government and for servants to be subject to their masters. Perhaps the key thought is that Christians must be willing to give up their own rights to win others. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)



The example of Christ is paramount in Peter's mind. Christ lived perfectly in this world in action and speech, and never retaliated against those who abused him. Christ died for the sin of man and the Christian is to die to sin and live a righteous life. Christ sets the ultimate example in denying oneself and showing submission.

When Peter writes that Christ left us an "example" (2:22) he uses a word that described students who learn how to carefully trace letters so that they might be able to write. He says this example is given "so that you might follow in his steps." This pictures one who carefully places their foot in the footprint of another to follow exactly, much like a child sometimes attempts to follow in the footprints of a parent.<sup>1</sup>

Within the home, God has designed a structure of leadership that is to be followed by Christian wives. 1 Peter 3:1 says, "...wives, be subject to your own husbands..." Peter begins with the word "likewise" pointing back to 2:13 and 2:18. It is important to recognise that submission does not indicate that wives are inferior to their husbands. Christ is inferior to no one yet he submitted himself to death for mankind.

In 1 Peter 3, the primary concern is for husbands who are unbelievers. A wife who shows respect to her husband and who quietly lives out her faith in Christ serves as a powerful witness to her husband and the world.

1. Does Peter say that women are to be subject to "all" men?
2. In whom or what is ultimate submission based? (1 Peter 2:13)
3. Why might "respectful and pure conduct" be more effective in winning a non-Christian husband than nagging?
4. How does 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 support the teaching of 1 Peter 3:1-6?

<sup>1</sup> Davids, Peter H. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle of Peter*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990. (Kindle edition).

The values of a Christian woman are to be on righteous living before God instead of outward adornment that is viewed as beautiful in the eyes of the world. It is the heart and a gentle and quiet spirit that make one beautiful and precious in the eyes of God. The beauty of the heart is said to be imperishable while physical beauty is fleeting. (See also 1 Timothy 2:9-10)

**5. Do verses 3-4 indicate that it is wrong to be concerned about outward appearance? What is the proper balance between the desire to have an attractive appearance and the necessity of having a gentle and quiet spirit that will please God?**

The holy women of the Old Testament placed their hope fully in God and they tried to please him in their way of living. “The holy women of old were examples to Christian women of all the ages. They cultivated beautiful lives by being supportive of their husbands.”<sup>2</sup>

Sarah is singled out as an example of a submissive and respectful wife and all Christian women who live gentle and quiet lives are spiritual daughters of Sarah. Such women do not need to fear even if their husbands are non-Christians and are opposed to their Christian faith.

**6. Describe how husbands are to treat their wives? (1 Peter 3:7)**

Husbands who treat their wives in an understanding way make their submission easier. Peter says to “live with your wives in an understanding way.” This means that a husband is to consider the needs, desires, and emotions of his wife and to treat her in a way that will honour her.



**7. In what way or ways is a wife to be considered a “weaker vessel?”**

**8. What great privilege do husbands and wives share (vs. 7)?**

Husbands and wives are equal in the eyes of God (Galatians 3:28) and a submissive, gentle, and quiet wife coupled with a understanding and considerate husband are able to pray together in an effective way. Our relationship with others greatly affects our relationship with God and the closest and most intimate human relationship possible is with our spouse. It is difficult to have an effective prayer life and an abundant spiritual life if our marital relationship is unhealthy.

## Submission in Everything (1 Peter 3:8-12)

Peter uses the word “*finally*” to begin verse 8 indicating that he is concluding his remarks on submission. Christians live differently from people around them because their lives are submitted to Christ and to one another.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: General Epistles*. Lulu.com. p. 67.

**9. List the five imperatives of verse 8 and explain what they mean.**

A. \_\_\_\_\_

- Meaning --

B. \_\_\_\_\_

- Meaning --

C. \_\_\_\_\_

- Meaning --

D. \_\_\_\_\_

- Meaning --

E. \_\_\_\_\_

- Meaning --

It does not seem to be a coincidence that “*brotherly love*” stands in the middle of the five imperatives of verse 8. If a person loves others they will find the other imperatives will come naturally.

**10. How should a Christian respond to evil and reviling (or insult)?**

**11. Why are people inclined to react to evil and reviling with evil and reviling?**

Verses 10-12 are a quote from Psalm 34:12-16. The teaching is for those who want to “*love life*” and “*see good days*.” As this would describe most people it is beneficial for us to consider what will bring about a life that we can love and days that we can call good.

**Psalm 34:12-16**

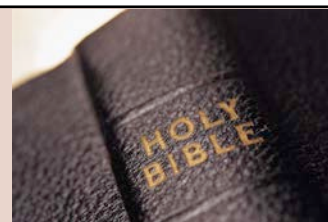
12 What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?

13 Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.

14 Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

15 The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

16 The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. (ESV)



The standard of submission required to love life and see good days is quite high. The Christian must “*keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit.*” The evil here refers to malicious speech that aims to harm another while deceit refer to speech with is untruthful or meant to mislead.<sup>3</sup>

It is not enough to keep control of the tongue, but the Christian must actively seek good in the face of evil and peace in the midst of those who seek to cause harm.

**12. What is meant by the phrase, “the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous?”**

**13. Describe the different response of God towards the righteous and those who do evil in verse 12.**

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, Ibid. p. 70.