

XXIII. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“The Sojourner’s Journey–Submission, Part 4”
I Peter 3:1–7
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The passage we will focus on in this study is I Peter 3:7 but we need to read the context of I Peter 3:1–7 that look at the matter of the Christian marriage as Peter is giving direction. I Peter 3:1–7 says [1] *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, [2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct. [3] Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— [4] 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. [5] For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, [6] as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.*

[7] *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

The question might be asked in today’s culture who is it that would preach on a text that calls wives to be submissive to their husbands? The answer would probably be, only a fool. Now who would follow up that sermon with the next sermon from the next verse in which the wives are identified as weaker vessels? The answer probably would be, just a bigger fool, therefore I am well qualified to handle these seven verses from I Peter 3. Seriously though, don’t read this text through the eyes of the culture in which you live. Let God be the Interpreter of this text. See it through His eyes.

Work with me through it and let’s see what God would have us understand from this text, particularly as we address the issue of the Christian husband who is a product and instrument of the grace of God in his marriage and then with his wife, a testimony of the grace of God to a surrounding world, with a marriage that is countercultural, to the culture that always develops in rebellion against God and His Word. Let’s get into the text.

Immediately you see this word ‘likewise’ in I Peter 3:1 and 7. Likewise in verse 7 means it is tied to verses 1 through 6 and likewise in verse 1 means that all of these verses is tied to what went before in chapter 2. The challenge for me in preaching is that any text that is delivered outside its context becomes a pre-text and I can’t spend a long time in review, but I can’t just let this be a text that stands alone for this text doesn’t allow me to. The word likewise means ‘in similar fashion’ but not exactly the same to what has already been said. So what has been said?

Peter is writing this letter to disciple Christians he has never met in churches where people have been converted and they have been converted out of a first century culture of paganism that was dominated by Greek philosophy and Greek paganism under the rule of a despotic Roman empire. They weren’t save out a home where their dad and mom were Christians or Christian testimonies in the culture. They were saved in the first generation of Asia

Minor out of a pagan environment. So they write, wanting to know how they live now that they are Christians. They know they are supposed to be different. We see that Peter writes very much the same as the Apostle Paul does when he disciples people and that's this.

First of all, he gives them a picture of the Christian life. He calls them elect exiles and he is drawing on the imagery of the God's deliverance of His people from Egypt through the sojourning of the pilgrimage of the wilderness to the Promised Land. You have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness, not just Pharaoh but Satan, sin, death and hell have been defeated and not just Moses but a Christ has redeemed you as He has taken you through the wilderness of a sin broken world to bring you to a new heavens and a new earth. Elect is who you are in Christ and exiles, is how you live for Christ in this world.

Then Peter tells them they need to get foundations right. So he gives in I Peter 1 and 2, thirteen Gospel blessings as the foundation. Peter, like Paul, never tells you what you do for Christ before he tells you who you are in Christ, lest you think what you do makes you what you are. It is not what you do that saves you, allows God to save you or enables God to keep you saved but it's what Jesus did which is the finished work of Christ on our behalf. Once the Good News blessings are in place in your life then you are ready to build the super structure. So this series is called the Sojourner's Journey as we learn how to live for Christ.

After the Gospel blessings, Peter gives five Gospel commands. The first one was the personal pursuit of pervasive holiness for Christ. Be holy as I am holy (I Peter 1:16) in all of your conduct. The second Gospel command is you are to develop a sincere and heartfelt love for one another. You are not on a journey by yourself. You are on a journey with God's people. Once you make a personal commitment to Jesus you don't live for Him alone. The third command is that we are to cultivate an appetite for God's Word. In our gathering today we have prayed, sung, confessed, and read the Word and I am preaching the Word. We declare the glory of God of the Word through the Word of God. We are people of the Book. This is so the Word can be heard in your life. The fourth command is that you develop a lifestyle of obedience that stimulates praise to God as sojourners. In other words, when God comes to save unbelievers or in the Day of Judgment, they will give glory to God for the way that you live Christ.

The fifth command is where we have been in the last few studies. The fifth command is to be in subjection to every human institution silencing the ignorance of foolish men. Foolish men is a technical term in the Bible and it means those who deny God. It is the fool who has said there is no God (Psalm 14:1). Romans 1:22–23 says [22] *Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*

There is something undeniable here. Peter is communicating that if you're truly converted and have repented of the sovereign self by the sovereign grace of God to the sovereignty of God, surrendered to Him, then it will show up in your ability to trust Him by being submissive to every human institution. Is there a limit to this? Yes, and that is, any human institution that commands you to disobey God and His Word, you must obey God rather than man in that case. Otherwise we don't enter in looking for the exceptions but we enter in with a heart of submission.

I want you to know that you don't have to be a Presbyterian to be a Christian but I am one by conviction and it's not because of any perfections in this denomination by any means but here's why. It was the one system of government that not only matched up to Scripture in terms and precepts but most of all it was the one that I found that every minister, church and member is accountable to somebody and called to submission. And I need that, to always be accountable

and in submission! I don't need to be at the top of the heap anywhere. We will find out how this principle works in the church when we get to I Peter 5 but currently we have seen it in four areas.

Now these areas are not exhaustive but Peter picks four challenging areas in this first century paganism. The first he addresses was to Christian citizens who need to be submissive to those in authority over them – emperors and governors. Your trust is not in the emperor or governors and back then the emperor was Nero and governors were Pontius Pilot, Herod, Felix, Festus and others. Your trust is in the Lord who has the heart of the king in His hand and turns is wherever He wishes as He turns the rivers to the sea (Proverbs 21:1). The Lord can draw straight lines with crooked sticks. You're trusting in the One, when they mean it for evil God means it for good.

Secondly, Peter takes on the challenging area of chattel slavery which is the most difficult in the world and he calls for this submission to be manifested in the Christian slave. Paul will speak to Christian masters and their responsibilities in books like Philemon but here Peter takes this on to show a Christian slave how to change that master.

Then Peter talks to Christian wives and he gives this counter cultural call to woman. In that culture women were to dress up as a sex object and Peter is calling them to the hidden person of beauty. In that culture women were supposed to convert to whatever their husband says but Peter is telling these women they can be God's instrument to convert their husbands even without a word as they observe your chaste and respectable behavior. In that culture they were just a piece of property but now that you're a Christian wife, you're a child of the living King and a daughter who is not frightened by any fear, as you live for Christ, even when your husband is disobedient to the Word. Your submission is not based on his worth but the Savior who called you there and there is where your trust is.

Counter cultural work doesn't stop there for we now come to the Christian husband. So by the use of likewise to the wives in a marriage covenant, their submission is similar to that of the citizen and slave but not the same. Now Christian husbands (likewise) in similar fashion to the wives here is how your submission to Christ is worked out, manifested in the marriage. So how does Peter do this?

First, who is Peter talking to? He is talking to Christian husbands. He is speaking to men of God who are married, have been redeemed by the imperishable blood of Jesus Christ and born again by the imperishable Seed of the Word of God that was preached, who have an inheritance that has been kept for you. You are chosen, sons, royal priests, and all of those 13 blessings that Peter articulated in I Peter 1 and 2. Because of that (not to attain that), here is what you are to do as stated in I Peter 3:7.

To whom do you do this? This is a directive to Christian husbands to their own wives. You do not do this to another man's wife or women in general. Ephesians 5:21–34 is a parallel to this text and I commend it to you to go through on your own time since I don't have time to do it here. In this verse Peter gives two directives to the Christian husband. It is not exhaustive but it is foundational to your imperative relationship with her. It is God's call to the Christian husband.

In the Greek these two directives have imperative force but they're not exactly commands. They are present participles directing you to a lifestyle. In other words, these are not something you do one time and move on for this is a way of life every single day but God's grace and for His glory. The first directive is dwell with your wife. Another way to say this is live with, alongside of, your wife. I want to embellish this contextually and that is dwell with your wife in covenantal intimacy – personally, physically, spiritually, intellectually.

Genesis 2:24 says [24] *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast (cleave) to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* One plus one equals one. How? If you don't leave your parents and cleave to one another then you will have one plus one equals six (includes the in-laws) or even one plus one equals two. You don't have a partnership but God is saying that the two of you are one. A partnership is 50/50 – you win 50 percent of the time and you lose 50 percent of the time. Marriage in Christ is where a man is one hundred percent committed to live with his wife and a woman is one hundred percent committed to complete her husband as they bear the image of God together. That is what He is laying before us in this text.

Yesterday I did a marriage to a couple of our members and I get to the point in the ceremony where I say 'who gives this woman to this man' so why do you leave your father and mother. You don't leave your mother and father with a contract, you leave your father and mother to dwell with your wife. You leave to dwell with them.

Then Peter gives a second directive to the Christian husband and that is affirm or assign your wife honor. Assign or affirm the honor that God has secured for her. So the next question is how do you dwell with your wife for Christ and affirm her assigned honor in Christ? You are to do this by knowledge. The NAS version says to live with your wife in an understanding way. I think the ESV says it more pointedly and correctly, to do it according to knowledge.

When you dwell with your wife according to knowledge two things become abundantly clear. The first thing is by virtue of creation she is a woman and because she is a woman she is a weaker vessel. Immediately cultural stuff comes down on all of us reading this where one would say 'Just how demeaning can you be?! Vessel! That is so demeaning!' If it is then I have just demeaned everyone reading this because that's what the Bible calls every one of us.

According to II Timothy 2:20–21 we are either a vessel of honor (by grace) or dishonor (by sin); [20] *Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.* [21] *Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.* II Corinthians 4:7 says [7] *But we have this treasure in jars of clay (earthen vessels), to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.* If this is demeaning then Paul is being demeaning here.

After Saul's conversion Ananias is told about Paul in Acts 9:15, [15] *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument (vessel) of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."* Paul was a vessel. All of us are vessels. If you're saved you have a stewardship entrusted to this vessel. So the word vessel is a Biblical term that is carefully chosen. Why would God call human beings, male and female, vessels? It's because a vessel is something that doesn't exist unless a potter has made it. This is telling us that we exist by God's hand of creation – I am the Potter and you're the clay. The two of you are different and it's not just the plumbing. That doesn't mean superior and inferior because both of you are required to image me.

Next Peter uses the term weaker. I did learn in my 10th grade English class about normative, comparative and superlative. Weaker is a comparative. So Peter is telling the Christian husband that his wife is the weaker vessel but it is also saying that in the normative that men are weak vessels. This means that you can't do anything without Me. A vessel can't do anything until someone picks it up and uses it for its purpose. That's why God says that you're a vessel and I made you for a purpose. Together the two of you bear My image but I've

made you differently, not superior or inferior. It's paganism that produces egalitarianism in the mythology that we're just interchangeable pieces.

Part of that difference, is that you as a man are weak and the woman is weaker, so what does the comparative mean here for weaker? It does not mean she is weaker mentally. A mentor of mine who did a study on this text found out that women on average have 15 percent less gray matter than men. In other words, men's brains on average are 15 percent bigger than women's. My wife had a much better GPA than I did and I was not a member of the National Honor Society like she was. So in essence women can be smarter than men and yet men have more brain to work with, on average.

So is this text pointing at moral or physical courage that women may be weaker at? Every day you will see a husband in his wife's birthing room and then you will see them coming out of the birthing room, saying 'I'm just a little faint, I need to leave for a little while.' Men, you need to realize the woman does not have that luxury to leave when she feels faint. Women are an awesome dynamic of going through the birthing process and yet we are fainting in this. That's not it. Moral courage? Where did the Disciples go when Jesus went to the cross and the tomb? They fled. Who was there? The women were at the cross, the tomb and there on the first day. Who were the first shameless evangelists of the Gospel? It was the women.

I know it's not physical courage. My first pastorate was in Miami, Florida and in the first month we were there we went to the Orange Bowl Fair. I can't go into all the details of how this happened but I ended up in the middle of an ethnic gang fight with almost 100 teenagers involved. I told my wife to go get in the car with our three kids, lock the door and hoped to be back in a little while. As I was in the middle of this, I look up and here comes my wife, with my kids locked in the car. She has picked up a palm frond in her hand coming towards me, waving it and telling these guys to get away from me. I can't tell you the weapons in this gang fight but the weapon of choice was not a palm frond, but her courage was undeniable.

It's also not that they are weaker in competency. Go read Proverbs 31. That woman had five businesses, took care of her home, prioritized her children and her husband was exalted in the gates. So what is it? I think it's obvious. It goes all the way back to creation. God made us different and you can mess with it all you want but the fact is that men and women are different physically and men are made to be stronger to carry out their God-given tasks. That is what He is pointing to when He is talking about the weaker.

Paganism attempts to deny that but as we look at this with a Christian world and life view we say that God has made us different, not superior or inferior, just different. Therefore Adam is made but made incomplete functionally and God brings the woman from his side. Adam wakes up and says 'Ishshah!' with his name being 'Ish' and Ishshah (woman) is a reflection of man. She is bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh and is joined to him. That weaker is not demeaning in strength and function.

Is a rose demeaned because it has to have a bush to grow on? Doesn't all the attention go to the rose? Is a grape demeaned because it has to have a vine? Is an orange demeaned because it has to have a tree? The way God functionally made man and woman to be together is not demeaning. It is actually enhancing. It becomes the platform whereby her honor is affirmed as a joint heir of the grace of life. So in the call of creation you see how the woman is created and in the work of redemption she is a fellow heir. The same blood, grace, Spirit and Lord that saved you saved her. The two of you are fellow heirs in the grace of life and you are constantly honoring and declaring that in her life.

Why do Christian husbands do this? You do this for Christ's sake. You do this to silence foolish men. A third reason is what it says in I Peter 3:7, so that your prayers may not be hindered. Men, I ought to have your attention right now after saying that. God says your robust, vital, effective prayer life is directly related to the way you treat your wife. It's either a hindrance or it affirms your love for Me and the intimacy of our communication. If this doesn't get your attention then maybe we're not converted, because I don't know what we as men ought to want more than an effective prayer life with our God. One of the reasons is that He would enable us to be the kind of husband God has called us to be in the life of our wife. I don't want to treat her in such a way that my prayers are hindered. I want to treat her in such a way that God hears my prayers, in the name of Christ to give me the strength to be what I'm called to be for Him and for her. So that with her we can be the parents we're called to be, the witness we're called to be and the testimony we're called to be.

Here are the takeaways from this study. The Christian husband demonstrates submission to Christ in the marriage by one being intentional. You got married to intentionally dwell with your wife. That may affect the job you have. My job does not supersede my covenantal vow to leave and cleave to my wife. I'm called to dwell with her. I met an elder early on when I was at the church in Charlotte, who said 'I try to never miss a Lord's Day service and if I have to be away I try to get back for at least Sunday night. I don't take any extended trips except once a year otherwise any other trips are no more than three days.' It is just that simple. I remember using that in my life being in the ministry where I was never away from wife and therefore my children for more than three days.

I Corinthians 7:5 says [5] *Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer (and fasting); but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.* Fasting is three days so that was the rule I tried to use. Yes, there have been exceptions to that but I believe you need to be intentional about this. You are to be intentional to dwell with your wife personally, physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. You have to be with her.

Singles, I know this text is not dealing with singleness and I know we're in a broken world and God has redeemed singleness. I have preached five sermons on this and I can't go into those now but some of you are single by calling, praise the Lord as He has gifted you. Some of you are in singleness in transition. This text does two things. One, what are you looking for and what is marriage really supposed to be? Are you looking for the guy with the 28 inch biceps or are you looking for the guy who knows what it means to dwell with his wife according to the knowledge of who I am and who Christ has made me. Am I looking for the guy that makes all the money? That will run out and the biceps will become hanging down parts.

Men, what are you looking for? I'm looking for that runway babe who has her quiet time. What about the beauty of the heart? There is only so much cosmetics and only so long that gravity doesn't start winning, but that internal beauty just shines brighter and brighter. That's what you pray for and look for. That is what you nurture. So if you're in that single transition or calling God's Word speaks to this and I'll get to this but not in this study. This text is speaking to Christian husbands and Christian wives. This is, like the first century, counter cultural. Do you long for it even as they did?

Secondly, men be relentless learners. Prioritize preaching. Get in the Word, study it. You have to know the Word of God to know who your wife is by way of creation, redemption and providence. Be a learner of the Word of God and a learner of your wife. Just watch and learn. What an amazing tapestry God weaves for us in the bride of our youth.

Thirdly, avoid the intrinsic traps of sin. Men, your strength has not been given to abuse your wife. That temptation is indicated in Genesis 3 from the curse. The wife will desire her husband for she wants his strength but he will rule over you and the word used here is tyrant. He will tyrannize you and that's what sin invites you to do with your strength, but men of God are not predators verbally, emotionally or physically. Men of God are not intimidators. Men of God are not abusers.

I Corinthians 16:13–14 says [13] *Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.* [14] *Let all that you do be done in love.* This is where we get the term 'gentle men.' We didn't just make up something to put on a bathroom door. These are men who are sensitive, compassionate in relationship and strong and courageous to stay the course, to provide and protect. The egalitarian says there is no difference but when someone breaks in we don't say to our wives, 'the bat is over there go see who it is.' You get up and go.

Women don't fall into the trap of 'I want my husband's position.' If men do not take hold of their position with strength and grace and women want their position then here's what happens in the culture. You de-man men and you de-woman women. Then you find out you're not interchangeable. Go check every pagan culture for it is the same neo-paganism that is promoted in this culture and find out what happens to women. Then go to the Bible that says to honor your father and your mother which is counter cultural. We say 'no' to those traps of sin. I'm not talking about stereo types here, but we're not going to kill Biblical manhood or Biblical femininity. We embrace it as a gift from God.

Number four, Christian husbands cultivate Christ-centered motivations. Men, you want to do this for Christ's sake and to silence foolish men. You also want to do it as a witness. Recently my wife and I had a three day vacation with our family and afterward we had some days just the two of us as I am in the process of doing physical therapy for recent knee replacement surgery. My wife is there with me in the weight room and I'm doing exercises in the swimming pool as she is out there with me. We kept running into this guy the few days we were there and he finally came up to us and said 'You know, I've been watching you two and I think you two really love each other.' I said 'Oh yes, we do.' He said 'You seem just like soulmates. How long have you been loving each other?' I said 'this coming January will be fifty years.' He said 'What's the secret?' He just put the hook in and all I had to do was reel it in. I know enough hymns that I responded to him by saying 'It is no secret what God can do.' I was given the chance to explain to him about the grace of God and we still have a relationship going with him from that moment.

Do you realize in this culture that is destroying sexuality, marital anarchy, familial chaos that burnished grace driven marriages where men and women love each other by the grace of God according to Biblical directives will shine out to this culture? They will say what is the secret and you get to tell them about Jesus Christ. We are what we are in our marriage by the grace of God.

The final takeaway is to make a fearless commitment to a Christ-exalting counter cultural marriage. Not only was the call to women counter cultural but this is counter cultural. Men in the first century married a woman to have children, she was put in the house to raise the children and she was a piece of property. Women are not a piece of property for they are made in the image of God. God made you with a purpose. You are a vessel of God. Women are not a sex object. You are not having to convert to your husband's religion. You have a personal relationship with Christ.

Men, instead of marrying a woman to have your children over there in that house while you go out and live your life, you dwell with your wife. You live with your wife in an understanding way. Don't be like that pagan culture. You minister to your wife. You care for her. Instead of demeaning her you use your strength to build her up. Protect, provide and lay down your life for her. Men, by God's grace you can be used of God in her life to show the world that your wife, like you, are fellow heirs of the grace of life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

One might be thinking 'Pastor you don't understand for I grew up in a broken home in a broken culture and I just didn't have any models.' Those in the first century had no models, but yet they did and so do you. There was a Man who left His Father for it was the Son of God who became a Man, 2000 years ago to dwell with you. And He will never leave you nor forsake you. With His strength nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ. By God's grace may our marriages reflect that marriage of redemption between Christ and His bride of which we are the beneficiaries for we are joint heirs with Christ, yet without Him we can do nothing. He is our Strength. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the kind patience of these people as we work through a difficult and challenging text yet a glorious text. God please speak by Your Holy Spirit to the hearts of Your people. Friend today if you don't know Christ as your Lord and Savior and you want your marriage to be reclaimed or you want to be prepared for a marriage, the first step is Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If you would like to pray with someone about your life and marriage please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to pray with you. Dear Jesus, in a world of chaos, with the sovereign self world and life view, may the sovereign God of grace take hold of our lives, our marriages and our families burnishing the testimony of the triumph of God's grace over sin in our lives that others will glorify You and be drawn to You. May they even ask us 'who did that to you?' and we can tell them 'oh the name of Jesus,' Amen.

Power Point

GOSPEL BLESSINGS – GOSPEL COMMANDS

1. Personal pursuit of a pervasive holiness in life.
2. Sincere and heart-felt love for one another.
3. Cultivation of an appetite for God's Word.
4. A lifestyle of obedience stimulating praise to God as Sojourners.
5. Subjection to every human institution silencing the ignorance of foolishness men.
 - Christian Citizens
 - Christian Slaves
 - Christian Wives
 - Christian Husbands {note}

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

The Christian Husband demonstrates submission to Christ in the marriage by...

- Being intentional
- Being a relentless learner
- Avoiding the intrinsic traps of sin

- Cultivating Christ-centered motivations
- A Fearless commitment to a Christ-exalting counter-cultural marriage.