

XXIV. I Peter in Biblical Perspective
The Elect in the Exile
“The Sojourner’s Journey–Submission, Part 4 – An Addendum”
I Peter 3:1–7
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This is our 24th study in I Peter and our third study in these particular verses. This is God’s Word, it’s the truth and it’s inspired, inerrant and infallible. 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.

I have been absolutely overwhelmed this last week with singles, young couples moving toward marriage, young couples who are married, older couples who have sent me insightful, intriguing and delightful emails. Some wishing they had known this sooner but the one thing that kept coming through is the comment ‘this is so counter-cultural even in the professing church.’ People haven’t really learned this. It is obviously counter-cultural in the surrounding society. Then the other thing I kept getting was ‘Pastor, how can I get on track with this? How can I start making progress?’ I wanted to spend this study giving some very practical information on this and if employed I definitely think you will see progress in a Christian marriage. I think you will find these five recommendations applicable in every case in journey of life.

This is counter cultural. This is why I actually chose to do a study on I Peter. As I look at this society of neo-pagan, human secularism and what it means to live for Christ in such a culture, it’s really like the first century, where the Christians were living in a pagan culture dominated by Roman and Greek paganism and had permeated marriage, family and everything. Peter and Paul show us how to live in the world but not be of the world. Now the paganism of that era is now being repeated in the secular humanism of the neo pagan world and life view that is now penetrating our culture. So how do we respond without being angry little Christians but effective believers speaking the truth in love?

Peter gives us what I have called the sojourners journey. Right from the outset he calls us elect exiles which automatically tells us it’s counter cultural. Elect is who we are in Christ because of God’s grace that has reached you in the world. Exiles or pilgrims or sojourners are who we are for Christ as we are in this world for Christ. This was in direct opposition to the religions of the culture.

When Peter told us who we were in Christ he told us about our Gospel blessings, which are not secured by us but by Christ on that cross as He shouted victory in the resurrection and applied by the Spirit of God and now you're ready for your Gospel commands. All the religions of that day did not tell you what a God had done for you for the gods of that day were all disconnected but they told you what you had to do to get to god, maybe. We have a glorious Good News of what God has done to get us, not to us and that is through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Then we live a life for God not hoping to get to God. These Gospel commands reflect our trust in the Lord. We don't do these things for ourselves or because of who we are but we do them for Him and who He is. You love Him because He loved you and therefore you give yourself freely to Him. That is counter cultural.

On the sojourners guide of the five Gospel commands we are currently on the fifth one which is the call to subjection to human institutions and there is no Gospel command that is more counter cultural to be submissive to every human institution. In other words, now that you have surrendered to Him you are now able to, with confidence in Him and love toward Him, submit yourself to every human institution, even to immoral Caesars like Nero, because your trust isn't in them and your love isn't based upon them. It is because you have confidence in your sovereign God who saved you.

There are limitations for if that one in authority is commanding you to do something with is contradictory or in opposition to God's Word then I must obey God rather than man. You don't enter into it connected to the person you're submitted to as the reason why you do it but you do it out of trust and love to God because you're connected to your God. It shows up in Christian slaves to masters and then in the marriage. Of all the submissions we have worked through – employment, citizenship, slaves, marriage – there is none more counter cultural than submission in a marriage as a woman is surrendered to Christ and submits to her husband and a man who is surrendered to Christ submits to his wife.

The submission in a marriage is not exactly like that of a citizen or a slave but it is similar to. This is what it looks like. When it says 'likewise husbands' mean it is similar to that of his wife but it is something different. The sojourners journey rooted in the Gospel blessings found in Christ and framed by the Gospel commands to live our lives for Christ is counter cultural and none are more counter cultural than the command and the call to submission in marriage itself.

When I make a statement like that I need to prove it, so here goes. As I looked through I Peter 3:1–7 here are some ways this is counter cultural. A Christian wife is called to focus on inward beauty not external beauty. That doesn't mean she doesn't give any attention to her physical beauty but he is giving us a priority where the woman gives her attention to inward beauty and that is totally counter cultural. The main reason a woman was married was because of a man's fascination with her beauty and her life span and shelf life was directly related to that but here Peter calls Christian wives to give attention to the inward beauty of the heart and soul.

Here a Christian wife is identified as an instrument of evangelism in the life of her husband. If their husband is disobedient to the Word then the wife can win them to the Word. In the culture the woman was under obligation to convert herself to whatever religion her husband had, not to be an instrument of God for his conversion. A Christian wife is a instrument of converting and not the object of a mandated conversion. This Christian wife by virtue of creation physically is weaker but that's not the occasion of being abused but it is the call upon the husband to give himself for her. In the culture the weakness of a woman became the man's occasion for his predatorial behavior documented throughout the first century's history.

The Christian wife is to be honored and elevated as a fellow heir of the grace of life. There was no equality in a marriage of a woman and a man in any sense in the first century. Here her status is also being saved by the blood of Jesus, empowered by the Spirit of God, saved to the glory of God as an image bearer of God along with her husband and is affirmed and honored as the husband is called to elevate this before a watching world. This is completely counter cultural. The Christian wife in this text is called to be fearless in the culture she was expected to cower in.

Here a Christian husband in opposition to the culture is instructed in Christ that when he marries his wife he is to dwell with his wife. They didn't do that in the first century. In the first century they married a woman, found a place to put her and would visit whenever they desired in order to be gratified and have children. Otherwise they were out with mistresses and out to do whatever they wanted to do. Peter tells the Christian husband to dwell with his wife in intimacy, consistency and intentionality.

The Christian husband is called to take the obvious created difference of his strength by the hand of God as a mandate to provide and care for his wife. The Christian husband is instructed, not that his wife is simply there to serve him, but his wife exists for him to prioritize her well-being. In fact, he is also instructed to learn from the Word of God and learn in his relationship in knowing her. He is told to live with her in an understanding way. A Christian husband is reminded that this wife is so precious in the eyes of God that if he deals with her treacherously his relationship with the Lord and even his prayer life will be hindered. This stands in counter culture and in contrast.

This begs the question that why do cultures apart from the impact of Christianity that says honor father **and** mother, don't commit adultery and all these others that men take their strengths to be predators upon women or to abuse them? Why is it that women would seek to de-man the man or de-woman women in competition with the husband? Why is that we have this chaos? It is because of sin. I want to show you this from Genesis 3. Why is it that the cultures apart from the impact of the grace of God wants to rewrite the way marriage is to be viewed and the way men and women are to relate to one another?

In creation we have this beautiful picture. Genesis 2:24 says [24] *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* Then sin enters the world and it divides. Sin brings death and the death of that marriage and the ability to have it is introduced because of sin and its curse. I won't read the whole curse of sin but look what it says. Here is to the woman. Genesis 3:16 says [16] *To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your **desire** shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."*

So before this the man and woman were instructed to rule over the earth, and be fruitful and multiply as they bear God's image. Then when sin comes we don't want to reflect God, we want to be God. When idolatry comes with all its sins of rebellion then it brings a curse and God identifies the consequences of that curse. One of the results of that curse is that the woman will desire the husband. Men, that doesn't mean what you think it means. It means she desires the husband and all of his responsibilities.

The word desire in Genesis 3:16 is only used three times in the Old Testament. It is used two times in Genesis and once in Song of Solomon. It is a desire for the control of, the replacing of the husband. The other time we see this word in Genesis is between the relationship with Cain and Abel. Genesis 4:6-7 says [6] *The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?" [7] If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin*

is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” We get a word picture here of a lion crouching. It is not a desire of ‘I’d like to be your pet’ but a desire to devour. Sin’s desire is for Cain here.

Now back to Genesis 3:16, what will be the man’s response? It says that the man will rule over the woman. The Hebrew in its noun form here for rule is tyrant and the verb form would be to tyrannize (the woman). Thus the culture gives birth to the #MeToo movement. The man sees the woman as property to own, an object for personal gratification. The woman’s response is to un-man the man. The man’s response is to be a predator and abusive. Peter and Paul are telling us in light of what Christ has done with the call and blessings of the Gospel that this must not happen with the Christian.

The way God has created the man and provided for him, his call is to love his wife as Christ has loved His bride as Paul says Ephesians 5:25. The husband now has the strength to sacrifice himself for his wife and to be her servant leader. Jesus’ leadership for the bride is foot washing. It is the work of a servant. She is not a piece of property to own or for you to come in and out of her life whenever you want to. On the contrary, for she like you has been made in the image of God, a fellow heir of the grace of life and you are to live, dwell, with her as you elevate her to where Christ has done His work upon her. Give yourself as Christ’s instrument to wash her with the water of the Word.

Ladies, Christian wives do not have to retaliate to de-man the man. On the contrary, you become a completer. You come along side your husband with your eyes fixed on Jesus. Wives, respect your own husbands as unto the Lord. Submit and come along side of him. So the man in submission to Christ surrenders and brings that submission into the life of his wife using his strength to serve, using his calling to sacrifice, using himself to care for her as one to be cherished and honored because she is a fellow heir of the grace of life and you are called to lay down your life for her as Christ did for His bride. The wife no longer competes for she is not over him or under him but she is alongside of him as she completes him.

So what is it that you show in your marriage, the call of the Gospel or the call of culture? One of the giveaways is as we go through this is how you hear the Gospel in this, in terms of your spouse or in terms of yourself? If as a man you are hearing that you are to make your wife submit then you are not hearing the Word because the Bible never says that. To the husband, the Bible says you lead, love and care. The call for the wife to submit to the husband is to the wife, not the husband. If you are hearing this in terms of what you want the other person to do then you are not hearing what Christ has called you to do, in order to show the world that the testimony of your marriage is to the call of the Gospel.

My best illustration on this comes from C. S. Lewis and his novel titled Perelandra. This novel is his distillation that the Christian life when lived out intentionally and consistently is what he calls the great dance, where the diversity comes into intimate unity and it becomes so beautiful in attraction like an elegant dance. You see it in the life of the believer with their Savior as the sinner surrenders to Christ and they become one. In this novel he displays this relationship as a dance of glory and grace. Then he talks about how it happens in a church and a marriage becomes a testimony of it, of role and responsibility, not based upon inferiority or superiority but of calling as the leader leads and the follower completes. When the leader leads rightly the follower who has competed ends up as the one exalted.

So here is the woman that as she becomes the completer in working in the context of her husband then she becomes like the rose on the bush, where nobody talks about the bush but the rose. The bush loves to lift up the rose and the vine loves to lift up the grape, thus the man in his

strength, leadership and calling is caring and elevating the wife which is the way it happens in an elegant dance.

Interestingly, maybe the most iconic dance duo that has ever existed, lived during the time of C.S. Lewis. If I said Fred Astaire you would probably say Ginger Rogers or at least everyone over 50 probably thought it. They were both well-known as actors and dancer and then someone had the brilliance in 1933 to put them together. I have seen their movies and I'd highly recommend their last movie together, *The Barkleys of Broadway*. The critics would all write about the strength of his leadership as it gracefully enabled her and the powerful beauty of her moving in absolute concert of him so that the two appeared as one in the dance. The two function as one in the dance because the one leading was using the leading to elevate the one following and the one following was using their following, not to step on the leader, but to complete the leader. Thus the advantage was given and the presentation was attractive as everyone began to be attracted to its beauty. That is the way Christian marriages should be in a pagan culture.

When you read the comments Fred Astaire makes about them working together he knew that the way he would work with her would take him to whole other level. Ginger Roger's comments about him had to do with how she loved his leadership and wanted to follow him. She does say in her biography 'I was extraordinarily blessed with the leadership of Fred Astaire in a dance for what strength, beauty and clarity yet lest I remind you that everything he did I did, backwards and in five inch heels.' It's not inferiority or superiority but it's this beautiful picture of being drawn together in that relationship.

Of course about 40 years later my culture produces a dance movie and it was called *Saturday Night Fever*. Can you name who was partnered with John Travolta in that one? You don't know because it was a reflection of the cultural depravity. In the movie the one that he originally partnered with became useless and the one that could take him to another level was thrown aside. He uses the strength to draw attention to himself at the expense of the partner. That is the world's marriages.

So what would the dance of glory look like and how do I get there? I think the key in progress in this in any Christian marriage are found in the two words that we want to slide by or avoid which is 'weaker vessel.' The woman is not only a vessel but so is the man. If the woman is called a weaker vessel then it means the man is a weak vessel. The man can't do what God made him to do without God for he is utterly dependent upon Him. The woman also dependent on God expresses her dependence upon God by functioning the way God her made her, from the side of the man to come alongside of the man in the context of a Christian marriage.

So why does God use vessel to refer to us? It is because you don't have a vessel without a potter. Vessels don't appear on their own, they have to be made. God is telling us He created us on purpose. You are not a cosmic accident crawling up through a series of mutations. Secondly, a vessel is made for a purpose. Men and women have a purpose together to image God but male and female have distinctives of how together they do that and one can't do what the other one does but they can do them together as one, expressed in the covenant of marriage that is saturated with the Gospel. Thirdly, is the key and that is vessels are to pour out what is in them. To pour out you have to be filled up. So how can we get filled up and make progress in this?

Here are five recommendations. To grow in the grace of marital unity and intimacy manifesting my submission to Christ in marriage with trust and confidence in Him first get some models of the Gospel of grace demonstrated in marriages. You and I are born imitators. The

world knows this and that's why they try to get celebrities in front of you for their world and life view. Most celebrities are parasites that live off of culture. I'm asking you to find models of the Gospel of grace that through marriage build a Gospel culture. Hopefully they are your grandparents and parents but if not go to the body of Christ. That is why Paul said in I Corinthians 11:1, *[1] Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*

We are imitators. Here in our church these babies will grow up speaking English, not because they have an English gene but because their parents speak English and most mothers are never trained in how to teach a foreign language and have no point of reference. The reason they can teach their baby a foreign language is because one, the uniqueness of a mother's patience and love and two, the child is a born imitator. I made a decision when our last grandchild was born to pray that God would allow me such a connection with her that the first words out of her mouth would be 'Papaw.' Minutes after her birth I began saying 'Papaw' very slowly over and over again. Get the right models for your Christian marriage.

Secondly, get some mentors in the faith. The Christian life including Christian marriage is both caught and taught. You need both. This is why we read in Titus 2:1-8, *[1] But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. [2] Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. [3] Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, [4] and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. [6] Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. [7] Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, [8] and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.*

One of the things I love about this church is the unbelievable diversity. Go get ahold of our congregational communities. Find a way to get connected so that you can find your own mentors. Don't wait for someone to come to you, go seek someone out. We don't assign mentors for that is something God will have to lay on your heart and their heart. We can certainly train someone to be a mentor but someone who just comes up to you and says 'God, has called me to be your mentor' is probably someone you don't want. How arrogant can you be?

I have five mentors in my life as a man and thankfully I've had five mentors in my life as a pastor and I have had the privilege to have one of them in my life for 20 years. Two of my mentors are with the Lord but thankfully the other three are still living and I can call on them. With one of them I meet with him two times a year with questions and we talk on the phone at least four times a year and that has been so valuable to me throughout my life.

Thirdly, get motivators of the Gospel of grace. Husbands and wives get some friends who are married who will be your band of brothers and for the ladies, your circle of sisters. Give me ten minutes with someone to find out who are their closest friends and I'll tell you where they are headed. I'm trying to be as practical as I can. Start with those in your congregational communities, your Sunday school class. I heard from one of our pastors on staff that 86 percent of people in our worship time are in a congregational community. So make use of this. I like what Evelyn Christiansen said; 'get those people in your life that are balcony people. Basement people pull you down to the basement but balcony people pull you up to the balcony.' Then you be a balcony person for those who are in the basement but get that circle of sisters or that band of brothers in your life.

Fourthly, be immersed in the means of the Gospel of grace in your life. Get into prayer and the Word. Get into fellowship. Get into sacraments. I'm doing this because I love you. If you want to get filled up to be poured out, you get filled up by the Word of God and prayer that will fill your life by the power of the Holy Spirit and the more you get filled up the more you will pour out. The more you pour out the more you will want to be filled up. To get into the Word, prayer, fellowship and the sacraments then you need to prioritize the Lord's Day because all the means of grace are collected on one day so that you can take advantage of them for six days. It's not something that is worked in if your sports team don't conflict with it. With the Lord's Day comes the means of grace and with the means of grace comes a saturation and a filling up so that we have something poured out.

Fifthly and finally, be ministers (missionaries) of the Gospel of grace. I love to tell this to newly marrieds; I know you each have gifts and I know there will come a time that the two of you will gravitate towards ministries that will utilize those gifts but in your first couple of years of marriage I ask you not to do this. First, go find a ministry the two of you can do together if at all possible. Worship together and get on mission, on message and in ministry together.

Do you know what it does when you get in ministry with people? You develop intimacy and fellowship with those in ministry with you and you need that kind of ministry as a couple so that is what I would encourage you to do by the grace of God. Do evangelism together. Get in a small group together with other couples but do things together. Then we won't have to ask people if they want to see an elegant dance of glory and grace because they will be able to look at the two of you and see Jesus.

Look at these men imperfectly but intentionally by God's grace who are trying to wash their wives with the water of the Word, who are laying down their life for them, and serving them as servant leaders. Look at these women who aren't competing with their husbands but completing them, who are respecting and honoring them out of their trust for the Lord. Look at these couples who are faithfully and fearlessly standing counter cultural because Christ is the cultural of their life. You think Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire attracts you? Watch how you treat your spouse attracts people, not to you, but to the Jesus who makes you and this marriage grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Let's be there for each other. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word and for the great blessing of this Scripture and the whole dynamic of the Christian marriage. Lord, I know much more needs to be said and we will for each situation needs its own dynamics of working their way through their relationship but we thank You for some basics. Unite us Father with our eyes fixed on Jesus, with the arms of love reached out around one another and the call of truth bringing us forward. Help us without shame live counter to the culture in the world but not of the world. Then Father, allow us to do it, not with the anger that repels, but with the grace that attracts for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

The Sojourner's Journey

The Sojourner's Journey rooted in the Gospel Blessings found in Christ and framed by the Gospel Commands to live our lives for Christ is counter-cultural, and none are more counter-cultural than the call to submission.

Life Takeaways

To grow in the grace of marital unity and intimacy manifesting my submission to Christ with trust and confidence in Him...

1. Models of the Gospel Grace
2. Mentors of the Gospel Grace
3. Motivators of the Gospel Grace
4. Means of the Gospel Grace
5. Ministers of the Gospel Grace