

A Study of First Peter  
Week Three  
1 Peter 3:1-22

**Day One**

3:1 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes.

vs. 1&2 – Peter wrote that wives should be submissive “in the same way” and we need to ask, “The same way to what?” For that answer, we must go back to 2:18: “Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.” No, I am not saying that wives are slaves to their husbands. But how a wife submits to her husband has some similarities to how Paul urged workers to relate to overseers.

Paul’s desired peace in the home and to have unbelieving husbands come to the faith. His advice was for wives to bear up under harsh treatment with an attitude that would speak to their husbands of the reality of Christ in the wife’s life. This doesn’t mean that a wife must remain in an abusive relationship, although I know one woman who chose to do so and did indeed see her husband come to the Lord through her godly submission to his abusive ways. But that is the exception, not the rule.

I counseled a woman who was married to a drug dealer to leave her home for legal and safety reasons. She did so and they eventually divorced after he was arrested and convicted. He took advantage of her submission and put her and the children in harm’s way to commit his crimes. I never felt like I counseled in a way that was contrary to what Peter wrote in this case.

I also don’t think that there is an absolute guarantee that a godly, submissive wife will win an unbelieving husband to Christ. But if she plays a part in his salvation, she won’t often do it with words. If it is going to happen, she must act in such a way that God will somehow move on her behalf, being released to do so by her godly behavior.

v. 3 – Don’t let the cosmetics and beauty industry read this verse or they will be upset! If women take this to heart, many of those companies will be out of business. When I go into a store, I am always amazed at the number of beauty products for women! Whole sections of these stores are devoted to hair color and conditioners, lipstick, perfume, eyeliner, eye shadow, powders, and special creams, all designed to make a woman look “prettier” and feel better about her appearance.

Add that to the cosmetic surgery craze that allows women (and men) to design a new nose or correct some age-related or genetic imperfection. Peter made a simple statement

that we would do well to consider in this day and age: God isn't interested in outer beauty; He is more concerned with heart matters. Peter did not forbid outer adornment, but he certainly cautioned against it taking the place of inner beauty, not the least of which was submission even to harsh treatment.

## **Day Two**

4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

v. 4 – I don't think this is only true for women. God is more concerned with the heart than any outward adornment, title, prestige or appearance. Samuel found this out when he was looking for the man to replace King Saul:

But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart' (1 Samuel 16:7).

**Where are you putting your emphasis? Developing the outer or inner man or woman? I urge you to invest your best efforts to develop those things that are precious in God's sight—and those things are matters of the heart.**

For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him (2 Chronicles 16:8-9).

vs. 5&6 – Since Peter focused on women here, we need to do the same and not broaden the study beyond what he intended. Peter chose Sarah as an example here. Consider what Sarah went through as she submitted to decisions Abraham made out of fear:

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you." When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was a very beautiful woman. And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels. But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" Then Pharaoh gave orders about

Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had (Genesis 12:10-20).

God protected Sarah and blessed Abraham because of Sarah's submission to Abraham's misrepresentation. Abraham didn't lie for Sarah was in truth his sister; but he didn't tell the whole truth either, for she was also his wife. You may ask, "What would Sarah have done if the pharaoh had wanted to consummate their relationship? We'll never know, for the situation did not progress that far. I would like to think that Sarah would have had to tell the truth at that point. But it just amazes me that God blessed Abraham even though Abraham misrepresented the truth. That shows the power of a godly woman's submission. Sarah's submission protected her and prospered Abraham. **What lessons can you learn from this story and example?**

### Day Three

7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. 8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

v. 7 – Why did Peter put in the phrase, "in the same way"? What was he referring to? Perhaps he was referring back to verse 6, which states, "do what is right and not give way to fear." What would a man have to fear in relating to his wife? Perhaps he would fear being weak or "un-masculine" if he was considerate of his wife. Or maybe he was making the same reference point as he used for the women, which was 2:18 "Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh." In that case, God expected the husband and wife to behave as He commanded regardless of how the other partner acted or responded.

Peter stated that the wife is the weaker partner. What did he mean? I have watched women carry their infant through an airport while also carrying a diaper bag and never stop to rest or put the child down. I don't think I could do that, so I don't think it's a reference to physical strength. I think Peter referred to the emotional makeup. Right now, I am carrying some financial information that I haven't shared with my wife. She is a worrier and I am not going to share that information with her until I have to, until I see how all the factors play out. To me, that is being considerate of my wife: knowing her and being considerate of her strengths and weaknesses.

A man has added incentive to honor and treat his wife with respect. If he doesn't, God won't answer his prayers! **So if you are a married man, do you treat your wife with respect, living with her in a considerate manner? Are your prayers being answered? If not, then the remedy may not be in better prayer techniques, but better husband techniques!**

v. 8 – Once Peter addressed the marriage relationship, he went on to speak to relationships in the body of Christ. He commanded five things: harmony, sympathy, love, compassion and humility. This assumed that the people he wrote to had a relationship with one another. You don't need any of those things if you simply attend a church and don't know anyone. So I suppose questions for you are: **Are you part of your church community? Do you know people and do people know you? Or do you simply attend the service, getting in and out without touching anyone else? Then if you are a part of your church community, how would you evaluate yourself in those five key areas. Why not give yourself a score from one (worst) to five (best) in each. Where is your lowest score? What can you do to improve?**

v. 9 – Peter is writing to the church about the church and commanded that we not repay evil or insult in kind. So this tells me that I can expect some difficulties as I relate to my brothers and sisters, perhaps experiencing insults or evil from them at one time or another. The Bible would not tell us to forgive one another as often as it does unless we were going to need to forgive wrongs done from time to time! But that is so hard for many, including me. I expect better behavior from believers and, when it doesn't occur, I can be easily offended. **Are you offended by the treatment you have received from the brothers and sisters?** If so, you must forgive and not repay them for the wrongs they did.

If you do that, then the Lord who is watching will bless you. And Peter wrote that “to this you were called.” To what were you called? I think he was referring to the fact that we are called to bless and be a blessing, regardless of whether those we bless are worthy. **So, are you fulfilling your calling to be a blessing?**

#### Day Four

10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. 11 He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

v. 10 – Peter quoted Psalm 34:12-16 in these verses and reiterated what the psalmist had said: That we have some control over the kind of life we live and how God treats us. If we control what we say and pursue peace through what our speech, then God will allow us to see good days. I believe that, yet my tongue gets me into trouble. All the epistle authors addressed the issue of the tongue and speech. For instance, James wrote:

Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison (James 3:5-8).

The book of Proverbs also has much to say about my words:

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit (Proverbs 18:21).

**So how are you doing in the matters of the tongue lately?**

v. 11 – The Bible is clear that the only way to overcome evil is to do good and not match evil for evil. You can't fight evil in the same spirit, returning insult for insult. When insulted, you must bless or else the pattern of evil continues. I don't even think you can fight an insult with silence; you must counterattack an insult with something good from your own mouth.

v. 12 – If I will control my mouth and respond as God wants, His eyes and ears are open to me. What a tremendous promise! Why do I make others my focus? God should be my only focus, instead of my feelings, ego and sense of right and wrong. If I really trusted God, I could look past those wrongs against me and do the right that God commands. And if I do this, then God promises to bless me. But if I don't do this, then God won't bless me. That's a pretty clear choice, yet I have chosen at times to forego my blessing to get even with someone who has wronged me. How dumb!

**Day Five**

14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

v. 15 – If I am to overcome this fear of being vulnerable, then I must set Jesus apart as Lord. In other words, I must make Jesus' Lordship a more important issue than my fears, reputation or vindication. That means I must die to self and live to God and His will. I must pursue what is important to God and His priorities and abandon my own.

Whenever I behave so contrary to human nature, I can expect questions as to why I am doing so. At that point, I am not to complain or draw attention to myself. I am rather to give testimony to God's work in my life and to the reality of His kingdom. I am to point them to the hope that I have in God's ability to bless me when I obey Him. **When is the last time someone asked you about the hope that is in you? If no one has, then you must ask whether there is anything that sets you apart from everyone else who isn't serving the Lord?**

v. 16 – The early Christians were certainly slandered for their goodness. They were so distinct from their pagan neighbors that they were labeled as incestuous, sexually

immoral and anti-state. And probably this was wearing on those to whom Peter wrote. Yet he directed them to respectfully respond with gentleness to any who asked them about their chaste behavior. Once again, Peter was instructing the Church on what to say.

There is no guarantee that someone who slanders you will feel guilt when they behold your good behavior. So you must continue to do what God wants regardless of whether you suffer or not. You must respond to those who ask about your behavior, knowing that this may not change their opinion or cause them to correct the slander that they have spread. My only hope in these matters is to use Jesus as my model and then ask the Spirit to create Jesus' behavior in my own life. I can't produce what God requires without the Spirit's help. I must want to be like Jesus, but then I must surrender to the work of the Spirit if I am to be conformed to the image of Christ.

### **Day Six**

17 It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison

v. 17 – I'm sure that Peter's readers needed to be reminded of this truth. They had done nothing wrong but were suffering for it. Peter directed their attention to Jesus, who certainly suffered for the good He did. And they had perhaps forgotten what Jesus had taught:

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household! "So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows (Matthew 10:24-31),

It is one thing to read what Jesus taught and quite another to live it out. It is one thing to know that you will be maligned as a Christian, but quite another to endure it.

v. 18 – Christ had died and was brought to life by the Spirit. Jesus willingly gave His life to deliver us from sin and yielded Himself to God's will, trusting that His life would be given back to Him:

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other

sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” (John 10:14-18).

v. 19 – This verse is commonly interpreted that somehow Christ went to the place of departed spirits of men during his three days before His resurrection to preach. I had heard this and had accepted it as the interpretation for this verse. However, my research has caused me to conclude that this *isn't* the meaning. It seems that this reference is to what comes after this verse concerning the days of Noah. Let us turn our attention to what follows to get the complete picture.

### **Day Seven**

20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

v. 20 – The context of these hard-to-understand verses is that Peter’s readers were righteous, yet were being persecuted by evil-doers and unbelievers. The same was true for Noah and his family. They maintained their righteous stance for 120 years while Noah built the ark. The Spirit came and revealed to them their righteous reward and why they building an ark for the flood, something that no one else understood. So it is impossible here to develop a doctrine that Christ somehow went to a place in the netherworld to preach to sinners who had been dead for centuries. The focus of verses 19 and 20 is the Spirit’s work of confirming the reality of Christ to those who were suffering for taking a godly stand. I think if Jesus had indeed gone “somewhere” to preach during his three days in the tomb that God could have made this plain to us in ways other than this one verse.

So I think we must accept this verse in the context in which it is presented and not develop a doctrine that just isn’t there. The reference is to the Spirit’s work in the life of those who are suffering for righteousness sake.

v. 21 – The water of Noah’s flood are likened here to baptism. Those waters were the source of death to the ungodly and life to those who followed God. And Peter made sure that the readers didn’t just interpret baptism as some purification rite. It was the first act of a life surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus. I have had people ask me, “Why do I need to be baptized?” My response: “Because God said to do it. Period!” If the Lord had said to be baptized in milk upside down, He is Lord and we would have to obey. There is nothing special about baptism *except*—and this is an important “except”—that God expressly commands it. You don’t have to understand it; you just have to do it.

v. 22 – Baptism “saves” you by the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead. We are buried in the waters of baptism and raised to newness of life. It is by our obedience to the act of baptism that the reality of God’s saving power is appropriated to our lives. I would suggest that you read Romans 6 to understand baptism more completely.

You must be careful, however, that you don’t believe that baptism saves you. That is called baptismal regeneration and has been rejected by most of the Church through history. We believe that the blood of Jesus saves and that baptism is an act of obedience that enacts the reality of salvation in the life of the candidate. If someone gave their life to the Lord and somehow died on their way to their baptism, they would be saved. If someone gave their life to the Lord and steadfastly refused to be baptized, then I would question their salvation. I would question it because they would so strongly maintain their will and not surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. You cannot give your life to God and then go on living it as you wish. And one of the earliest indications that you have surrendered to Him is to submit to baptism. **Does this make sense to you? If not, what do you believe and why?**