

## **“YES, DEAR: SUBMISSION IN THE HOME.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA**

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### **Text for the Sermon: I Peter 3:1-6**

#### **Introduction.**

Let me begin by stating the obvious about this text. Not every text in Scripture applies equally to all people. There are texts in Scripture that are specific to men, women, singles, marrieds, widows, young, old, rich, poor, strong Christians and weak Christians. This is a text about wives and especially to wives who are married to unbelievers.

So what do the rest of us do when we come to a sermon like this? Those who aren't married learn from this text what God intends for married people and we all learn how to speak to our friends or our culture that dismisses this truth from God.

Peter comes to his third example of how to live godly in an ungodly world, first in the political world, then in the economic or business realm and now in the home.

Peter wrote to a suffering church, to people suffering under oppressive governments, harsh slave masters and difficult or unbelieving husbands. He set the stage by holding up the example of Christ.

**I Peter 2:23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

**I Peter 2:12** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

These things we are talking about are hard but we are helped if we have an eternal perspective and a long view, if we trust all our circumstances to God and have faith

#### **Submission, what it is and isn't.**

You see on the outline the first point is about the “s” word in our day and age. There is a lot of baggage with this word. In fact there is so much, I am only going to get through the first point of our outline this morning. Submission is controversial because of our culture and because of the lies of secular feminism and because of the great abuses of many husbands. If husbands all loved their wives the way Christ loves the church, there might be a lot less controversy.

We have to work so much harder to be clear about this because the world we live in is trying to press us into its mold.

It calls headship tyranny or dictatorship or oppression or domination.  
It calls submission slavery, servanthood, being oppressed, dominated, a doormat.

We must resist letting the world squeeze us into its mold. We have lots of preconceptions and misconceptions. Some of us have positive experiences with this word, some of us have very negative experiences. We need to bring our experiences into submission to God's Word and put our hope in God and trust His Word and obey Him and it will go well with us.

***Let's focus on what submission doesn't mean.*** And as I do this let me just remind you that nothing I say is original. I have been helped by people as old as Augustine and Calvin and as recent as John Piper. My goal is never to be original, my goal is always to be faithful to the Word of God and to test my thoughts by those much wiser than me.

Let's begin at the beginning with the most fundamental truth. ***Submission doesn't mean wives are inferior to or less than husbands.***

***God created man in His own image, male and female.*** Men and women are equal image bears of God, there are no second-class citizens, there are none who are superior or inferior. We are both heirs together of the grace of God (I Peter 3:7) and of eternal life, equally precious to God.

The marriage relationship is comprised of two spiritual equal human beings who are different, male and female, and who have different roles and responsibilities in the marriage relationship.

Why did God create Eve? Because Adam was alone and God said that was not good. When Eve was created she is called a helper for Adam. We hear that word and think Eve is less than Adam. No, hear that Adam needs help. Adam was helpless and fruitless without Eve.

**I Corinthians 11:11-12** Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; 12 for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman.

From Scripture we can define our differences this way.

***The husband*** has the divinely given call to take the primary responsibility in leading the marriage in a God-glorifying manner and direction, to be the Christ-like servant for leadership, protection and provision in the home. More on that in a few weeks.

***The wife*** has the divinely given call to honor and respect and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it according to her gifts and abilities. Her primary area of

responsibility, though not sole area, is in the home and with supporting her husband and nurturing children.

Why is it this way? Why did God make these assignments? Why not base it on intelligence or ability or skill sets or competence?

This is what led a good friend of ours to say one time, “Being a wife is weird, just weird.” She was omni-competent and her husband was super laid back. Headship and submission aren’t based on competence.

Why did God give the tribe of Levi exclusive responsibility for the tabernacle and temple? Why did God give to the tribe of Aaron exclusive responsibility to serve as priests? Why make it based on a tribe and not on equal opportunity or merit or ability?

Why? Because God is sovereign and He designed our world with authority and submission and set the order of the sexes and He created us and wired us for distinct responsibilities.

Being in a non-leading role, being in the submissive role is not an inferior or less worthy status as is clearly seen in ***Jesus Christ***, who though being equal in every way with God, willingly submits to the Father’s authority and will.

A wife can submit to our husband’s authority without it being a statement about her dignity or worth.

***Submission doesn’t mean you agree with everything he says or does.*** Clearly the wife in I Peter is on a different page from her husband who has heard the Word of God but is not obeying it. She doesn’t agree with him on who their family should worship.

If he says to her, “I don’t want you to be a Christian.” How should she respond? “I love you and want to be married to you and to be your wife. I humbly and submissively can’t submit to that.”

Submission doesn’t mean if your husband tells you to abandon your faith or to join him in some sin, say group sex or a scam or some unethical venture, you must do so.

There are examples in Scripture. Ananias’ wife Sapphira went along with his plan to lie to the disciples in Acts 5 and it cost her her life. She should not have done that was unbiblical.

***Submission doesn’t mean that you leave your brain at the altar, and become a doormat.*** This wife heard the Word of God, pondered it in her heart and saw that it is true and beautiful and rich and worthy of her life’s devotion and energy. She is wise and she exercises her will freely in choosing the better way.

***Submission doesn't mean you don't try to change your husband.*** This husband clearly needs to change and she uses submission as a godly means for bringing about that change.

One of the most famous examples in church history is ***St. Augustine's mother, Monica.*** She was married to a most difficult man, one with a short temper and who lived an immoral life. She held her tongue, patiently trusted God, prayed constantly and saw him convert shortly before he died. Later her profligate and immoral son converted as well.

No woman has ever married a perfect man. Every husband is a piece of work. Don't blame him that he is full of faults, you should have known that by knowing your own self. We are all sinners. So the work is not to blame or criticize, but to improve him.

But the secret is know how to say just what is necessary and then stop talking and let the Spirit have room to work. The danger for some women is they don't know when to stop talking and give it a rest. Another secret is not to carry this work out in public and draw in supporters.

Wives are given to husbands to help them, and that takes many forms, such as to correct them, to rebuke them, to give them wise counsel, to expose their native selfishness, to call them to take responsibility, with a humble and gentle spirit.

Wives are given to husbands to civilize them, to tame their barbarian instincts and nature.

Let me take a tangent on this for a moment and give an example how this applies to singles. Women have great power over men, but they don't know it and they don't use it wisely. I will give you one example. No woman should ever give any man the sex he wants until she has first gotten a commitment from him to really love her and that mean's to give her the security and stability and strength she needs and wants. And that commitment to love is only secured with an "I do." Get the vow before God and then give him what he wants.

That's the power of women, but they don't exercise it. They give sex, they live together hoping to get what they most need and it doesn't work that way. Men are selfish and self-serving, they won't take responsibility unless forced to.

Any man who says if you love me you will have sex with me needs to be answered, "if you love me you won't ask for that until you marry me. You will put my needs about your lusts."

***Submission doesn't mean if your husband is unfaithful or physically abusive*** or abandons you, that you don't have Biblical grounds to leave. Talk to an elder or pastor and get counsel and help.

A submissive response to such a husband might be, "I love you and I want you to be my husband and to be the father to our children, but what you are doing is sinful and wrong

and destruction to all that is good and holy. I am going to leave and pray for you and wait for you to get the help you need to repent and change your ways and decide to put God first and be the husband and father God has called you to be.”

In normal circumstances and situations she is to submit. But there are special cases and circumstances where Scripture is the higher authority.

***Submission is not a sign of weakness or done out of fear.*** It is freely chosen and freely given. Submission is a sign of strength, a strength that comes from the inside, done in the strength of the Lord. She is fearless. Her faith and hope are in God, God is the source of her virtue, character and strength.

### ***What is submission?***

Submission is a disposition of the heart of a wife to give deference to her husband with the understanding and expectation that he will not be passive or abusive but take the primary initiative and responsibility to lead the family with love in a Christ-like manner and in a godly direction. In this manner the home and family will flourish. Submission can happen in the absence of godly and Christ-like leadership, but to the extent he doesn't do that, that family won't flourish. For that God will hold him responsible.

A wife is to fulfil her God-given role regardless of what her husband does, as a husband is to love and honor his wife regardless of how she responds. Our first obedience is to God and what His Word says.

She may be above him in many ways, she may be his superior in finances, or discernment. Most of women are ahead of men, women are smarter, competency isn't the basis of leadership.

In a health marriage between two loving Christians we can imagine a great deal of consensus. I am guessing that 90% of our marriage we have been on the same page. There have been a few significant differences along the way over raising or disciplining boys or finances or intimacy or other things but we have managed by God's grace and mercy to work through those.

There have been two or three critical points in our marriage where my wife carefully and prayerfully, calmly and respectfully brought something to my attention and in a way that made it clear I had better listen and pay close attention and seriously consider some significant changes. And again by God's grace I got the message and changed course and did what my wife said. He is a fool who will not listen to the wisdom of his wife. I yield to Phama on many things.

But what about those few times when there is a true impasse. You have both been around the barn five times and there is no movement. When a mutual consensus cannot be reached what do you do?

I know some couples who commit to a season of prayer, maybe even fasting, and seeking the Lord, and wait to see if God will bring clarity and light. But what if that doesn't happen?

James Hurley in his book *Men and Women in Biblical Perspective*, offers a possible scenario that might go something like this:

**Husband:** 'Not because I am inherently wiser or more righteous, not because I am right (although I do believe I am or I would not stand firm), but because it is finally my responsibility before God we will take the course which I believe right. If I am being sinfully stubborn, may God forgive me and give me the grace to yield to you.'

**Wife:** 'Not because I believe you are wiser in this matter (I don't) or more righteous, nor because I accept that you are right (because I don't or I would not oppose you), but because I am a servant of God who has called me to honor your headship, I willingly yield to your decision. If I am wrong, may God show me. If you are wrong, may he give you grace to acknowledge it and to change.'

This sort of commitment preserves the dignity and honesty of both partners by setting matters in their proper Biblical context. Fear God and have faith in Him. With a fear of the Lord and faith in Him, you can look at life's difficulties and challenges in a new light.

### **Implications and Application.**

If I set the sun beside the moon,  
And if I set the land beside the sea,  
And if I set the flower beside the fruit  
And if I set the town beside the country  
And if I set the man beside the woman  
I suppose some fool would talk  
About one being better. (G.K. Chesterton)

God is God. God is the creator of male and female, the creator of marriage, of husband and wife. God is exceedingly wise beyond our thoughts and ways. Individually and together we are God's workmanship.

May God cause and enable our marriages to be a God-glorifying reflection of the relationship that exists between Christ and His Church.

Let us order our lives and our marriages according to His Word and will that it may go with us all the days of our lives. He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.