

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

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

**March 13, 2016, 10:30AM**

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

### **Introduction.**

We return to the text I started two weeks ago and only got as far as to say what a wife's submission to her husband is and is not. So we are picking up an unfinished conversation. You can listen to or print out that sermon on-line.

### **Submission and what it is not.**

Just to summarize that first point, I listed several things submission is not.

Submission doesn't mean wives are inferior to or less than husbands. We are equal bearers of the image of God. Submission doesn't mean you agree with everything he says or does. Submission doesn't mean that you leave your brain at the altar, and become a doormat or that you are less competent. In fact, the opposite is many times the case. Submission doesn't mean you don't try to change your husband. Submission doesn't mean if your husband is unfaithful or physically abusive you can't leave. Submission is not a sign of weakness or done out of fear.

Rather, submission is a disposition of the heart of a wife to give deference to her husband to follow her husband's leadership. It's an expectation that he will lead and a willingness to follow and help and partner with him in that leadership.

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.

Why submission? Because of the mystery of marriage, which is that all human marriage is meant by God to be an image and reflection of the relationship that exists between Christ and His bride, the church. That is what marriage is supposed to be, so God wants our headship and submission to tell the truth about Jesus and the church.

### **Majoring in minors: Externals verses internals.**

So if the topic is submission, why does Peter bring up hair style and jewelry and clothes? Because he wants us to see the beauty and honor and worth in God's eyes of a submissive spirit. Peter is elevating something that our culture diminishes. We need to see this and take it to heart.

Apparently this was an issue in the first century as it is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their culture like ours had an obsession with external adornment. Just notice Pinterest and how many of the pins have to do with hair, jewelry, makeup, clothing, shoes, purses, accessories.

Women are assaulted today from every side with the lie they aren't pretty enough or don't measure up to some impossible airbrushed, super model standard. So women constantly feel ugly and inferior.

What does Madison Avenue or the fashion industry or TV or women's magazines say about beauty? How do they say a woman ought to do to make herself beautiful? With expensive or revealing clothes, expensive accessories, external things.

Is Peter saying don't do anything to your hair, don't wear any jewelry and don't put on clothes? Well that third one makes it obvious that's not his intent. Peter is speaking against excesses, against fixating on these things, on drawing attention to oneself,

Peter is after our hearts. His concern is vanity, pride, and being on display. He points us toward moderation and modesty. There is much room for freedom on this before it spills over into the excesses of fashion and style, of ambition, affectation, competition and one-upmanship.

Peter thinks more highly of women than the culture does.

Rather than invest in what fades and wears out and goes out of date or out of style, focus on what is lasting and eternal. Never let outward adornment be a substitute for inner beauty.

Should you exercise? Of course, it has value and benefit. Should you work-out and try to stay health physically? By all means. But if you only do that and neglect your soul, what does that profit you? Who these days actually seriously focuses on a character trait or character flaw or sinful disposition?

Remember what Paul says,

**I Timothy 4:7-8** Train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

We live in a culture obsessed with the body while almost completely ignoring the soul. Ours is a youth oriented culture with a supermodel ideal. And men are no help to women when they hold up worldly values or expectations. The pressures put on women today are almost oppressive.

A godly husband has a full time job countering the lies women are told and reminding their wives constantly of the beauty in them that can't be bought or applied or put on.

What most adorns a woman? Not perishable jewels or gold, but the *imperishable* jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit.

Don't mistake quiet for silence. This doesn't mean, keep your mouth shut. It means calmness, peacefulness, serenity, tranquility. This is not like that wind storm on Thursday. This isn't nagging and complaining or *a quick temper and sharp tongue*?

Men are generally competitive and combative, they will match force with force. A gentle and quiet response will be a rebuke to their sinful force, a gentle spirit will turn away wrath.

Don't be part of the escalation, don't return evil for evil. But control your own anger and control your response to others anger.

Don't major in minors, don't make mountains out of molehills, don't be an anxious presence. Know when to speak and when to be quiet. Sometimes Br'er Rabbit, he lay low.

A quiet and gentle spirit is a reflection of a heart not given over to pride or stubbornness, but to humility and grace. It is a reflection of a tongue that is not quick and sharp but wise and controlled. It is a reflection of a self-sacrificing will to put another first, to die to self, to make allowances for others. This kind of spirit is strong, it takes great strength to suffer rather than to sin.

***Most of all it is precious to God.***

This is an adornment more beautiful than external things and an adornment that is precious to God.

Is all of this just a strategy to win an unbelieving or disobedient husband? Clearly not when we hear it praised as precious in the eyes of God. Whether her actions change her husband or not, her actions are of great value and worth to God.

In the end, women, who do you want to please? The eyes of man or the eyes of God? Put your time and effort and energy and money into what is of most value to God. Purify and beautify your heart and soul.

This is how my wife becomes more beautiful every year. The years may not be so nice to her body, but years of wisdom and godliness and seeking after God are adorning her in far greater and better ways. No supermodel has anything over her.

This verse has application for all of us. In what do we put our hope? The secret to all healthy relationships is to seek what we most need from God and not from others.

We are to become men and women of virtue, of quiet inner strength, of deep, solid, settled faith and conviction and courage, looking to God more than man, fearing God more than man.

*Peter sums this up and then gives an example.*

**I Peter 3:5** For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands.

First, these holy women hoped in God. What do you hope in? In your husband's approval or in God? And no that doesn't mean you don't care about what he thinks or says, but you care about your priorities.

Second, because they hoped in God, they adorned themselves in a certain way, namely, with a gentle and quiet spirit. *Freedom from the bondage of the mirror comes from hope in God*, from focusing on the heart, on internals rather than externals.

Third, by hoping in God and adorning themselves with this spirit of tranquility, they were submissive to their husbands.

### **The example of Sarah.**

Here is more evidence that this is not just an occasional or circumstantial strategy. Peter uses the example of a woman who was married to a believer. Of the possible examples of Sarah's submission, why does Peter choose this one? I can think of at least two more obvious examples of Sarah's submission.

Twice Abraham told his wife to lie and say she was his sister rather than his wife to save his neck from possible death, and both times she went along. I am not saying that was a good thing, it wasn't. Abraham was being a bad husband and was more concerned about himself than her and he put her in danger morally. But clearly she submitted and God had to deal with Abraham.

Peter doesn't use those examples. Peter doesn't hold that up for imitation. Rather Peter finds this one time in Genesis when Sarah referred to Abraham as lord. It was when God visited Abraham and Sarah and told them they would have a baby next year.

**Genesis 18:12** So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?"

Peter, instead of using one of those big example, uses an example from normal, everyday life to show that this submissive spirit was just part of Sarah's nature. Her respect for her husband's leadership was natural, even well into old age. In a hidden moment when she thought no one could hear, she still said lord.

Don't stumble over the word lord. In that culture it was a term of respect and deference. In our culture it isn't. But we do have words that we use that show respect.

The closest parallel might be found in the southern part of the US where sir and ma'am are used even by children in the home and by students at school and by adults with each other. It is used to show honor and respect.

Peter isn't interested in titles and knows that titles and words can be spoken without meaning. He is interested in the character behind the words. Sarah loved her husband and showed it by her faithfulness and submission and respect.

Was Abraham perfect? Far from it. Did Abraham always make good decisions or judgment calls? Clearly no, at least three times there is recorded in Genesis bad decisions Abraham made that involved Sarah. Twice he urged her to lie and say she was his sister. And once he agreed to a terrible plan that Sarah put forward regarding her slave girl Hagar.

He was a work in progress, he failed in his leadership more than a few times.

Today women say to this teaching of Scripture, "Are you kidding me? I have to submit to this guy, do you know how difficult he is to live with and how hard he makes my life?"

And God says, "Trust me, put your faith in me, I am with you and I will go before you. As you reflect Christ I will honor you."

How do you talk about your husband? How do you talk to your girlfriends about your husband? Are you generally respectful? Demeaning? How are you in private? What does God hear?

Get rid of eye-rolling, sneering, sarcasm, disdain, passive-aggressive comments or tones, manipulative statements, guile, bitterness, and contempt. Don't let any of that into your heart or relationship. (Phama)

***Do not fear anything that is frightening.***

Peter concludes with a rather interesting statement to wives.

**I Peter 3:6** You are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Submission can be a rather scary thing especially if you are married to an unbeliever or a disobedient believer. It's hard enough with a godly husband. Two sinners under one roof is the recipe for trouble.

Men at their worst are mean and cruel and abusive and hurtful and say and do a lot of terrible things. They can be scary.

As I said before submission is not for the faint of heart, it isn't something done in weakness, but in great strength and in hope in God. It is a fearless strength that comes from the inside.

**Proverbs 31:25** Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.

How can women laugh at the future? Because of her faith in God who holds the future.

A woman who hopes in God can have a quiet and gentle spirit in the face of an unbelieving or disobedience husband. As God protected Sarah in the midst of her husband's folly, so God will protect you.

Trust God with your husband and his decisions and leadership. If you are submitting in a Godly manner, wait on the Lord and believe by faith that God is sovereign and that He is at work.

Submission is most fruitful when done in faith to God. Your submission should produce in the wise and discerning husband greater love and a more yielding spirit, less argumentative, more humble.

Being a wife and mother is a hard job, at times utterly frustrating and exasperating. We are helped by examples from Scripture and by good examples around us. A godly younger woman should prayerfully seek out godly older women who have weathered the storms of marriage and can give godly counsel.

**Proverbs 31:30** Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Next week we will consider the role and responsibility of the husband, so wives make sure your husband is here. A wife's submission calls for the sacrifice of some of her freedom. A husband's leadership and love calls for the sacrifice of his life, to lay down his life for his wife. Let every man who has a submissive wife tremble at the tremendous responsibility he has to be worthy of that submission and faithful in making it a joyful submission.