



1st and 2nd Peter Bible Study

March 3 – June 17

At Laguna Woods – Tues. 6am, Wed. 10am, 6:30pm
At Aliso Viejo – Tues. 6:30am, 5:30pm, Sun. 10:30am

Session #5, March 31-April 5

Wives and Husbands - 1 Peter 3:1-7 Life Application Notes

3:1ff When a man became a Christian, he usually would bring his whole family into the church with him (see, for example, the story of the conversion of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:29-33). By contrast, a woman who became a Christian usually came into the church alone. Under Roman law, the husband and father had absolute authority over all members of his household, including his wife. Demanding her rights as a free woman in Christ could endanger her marriage if her husband disapproved.

Peter reassured Christian women who were married to unbelievers that they did not need to preach to their husbands. Under the circumstances, their best approach would be one of loving service: they should show their husbands the kind of self-giving love that Christ showed the church. By being exemplary wives, they would please their husbands. At the very least, the men would then allow them to continue practicing their "strange" religion. At best, their husbands would join them and become Christians too.

3:1-7 A changed life speaks loudly and clearly, and it is often the most effective way to influence a family member. Peter instructs Christian wives to develop inner beauty rather than being overly concerned about their outward appearance. Their husbands will be won over by their love rather than by their looks. Live your Christian faith quietly and consistently in your home, and your family will see Christ in you.

3:3 We should not be obsessed by fashion, but neither should we be so unconcerned that we do not bother to care for ourselves. Hygiene, neatness, and grooming are important, but even more important are a person's attitude and inner spirit. True beauty begins inside.

3:5 To be *submissive* means to cooperate voluntarily with someone else out of love and respect for God and for that person. Ideally, submission is mutual ("Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ"-Ephes. 5:21). Even when it is one-sided, however, the expression of submission can be an effective Christian strategy. Jesus Christ submitted to death so that we could be saved; we may sometimes have to submit to unpleasant circumstances so that others will see Christ in us. (Christian submission never requires us to disobey God or to participate in what our conscience forbids.) One-sided submission requires tremendous strength. We could not do it without the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.

3:7 When Peter calls women the "weaker" partners, he does not imply moral or intellectual inferiority, but he is recognizing women's physical limitations. Women in his day, if unprotected by men, were vulnerable to attack, abuse, and financial disaster. Women's lives may be easier today, but women are still vulnerable to criminal attack and family abuse. And in spite of increased opportunities in the workplace, most women still earn considerably less than most men, and the vast majority of the nations' poor are single mothers and their children. A man who honors his wife as a member of the weaker sex will protect, respect, help, and stay with her. He will not expect her to work full-time outside the home and full-time at home; he will lighten her load wherever he can. He will be sensitive to her needs, and he will relate to her with courtesy, consideration, insight, and tact.

3:7 If a man is not considerate and respectful of his wife, his prayers will be hindered, because a living relationship with God depends on right relationships with others. Jesus said that if you have a problem with a fellow believer, you must make it right with that person before coming to worship (Matthew 5:23-24). This principle carries over into family relationships. If men use their position to mistreat their wives, their relationship with God will suffer.

Study Questions and material

In 3:1-7, Peter continues to take the existing social structure for granted. Individual hearts, rather than social customs, are his priority. In both Jewish and pagan law, women were minors under their husbands' full authority.⁴² But while Jewish law let wives own property and established limits on divorce, physical abuse, and adultery by husbands, Roman law did not. Greek and Roman philosophers taught that women were "inferior beings, intermediate between freemen and slaves."⁴³ Because "submission" suggested voluntary obedience, non-Christian ethical teachers almost never used the word to describe a wife's attitude.⁴⁴

Normally, wives, slaves, and other dependents followed the religion of the head of their household. Still, as long as they did not dishonor the household rituals, a pagan man often permitted his dependents to pursue their own religion as well. However, a dependent who wanted to change her lifestyle or to honor one god alone encountered serious opposition. For Jews, it was a capital offense even to suggest conversion to Christianity (Deut. 13:6-10).

It's tempting to let our own prejudices color what we notice in 3:1-7. But Peter's words are still a challenge to all of us to change our ideas about marriage. Ask God to give you fresh eyes and a teachable heart as you read 3:1-7. Read 2:13-3:7 to put 3:1-7 in context.

Wives (3:1-6)

1. What light does the phrase "in the same way" or "likewise" (verses 1, 7) shed on marital relations
2. What reason does Peter give for wifely submission (verses 1-2)?
3. What is "reverence" (verse 2)? What attitudes does it include? (Use a dictionary if necessary.)
 - a. Toward whom should a wife be reverent?
 - b. How might she show reverence?
4. In verse 6, Peter exhorts wives to imitate Sarah by not giving way to "fear." What do you think he means? That is, what wrong fear might he be contrasting with the reverent fear of verse 2?

Gentle (verse 4). "Meek" in KJV and in Matthew 5:5. Toward God, gentleness is "that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting." 45 In the Old Testament, the meek are those who rely on God rather than their own strength to defend them against injustice.46 Thus, gentleness (meekness) toward evil people means knowing that God is permitting the injuries they inflict, that He is using them to purify His elect, and that He will deliver His elect in His time (Isaiah 41:17; Luke 18:1-8).47

Gentleness is "opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest." It stems from trust in God's goodness and control over the situation. The gentle person is at peace because he is "not occupied with self at all." 48 Gentleness is a work of the Holy Spirit, not of the human will alone (Galatians 5:23), and it is also a response to the believer's calling from God (Ephes. 4:2). Jesus called Himself meek (Matthew 11:29) and pronounced blessing on the meek (Matthew 5:5). Paul urged all Christians to be meek (2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 3:2). Peter implied that even masters should be meek toward slaves (1 Peter 2:18; niv: "considerate"; nasb: "gentle"), and all should be meek with unbelievers (1 Peter 3:15).

5. Describe in your own words the kind of beauty Peter commended (verses 3-4). Husbands (3:7)
6. Give some examples of how a husband might be "considerate" (verse 7; "understanding") of his wife.

Weaker partner (verse 7). Literally, "weaker vessel." "Vessel" was a common Greek metaphor for "body," since Greeks thought of souls as living temporarily in bodies. Thus, the phrase, "weaker vessel" means "physically weaker." 49

7. Why do you think each fact Peter mentioned about women in verse 7 is important?
 - a. weaker vessel
 - b. co-heir of the grace of life
8. Why do you suppose failure to respect his wife might hinder a man's prayers (verse 7)?
9. What insight from 3:1-7 seems most significant to you currently?

Bible Memory Verses: 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... 1 Peter 3:1 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. 1 Peter 3:7