

Explore the Bible: March 30

Our Witness • 1 Peter 3:1-12

By Arthur Story



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The instruction to wives in 1 Peter 3 begins with the words, "In the same way." This points back to 1 Peter 2 and the example of Jesus' submission and obedience to the Father. The Christian wife, like every believer, is called to live in submission to God. In her submission to God, she is called by God to submit to her husband (Ephesians 5:22-24). Submission in our day has been misinterpreted as oppression, or a lessening of value, or even a sign of inferiority. This is incorrect. The word for submission here is a military picture

of troops aligning themselves in order under leadership. Some of the most skillful soldiers aren't in high levels of leadership. That doesn't mean they are less than those in leadership. In fact, those in leadership recognize and depend on these individuals' skills on a daily basis. Similarly, wives aren't diminished in submission. In fact, our text indicates that the submission of wives combined with their Christian character can significantly impact the salvation of a lost husband.

What are the aspects of the character of a Christian wife? According to our text, she is to be "chaste and respectful." (CSB) This means she is to live a pure and ethical life. In addition, she is to prioritize spiritual maturity over external beauty and adornment. The Christian wife doesn't spend the majority of her time focused on external beauty and fashions that will fade. Instead, she focuses on her spiritual development. As she grows closer to Christ, it is seen in her attitudes and actions so that her character shines greater than her physical beauty ever could shine. She also has a "gentle and quiet spirit." (CSB) This means she has a soothing effect on her husband and doesn't engage in, or create, drama or strife. Simply stated, she pursues God and brings peace to her husband and her home.

The instructions to husbands in 1 Peter 3 begin with the same words given to wives, "In the same way." As husbands submit to God, they willingly serve and prioritize their wives. According to Proverbs 18:22, the man who finds a wife is blessed. A wife, like every blessing from God should be cherished. Husbands should work to understand their wives. They should work to know them intimately in order to anticipate and meet needs. Husbands should recognize and serve with an understanding of their wife's comparative physical weakness. Wives are not intellectually, spiritually, or emotionally weaker, but men and women are physically different and therefore men physically serve and protect their wives.

The priority of the Christian husband's character is the call to love his wife unconditionally and sacrificially as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25-28). This means he willingly lays down his life for her benefit. This commitment leads a husband to physically endanger himself, even sacrifice his own physical life, to protect his wife. This also means that he sets aside his own desires for her benefit. About 15 years ago, I read a book by Patrick Morley titled "The Marriage Prayer," which contained a model prayer for husbands. I don't remember the exact prayer, but as I pray for myself and my wife now, I pray that God will always be my first love, that she will be second, and that daily I will bring her into His presence. The Christian husband's unconditional and sacrificial love for his wife begins with a right relationship with God that then prioritizes her benefit over his own desires.

Lastly, our text provides instructions for Christian to Christian relationships. As we relate to other Christians, we should have the right attitude. As a result, we should have the same mindset, be sympathetic, show love, be tenderhearted toward them, and be humble (verse 8). This attitude is evident on our response to being wronged by another Christian. When wronged, we don't respond as we were treated (verse 9). Instead, we give a blessing. In addition, we flee from evil in order to pursue peace in these relationships (verses 10-11). We do each of these because our desire is to follow Jesus and to remain in intimate fellowship with God (verse 12).

As you study and apply truth from this week's passage, be careful how you live! The life you live daily in attitude and behavior can drown out the potential impact of your words/witness to your spouse, family, and others.

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