

Letters From a Fisherman
Week 11
1 Peter 3:1-6
"Submission (Part 2) - The Godly Wife"

Introduction

A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. **1 Timothy 2:11-13**

Whenever many preachers teach on what is considered to be so-called "controversial doctrine," they usually start off with some type of apologetic language. I do not subscribe to this approach at all. We should never apologize for the Word of God! If God commands us to behave in a certain way, then we should assume that way is the best, including the many Scriptures that are contrary to our own fleshly nature. Submission is one such doctrine. Many in this world may despise it, but in the end, it is only what God thinks that matters. All other opinions are simply noise.

Would you like to know why there are so many miserable people living in today's society? The answer is quite simple really. It is because they have despised the Word of God, choosing to go their own way instead. It is much like purchasing an expensive item from a manufacturer, but choosing to ignore their instruction as to how the product is to be operated. No one knows more than the manufacturer about the functionality and design of their own product. And yet many people willfully ignore the manufacturers operational instructions, and then, are subsequently surprised when the product ceases to function. If you buy a new car that runs on gas and you try to fuel it with diesel fuel instead, don't be surprised to find that you have voided the automobile's warranty!

The same principal applies to ignoring God's Word, when it comes to our own personal conduct. If you do not like doing things God's way, don't be surprised when everything around you breaks down. God is our Creator. And as such, no one knows better than Him as to what is best for us. All of us, as Believers, are required to submit ourselves to one type of authority or another. Un-submissive people are disobedient people. Simple as that. As we have already studied, we are to submit ourselves to The Holy Spirit, to civil or secular authority, and to our superiors in the workplace. We are not a protesting people. We are commanded to be a compliant people.

As Peter continues his teaching on submission in his first epistle, in the third chapter, we see his instruction on submission in the home. First to that of the godly wife, and then on to the role of a godly husband. God is a God of order, and He has established rules for the family unit. Husband's, wives, and children all have a prescribed way in which to conduct themselves. And when God's prescription is followed, the result is a home that is blessed and unified. But in order for us to accept God's commands, we must first come to the realization, that He is more qualified to decide when it comes to perfect order or our personal conduct. Sadly, many refuse to accept this reality, and their lives are miserable as a result.

The divorce rate in the United States was at one time over fifty percent. Social scientist like to boast that the number has decreased over the years to somewhere in the mid thirties. What they fail to mention, is that more and more people do not even bother with marriage these days. So there are fewer divorces, because there are fewer actual marriages. Many have completely given up on the institution of marriage and have chosen to cohabit with whomever they see fit at the time. Then when they have used up all they can from the relationship, they simply move on to the next one. So, believe me when I say, there is nothing to brag about when it comes to a declining divorce rate.

God created men and women to be partners together for life. And He is able to join together that which no man can put asunder (**Matthew 19:6**). Sadly, these days, the divorce rate among so-called professing Christians mirrors that of the lost world. How can these things be? They are what they are because the church has become woefully inadequate in the consistent and unapologetic teaching of doctrine. We prefer to make people feel good as opposed to making them holy. Is there any wonder we have little impact upon a lost and dying world? As Peter has so adequately demonstrated, we must learn to submit to God's commands in order to reach others for Christ. For lives are at stake here.

As we look today at the submission of a godly wife, we see that there is no less at stake. For only by God's direction can we lead others to Christ. To be an effective Christian witness, a Believing wife must be obedient to God's Word. And as she yields her will over to her LORD'S, we see her Submissive Spirit, Her Splendor, and Her Supportiveness. Ladies, if you want to be an effective witness for Christ know this: There is very little in this world more effective than a godly submissive woman. Please allow me to explain.

Her Submissiveness (vs. 1-2)

In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live when they observe your pure, reverent lives. **1 Peter 3:1-2**

Peter starts his instruction for godly wives by saying, "In the same way..." The reference of course is to the previous chapter as he speaks of Christ's submission to His own Father even unto the cross (**1 Peter 2:21-25**). Just as Christ entrusted His own well-being to His Father's care (**1 Peter 2:24**), a Christian wife should entrust herself to God's care and submit herself to her husband as God has commanded her. If she is obedient, then she will be honored by God.

Once again Peter reminds his readers of just what is at stake. In Peter's day, wives were considered little more than property in the Greco-Roman culture. A man treated his own wife much like he would treat one of his household slaves. And as Christianity began to spread, many of these women found refuge and a place of belonging within the church. Often times, a woman would surrender her life to Christ, even if her husband refused to do so. This would bring considerable conflict within the household, for women weren't particularly encouraged to go their own way, as it were.

Many women ended up divorced from their husbands, if they chose to follow Christ. And others were treated with contempt for their newfound faith. Rather than preaching, condemning, or even leaving their cruel spouses, Peter encouraged these women to submit to their husbands and quietly live out their faith in front of them. For you see, to be a Christian is not to condemn, but rather to serve others. The thought behind Peter's instruction was; the harder a believing wife would work to please her unbelieving husband, the more likely he was to see Christ at work within her. This is no different from what Christ Himself has required from all of us.

You have heard it said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you, don't resist an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. **Matthew 5:38-42**

So why is it so important for the Christian to love those who treat us with contempt? So they can be won over to Christ and find salvation for their souls! This is why Peter commanded the godly wife to submit even to a cruel husband, so that he may be won over by her quiet and steady faith. Most people would rather see a sermon than hear one any day. And this is why God wants all of us to live in submission to The LORD, The Law, and all who are called to lead us. For our personal rights are far less important than God's desire to see the lost soul redeemed.

There is nothing so beautiful as a godly woman with a quiet submissive spirit that brings glory and honor to God. Outer beauty is fleeting, but inner beauty endures. And it is a power that brings conviction into the lives of the unbeliever. Which brings us to Peter's next point.

Her Splendor (vs. 3-5)

Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes, but rather what is inside the heart — the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands.... **1 Peter 3:3-5**

I have been acquainted with many “pretty women” over the years, but sadly, many of them were also pretty shallow. The true beauty of a woman is not just in their physical attractiveness, but their inner beauty as well. Many have taken Peter’s instruction in this verse to extremes, going so far as to say that a godly woman mustn’t make herself physically attractive. This is why in some church circles you will see women who seem to have forsaken even a modicum of self-improvement.

Read Peter’s words carefully, “*Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes...*” He is not saying to avoid these things. He is simply saying that a woman’s outer appearance should not be all that there is to her. The original text doesn’t say “*fine*” in front of clothing. This has been added by translators in an attempt to further explain the point. The original should read, “*...or the putting on of apparel.*” Now I am fairly certain that all of us agree that Peter is not saying that women shouldn’t wear any clothes! No, of course not. It is perfectly fine for women to be attractive on the outside, but a godly woman must be beautiful on the inside as well.

Remember Peter’s words in chapter two, when we are treated with contempt, we are to respond in beauty.

Conduct yourselves honorably (kalos in the Greek meaning beautiful) among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day He visits. **1 Peter 2:12** (illumination added)

If we are to make a difference in this world we must be transformed (sanctified) on the inside so that when we receive unfair treatment, we respond in beauty. For once more, lives are at stake. A godly woman must be beautiful on the inside so that all may see Christ in her. For in this is found her true splendor.

In Peter’s day, Roman women would weave gold and pearls into their hair creating an elaborate hairstyle meant to attract men and cause envy among other women. Clothing was chosen for the exact same reason. But if beauty is only skin deep, then the attraction will be as well. In order to make a difference, we must *be* different. A quiet and gentle submission to Christ is an inner beauty that will not perish spoil or fade. In fact, as a person matures in their faith, their inner beauty increases all the more!

The women who were the most highly praised in the *Old Testament* were not honored because of their stunning outward appearance, but rather for their true hearts of faith. My favorite woman in the *Old Testament* is Abigail, who became the wife of King David. Abigail was first married to Nabal, a real loser of a man in every sense of the word. But in spite of his churlishness, she did all that she could to honor him. And when this fool of a man had insulted David, he didn’t even realize how close to death that he actually was. It was Abigail’s fast acting wisdom that saved both her husband’s life and David’s reputation (**1 Samuel 25**). When God struck Nabal dead for his wickedness, David did not waste any time marrying this amazing woman, for he knew what many men sadly do not; a woman such as this is of indescribable worth.

Her Supportiveness (vs. 6)

...just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation. **Peter 3:6**

Sarah (whose name means “*princess*”) was a marvelous woman. And The Scriptures say that she was stunning to behold even at the age of ninety! But there was so much more to Sarah than simply an outer beauty. She had inner beauty as well. Now, I know what some of the men here might be saying, “Why doesn’t my wife ever refer to me as lord? And I know what some of you ladies are thinking as well, “If he’s waiting on me to call him lord, he’ll be waiting a long time!”

The word was used in that time as a sign of respect. You see, men and women are completely different (in case you hadn’t noticed). What men need in a marriage as opposed to what women need are two entirely different things. Women need love, and men... well men need respect. This is not just my opinion, mind you, but it is how our Creator wired us.

To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband. *Ephesians 5:33*

Did you catch that? Wives need *love*, and husbands need *respect*. If you want to know why many marriages fall apart, this is the reason. What men and women need are different. And just as cars need to run on the proper fuel, men and women also must have the right “*fuel*” in marriage in order to thrive. Men need to feel needed. We are providers and caretakers, (more on this next week). But when a man feels disrespected by his spouse, there can be no greater sense of betrayal.

So what made Sarah so special as a wife? Well, God had called Abraham to leave his own country and wander through the wilderness in search of a promised land. Abraham, in faith, obeyed The LORD. Sarah, in respect for her husband, followed him wherever The LORD led him. I’m sure there were many times when she wondered to herself, “What on earth are we doing out here so far from our homes and families?” But she followed nonetheless. Why? Because she loved and honored her husband. As he followed God... she followed him!

That is exactly what God intended for a Christian wife to do. As God leads the husband, whom He ordained to be the head of the household (**Ephesians 5:22**), the wife submits herself to his leadership. Now, let me explain why this works. No godly woman would ever think of not following God’s leadership. So as the man follows God, the woman has no problem following the man. When the system breaks down is when the man has no desire to follow Christ. Then the godly woman must influence him by her quiet submissive faith in order to win him to Christ.

The Bible is very clear on the roles of men and women in marriage. The husband is to lead in the ways of The LORD, as the wife submits to his leadership. When we do as we are created to do, then everyone ends up in the same place, the place that God intended. We will speak more on the marriage relationship between believers in our next session, but suffice to say, The Creator designed the system, and the system only works when it is followed correctly.

The women’s liberation movement has attempted to overthrow the will of God in this world. They seem to think that women are somehow oppressed, when they submit themselves to their own husbands. If that is so, then why do the women’s rights activists seem so angry all the time while godly women seem to have joy? Could it be that a perfectly righteous God knows more about us than we do? Could this be the reason that true joy is only found in following Christ? God Himself predicted in the Garden of Eden that women would rebel against His purpose for them (**Genesis 3:16**). She who was created to be a helpmeet to her husband, often now in her rebellion becomes his adversary. How sad it is when we disregard God’s commandments and go our own way. As the Scripture has so poignantly said:

There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way of death. *Proverbs 14:12*

Next week, we will discuss God’s commands for the husband who is called to lead and protect his submissive wife. Hopefully through all of this we can all learn how to live in quiet peace and harmony. For more than ever, this world needs to see godly marriages that accurately reflect Christ and His bride, the Church! So let us accept in humility the roles that God our Father has set forth for each of us. For it is only by this that we can ever hope to bring Him glory.

And let all those who are submitted unto The LORD say... TRUTH!!!