

1In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

7You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

This morning we approach a famous passage of scripture, and I will admit, with some dread, because it is bigger than me, but then all scripture is bigger than me, so with the Spirit's help, we will endeavor to not just make the sense of it, but encourage you to live by it.

And that is a tall order because our current society, if they were trying to find a place to begin to tear the Word of God to pieces might consider this as good a place to begin as many others.

Silly Peter, saying that women are the weaker sex, and even more crazy, insinuating the obvious, that your wife is a woman. Oh dear! Or worse, acting as if he can speak to the issue of women in general, since he is not a woman, is an impossibility to modern people. How dare he. Or the fact that he speaks about women as if they were any different than men? Shocking.

And yet we will find out, this IS the Word of God, and everything Peter states is not only true, but we could be scientific and historic and find other irrefutable truths that will agree with exactly what Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, states for us here.

20 centuries of successful women and families that thrived is hard to argue with, unless of course the very idea of families is also nonsense.

And likewise we do well to heed what Peter says, because irregardless of modern ideas, here in lies the keys to much happiness and joy and wellness.

We begin, as usual, with a review. We haven't left the context of what has already been said. Peter seems especially to ramble around the many facets of a single context or idea. Our great salvation. And our great responsibility to be a living example of Christ, the church the body of Christ, for the world to see.

Peter begins this section with a bridge from the previous; *In the same way . . .*

In the same way as what? Well, the section he bridges to is all about the distinctiveness of the church of God, set apart from, but dwelling in, this world.

We are distinct because we submit to the authorities the world has set in place. We are not subversives. We don't overthrow the government. We don't dis-obey the police. We honor and respect those authorities, and until they legislate things that are contrary to the revealed Word of God, we quietly and respectfully obey. We are submissive to authority.

That makes us distinct in the world. Aliens and strangers who respect and honor the citizens of this world. We abide here quietly. And that alone, these days, if we practiced it would make us distinct.

Next, we submit to our earthly masters. We work quietly and respectfully, honoring those that we work for. And that truth, again like the previous makes us distinct in a fallen world of people who either won't work, or they lie and cheat and steal from their employers and masters.

A quick story. This week Pam came back from visiting Tina in Oregon

and she told me that Tina and Phil are leaning heavily towards enrolling Rowan, our 13 year old grandson into a christian High School program in Hood River Oregon.

Their reasoning being that Rowan, like his grandfather, is a lazy student and needs an extra push towards excellence he's not getting in the local schools.

I went on line to read about the school, Horizon Christian School and was excited to see that they were unusually sound in all of their ideas. What a blessing. So I called Tina to encourage her on what a great privilege that school would be for Rowan.

And when I asked her how she found it, this is what she told me. At the restaurant where she is manager one of the bus boys excelled in attitude and sweetness. A pleasure to have and a fine worker, but, he was going off to college.

So Tina said, we can't lose you! Do you have any brothers at home like you, and in fact he did. And from there, she discovered that the kids who went to this christian school were every one, good workers and sweet kids. She's hired about 4 of them so far. So she investigated the school and decided that's where our grandson needs to be.

What an incredible picture for the onlooking world. High school kids who are sweet in disposition and willing workers, all with a common tie. A christian foundation.

Peter says, your submissive spirits, your good citizenship, and your willingness to work honestly and not be constant trouble makers, will elevate the image of Christ to an onlooking world.

And then within that framework, he says, *likewise, you wives . . .*

And already there's trouble. Why wives. Why does he pick on the ladies? He'll get to husbands, but there's a single verse for them and 6 for the ladies. What's up with that?

And in fact, if the current generation in our culture knew greek, there would be more trouble! The word for wives is scientifically gender specific. gynaikes. We get our word gynecology from that word. The study of women. It's very binary. Humanoids assigned with the gender of female.

It's enough to make the current culture, well for a better word, and I'm not sure there is one, insane! Wives are females. Oh the horror! The college kids would all have their "trigger warning flags waving. Don't say that!! Wives are females! That's impossibly narrow.

Whew! Good thing *I* didn't say *that*. GOD did.

I In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands

The world needs to see Christ in christians who are submissive to all authorities. The world needs to see Christ in christians who are submissive to their employers and masters. And the world needs to see Christ in wives who are submissive to their own husbands.

I didn't design the world order. I didn't design the ranking of authority and submission that every human finds himself some place within. So don't kill the messenger. God did that. My job is to tell you what God's book says. And there it is. *I In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands*

And the ladies may already be forming arguments within their pretty heads something like this. Define submission please. What does that really mean.

Sorry, but the context already has done that. In - the - same - way . . .

It means the same thing it did when Peter said don't be a subversive, overthrowing the government. Don't be a worker who hates and defies the authority of his master. The world see's that and says, well, they're no different than us. That's just normal stuff in a fallen world.

Christians are different than the world. We don't overthrow the

government. We not only obey, but we work within it, alongside everyone else, doing what we can to make it better. We work side by side those who govern. We are a positive influence. And God blesses governments where that is happening. We are salt that helps to preserve a government that would otherwise die of it's own rot.

Christians are different in the workforce. We don't fight and struggle with the master. We don't dis-obey the master. We don't rob and steal from the master so that he can barely keep his ship afloat. We work alongside our masters and we work hard so that they can thrive. Christians in the workplace should always be those who cause wellness. Success for our masters is what we strive for in the work place.

Okay, wives. Take those two examples and apply "in the same way" and make of it anything you find possible in all honesty. That's all the definition we need.

The world is looking at our families. Are they thriving? Are our children thriving? Is there happiness? Contentment? Peace? Love? Joy? Is there a teamwork pulling for a common goal? Hard work for the sake of home and family?

If there is; number one, we are radically different than the world, and number two, it's mostly at the hard work and sacrifice of . . . a wife. Just ask mine.

What a witness of Christ you ladies have on your shoulders. Yes, husbands are critical in all of this too, but if the onlooking world sees those qualities, the honor of the world seeing a picture of Christ belongs mostly to the wives.

I think Peter draws heavily from Proverbs 31:10 - 31, and I also think it is beneficial for us to stop and take a few moments and read through those verses.

By the way, if Peter's words would make our culture furious and have the college kids waving trigger warnings, this Proverb would make the same folks apoplectic with rage.

To those of us who are trained in righteousness though, they are wonderful.

- 10 An excellent wife, who can find?
For her worth is far above jewels.*
- 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her,
And he will have no lack of gain.*
- 12 She does him good and not evil
All the days of her life.*
- 13 She looks for wool and flax
And works with her hands in delight.*
- 14 She is like merchant ships;
She brings her food from afar.*
- 15 She rises also while it is still night
And gives food to her household
And portions to her maidens.*
- 16 She considers a field and buys it;
From her earnings she plants a vineyard.*
- 17 She girds herself with strength
And makes her arms strong.*
- 18 She senses that her gain is good;
Her lamp does not go out at night.*
- 19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
And her hands grasp the spindle.*
- 20 She extends her hand to the poor,
And she stretches out her hands to the needy.*

*21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household,
For all her household are clothed with scarlet.*

*22 She makes coverings for herself;
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.*

*23 Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sits among the elders of the land.*

*24 She makes linen garments and sells them,
And supplies belts to the tradesmen.*

*25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,
And she smiles at the future.*

*26 She opens her mouth in wisdom,
And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*

*27 She looks well to the ways of her household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness.*

*28 Her children rise up and bless her;
Her husband also, and he praises her, saying:*

*29 "Many daughters have done nobly,
But you excel them all."*

*30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain,
But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.*

*31 Give her the product of her hands,
And let her works praise her in the gates.*

When the world looks at us and sees thriving families, I can guarantee you that an excellent wife is working very hard in that situation. How lucky I was . . . to find one.

That's a good beginning, a good foundation for the rest of what Peter

will say. If we've landed here in agreement, the rest falls in place quite easily. But before we move on, I want to point something else out that is prominent here, and Peter will repeat it more than once.

*you wives, be submissive to **your own** husbands*

Scandal comes into the church when this simple command is not obeyed in it's fullest Paul in speaking to Timothy about false teachers in 1 Tim. 3:5 - 6 says; *having a form of godliness but denying its power. Turn away from such as these! 6 They are the kind who worm their way into households and captivate vulnerable women who are weighed down with sins and led astray by various passions,*

Wives, you are commanded to be submissive you your husbands, and only your husbands. No one else has any authority over you. My job is to teach you and encourage you in what this book teaches. But I have no authority beyond that. Nor does anyone else. You submit to your own husbands.

Such a simple truth. But the horror stories that dis-honor Christ are rampant and common. I was listening to Conrad Mbewe tell about the crisis in the church in Africa. The so-called holy men. About 98% pentecostal. And it's an easy transition from witch doctor to "holy man".

And the "holy man" seems always to be in some weak woman's house when her husband is gone. You can imagine the rest. The population is growing and the children aren't necessarily "holy".

Now, I will make one exception, for Carl's sake, and I hope we never have the need to visit it. A plurality of Godly elders in a church does have authority over single women. Correction can happen if it's necessary. But always with the safety of a plurality (which we don't have), never alone, and if there is a husband, never without him present.

Other than that possibility, wives are to submit to husbands.

OK, moving on;

you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives

What if a woman is gloriously saved, and of course she goes right home and the first person she wants to share the wealth and good news with is her husband who she loves.

So she tells Him about her new found joy in Christ and her release from the bondage of sin, and quite innocently she expects that he will jump at the chance to also enjoy all of those benefits. This'll be easy!

But no, he seems like he's gone deaf. He doesn't hear a word she's saying. And he must be blind. He can't see the obvious. And she persevere's a little bit and he is not only deaf and blind, he's on the ragged edge of belligerence. He becomes defiant. Enough, he doesn't want to hear about it again. Conversation over. Now what?

Listen to Peter, you wives. *you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so **that** even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.*

There's a play on words in there. If they are disobedient to the Word, capitol W, the word concerning Christ requires obedience, but if they are blind and deaf and belligerent and defiant, you press on. And the way to do that is without words. *so that . . . they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives*

After a few tries with the words, if there is no response, or perhaps even a negative response, you go into a long warfare of silence and action and prayer. You don't beat him to death with words, you silently submit, and love on him and obey him for the sake of this book, and for the sake of the world looking on to see if Christ is real, and ultimately if God is gracious to him, for his sake.

That's God's plan for women who find themselves in a relationship with

non-believers. Later on, Paul will add even more clarity. If, because of your christianity, he wants to leave, he wants out, you have to let him go.

If he is pleased to dwell with you, you a christian, and him not, you're right back in Peter's scenario. You must stay and be a christian wife to him. An excellent wife. A Proverbs 31 wife. The rest is up to God, as we'll see.

And now Peter has the audacity to take a stab at telling women how to be women; Humor is good. We approach this with humor because our world is shouting at the top of it's lungs and shaking it's collective angry fist at God . . . about these very issues.

We remind ourselves in our current culture, that Peter is speaking under the direct inspiration of God Almighty. This is the word of God. Hear it.

3 Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

Here the argument is most obvious. You can't miss it. See the word imperishable. That's the definitive word to understand here.

God made women beautiful. Even with all the noetic effects of the fall, the beauty that God designed for women is still obvious.

The world talks about gender equality and no difference, blah blah blah, but they don't have to make a profit on Wall street, do they. Money talks, and the advertising industry uses the allure of the beauty of women to sell wares. Everything from cars to coiffure's.

Beauty draws our eyes in and desire follows along and we buy stuff. Sorry, ideologists, that's how it works. God made women beautiful. Every magazine has a beautiful women on the cover. Even car magazines.

You flip on Velocity channel to watch a show about Hot Rods and bam, there's a pretty woman working on the cars. Who saw that comin'? It's a no brainer.

And Peter isn't telling women to modify what God did. Go make yourself homely. Put on a potato sack. Although modesty is helpful. Remember the world is looking at us to see if we're different, to see if Christ is modeled in the church. Women can be beautiful AND modest. Peter alludes to that here.

But mostly what Peter is telling women is that outward beauty fades. Right? Anybody notice that. And women, again by God's design, seem to have drawn the short stick on this deal. Men are noble trees. Women are beautiful flowers. The fading is more obvious on the flower. Some of us never had anything to worry about anyways. That's a good thing too.

Peter's point is; inner beauty, Godly beauty, *that* never fades. Inner quality and Godliness is imperishable. It doesn't fade away like the outward beauty eventually does. Don't dwell on the outward so much. Concentrate instead on what's inside.

Our society and culture has completely lost it. Outward is all there is! If you drew a bad hand, it's hopeless, right. I feel so sorry for the current generation of kids in this shallow culture. No wonder they're suicidal. If you're not pretty by this worlds standards and have the "likes" coming in on facebook, what else is there?

According to Peter, the stuff our culture starts and finishes on is just a minor value added. Nice if you have it, but not really all that important. Here's what's important. Here's what's valuable; *4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.*

A woman of quality with a gentle and quiet spirit is precious in the sight of God. How much more precious to us. Excellent inner person, based in this book, growing and maturing while the outward person is fading.

That lasts forever.

Peter's going to name names now. He's going to go beyond the Proverbs 31 namelessly impossible perfect woman, and give real examples of some who achieved this status.

5For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

The Old Testament is unique in ancient literature. Perhaps all literature except the New Testament. In God's book, women are held in complimentary high regard as equals to men.

This book elevates women. God made them equal in status. They bear His image in every way the equivalent of men. But by His design, they compliment men. And when women like Sarah, are the most beautiful and the most distinct from the fallen world, is when they are perfectly in the complimentary roles with their husbands, that God designed.

Sarah glorified God by being Abraham's wife. She was a class act. Noble in every way. Equal in every way. But God honoring as an excellent compliment to Abraham.

And Peter says, you have become her children, when you do that.

Actually, as the world goes more and more berserk, our job gets easier. If we are distinct. If we hold up this book and honor these principles, we will stand out in ever greater contrast to the world. The difference should be easier to see almost daily.

But, is that the case? Has the church done what Peter defined for us so clearly here?

Notice in verse 5 the phrase that I told you would turn up twice. *5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.*

Ladies, you do not submit to anyone else. You own that husband. Your own. The words are possessive. Sorry 'bout that. You own him. You submit to him alone.

Steeped within the very idea of those words is the intimacy of marriage. The complimentary relationship of submission only works within the intimacy of marriage. Husbands and wives are a unit, and Peter has strengthened that idea two times now by the possessive adjective translated as *your own*.

The greek word is idios. Submit to the idiot. No, no that's not what it means. It means you own him. He's yours. you're his. If he's an idiot, you don't get a pass.

Well then, we have about 4 minutes left to talk about husbands. That seems fair. A ratio of 6 verses to 1 verse. I like it. Hey, I didn't write the book.

Let's have a vote. Should husbands get 4 minutes or should we leave them until next week. OK, next week. And not to worry, God can assign more responsibility in one verse for the guys than He did in 6 verses for the ladies.

The world is watching the church. They're judging us. They're looking to see if we are distinctive. Aliens and strangers from another place, living along side them. Heavenly people living on earth. Or, perhaps no different at all.

This is a critical word to us this morning and next week. If our families are broken, dysfunctional, not thriving, why would the world take note. If that's the case, christians are no different at all. Just a bunch of rules. Do's and Don'ts.

But if we submit to these teachings that Peter has commanded with the authority of the Holy Spirit of God, we cannot help but present to the world a picture that is very distinctly different, especially in our current culture.

We should be night and day different from the world. Honoring those in authority obediently. Working hard for our masters so that they will thrive because of our diligence. And at home, families where peace reigns, where children thrive.

Think about how rare it is these days to walk into a restaurant and see a real live family with a mom and a dad and a bunch of stair step kids, all enjoying each other, well disciplined, happy, well adjusted. That's a remarkable scene these days. Even 30 years ago people would come up to us at a restaurant and say that. It's far rarer these days.

In vs 15 of this chapter, Peter will tell us to *always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you*

The whole point I keep making about being distinctive from the rest of the fallen world, we should stand out, stand apart from this world, distinct from it. The reason is this. No one will ask us about the hope that is in us if there's no reason to ask.

The "hope that is in you" is only obvious when you're different from the rest of the world. If we are indefinably the same, no one will ask. There's nothing to ask about.

Peter has given us 3 areas, and arguably they are the three main designators that make up all of society. And he has told us we need to be different from the rest of the world that is looking on. The world needs to see Christ, in us. How we live. How we obey authority. How we work for our masters. How are families thrive. In all of those areas we need to be distinctly different from the world. Then the questions will come. Then Christ will be honored.

Next week we'll talk about the grace of life, the blessings of marriage. God gave marriage to us. It's his gift. Even in the broken dysfunctional world, the best there is, revolves around marriage. Real fulfillment is found in abundance when God's design is honored. Marriage is a common grace, even for the unsaved.

But for christians, the possibilities are infinitely greater. I hope to expand on those ideas next week.