



EVANGELISM OF SUBMISSION

INTRO

We're continuing our journey in the General Epistles (the letters in the New Testament not written by Paul). We've studied Hebrews and James so far and are now in 1 Peter.

Peter addressed the temporary residents, those who had been dispersed because of persecution. Much of 1 Peter is about handling suffering, and the theme for the book is *Living Hope* (1 Peter 1:3).

TEACHING

1 Peter 3:1-6: The phrase, "In the same way" (v. 1) builds on how citizens were to relate to the government and employers to their employees in 1 Peter 2:13-25. Constable writes, "Submission should characterize every Christian. The Greek word *hypotasso* ('to submit') has in view the maintenance of God's willed order, not personal inferiority of any kind."¹ Submission does not devalue men or women but rather puts order into the Christian life. This is addressed to wives who were married to unbelieving men so that their husbands could be won over to the gospel based on the wives' actions.

Constable shares that submission includes four things. "First, it begins with an attitude of entrusting oneself to God (cf. 2:23-25). The focus of our life must be on Jesus Christ. Second, submission requires respectful behavior (vv. 1-2). Nagging is not respectful behavior. Third, submission involves the development of a godly character (vv. 3-5). Fourth, submission includes doing what is right (v. 6)."²

From the wife's perspective, submission is putting yourself under the guidance and control of the husband. By the wife's living in submission, the husband is challenged with living in obedience to God. This also is part of evangelism. This might be the only place in Scripture where the Bible instructs us not to share about our faith but to walk it out instead. This leads others to "be won over without a message by the way their wives live when they observe your pure, reverent lives" (vv. 1b-2).

Wiersbe points out three keys to submission: "Submission is an obligation (v. 1a)"; "submission is an opportunity (vv. 1b-2)"; and "submission is an ornament (vv. 3-6)."³ Verses 3-4 explain that beauty does not come from outward ornamentation but from inwardly having a heart for God. *Nelson's Commentary* explains the phrase, "imperishable quality" (v. 4) "involves inner qualities that do not decay or fade like makeup, jewelry, and clothes."⁴

Nelson's Commentary states, "Christian wives were to exhibit attitudes that do not demand personal rights, attitudes that are not harsh and grating but are soothing and tranquil."⁵ When working on the internal self, God opens up the ability for wives to connect through the gospel with the outside world, especially husbands.

Verse 5 ties back to the theme of the book—that Jesus is the *Living Hope*. "For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also beautified themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands." God designed man to reflect Christ in the marriage—as part of the order He designed for marriage. Peter gave the illustration of Sarah and Abraham—Sarah referred to Abraham as "lord" showing her respect for him.⁶ By showing submission to their spouses, wives showed they were Sarah's children (v. 6).

Nelson's Commentary gives several examples of how to face adversity through submission:⁷

1. Sarah took it on herself to provide her husband with a wife to bear him children (Genesis 16:2-4). She took on the leadership of this in order to serve Abraham, even when it was not what God had planned for them.

¹ Gerhard Delling, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "hypotasso", 8 (1972): 44; referenced in Thomas Constable, *Constable's Expository (Bible Study Notes): 1 Peter*, p. 64; available at <https://planobiblechapel.org/tconr/notes/pdf/1peter.pdf>.

² Constable, pp. 66-67; adapted from Family Life Conference (Little Rock, AR: Family Ministry, 1990), pp. 105-106.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: 1 Peter* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1989), pp. 408-409.

⁴ Earl Radmacher, Ronald B. Allen, and H. Wayne House, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p. 1683.

⁵ *Nelson's Commentary*, p. 1683.

⁶ *Nelson's Commentary*, p. 1683.

⁷ *Nelson's Commentary*, p. 1684.



Living Hope

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1 Peter 3

Teaching Notes

2. Sarah followed Abraham, even when he took her into difficult situations (Genesis 12:15; 20:2). By submitting, Sarah showed her respect for Abraham and her trust in the Lord's guidance.

Watching a wife submit herself to her husband should lead a husband to want to submit himself likewise to Christ.

1 Peter 3:7: This verse can be a check for husbands about how God is blessing their obedience to Him. Peter gave instructions to the husbands, commanding them "in the same way" as he instructed wives in verses 1-2, and "understanding of their weaker nature yet showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life" (v. 7).

Nelson's Commentary explains, "A Christian husband should be intimately aware of his wife's needs, her strengths and weaknesses, and her goals and desires. He should know as much about her as possible in order to respond in the best way to her."⁸ Peter was not demeaning women but holding them up to husbands to be cherished. This is not about control but about serving and honoring their wives in the Lord. According to verse 7b, if wives are not honored and served, the husbands prayers would be hindered. If wives are treated like coheirs in the kingdom, God will honor the husbands prayers. Peter seems to be alluding to the idea that those who take care of the members of their families correctly can then be used to take on other responsibilities in the kingdom of God.

CLOSING

Wiersbe concluded his commentary on these verses with an inventory of questions about our relationships with our spouses:

- Are we partners or competitors?
- Are we helping each other become more spiritual?
- Are we depending on the externals or the eternal? The artificial or the real? Do we understand each other better?
- Are we sensitive to each other's feelings and ideas or taking each other for granted?
- Are we seeing God answer our prayers?
- Are we enriched because of our marriage or robbing each other of God's blessing?"⁹

Submission begins with an attitude of trusting ourselves to God. That depends on who we are in Christ. Unless we belong to Him, we'll never be able to take the next step of marital submission. When we belong to Christ, we will have respectful relationships with our spouses. It will happen divinely and will include the development of godly character. For true submission to take place, it is necessary to do what is right.

Submission requires intentionally working on developing godly character. It cannot happen without that. We can only do that by having *Living Hope* in Christ.

⁸ Nelson's Commentary, p. 1683.

⁹ Wiersbe, p.411.