

## ABide Study on 1 Peter 3 On the Fourteenth of August Two Thousand And Five

Right, so chapter 3 then. Bit of a mishmash this one, and it's a tricky one to tackle. So this is pretty much designed to make you think, discuss and possibly argue with each other. Don't worry if you don't get this finished or even get past the first couple of verses, this thing's a beast and it doesn't make sense to rush things. Take your time and talk things out all right if you have to. Don't be afraid to wander off-topic and remember to be respectful of each other's opinions. And we're off...

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Read 1 Peter 3:1-7: *Wives and Husbands*

OK, so I'm going to make the random assumption that by now the entire female contingent is up in arms and complaining about the word "submit". To do you this was a tricky chapter to get landed with. Nobody panic, we'll get through this. Actually, Deans recently preached on this topic, so a lot of this is lifted straight from what he said. I'm really not this smart.

For one thing, remember this passage talks of the male/female relationship in purely a marriage context. It says nothing about how men and women are meant to interact with each other outside of married life, and should it be taken out of context.

First up, let's stop at verse 1. It seems a nice place to take a break. Don't want to burn out or anything. "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands". Before we even deal with the issue of women submitting to anything, we need to look at what submitting really means. Read 1 Peter 2:20-25.

- In the context of the previous chapter, how is a wife meant to behave?

Looking back at Ch2, we see a description of Christ's perfect, sinless life, and His complete purity, taking on our sins and shame, submitting to God the Father and to His death on the cross. We see Christ submitting to His suffering for the greater good, our salvation and eternal life with God.

So it seems like wives are called to live pure, blameless lives, providing an example and blueprint for husbands to look to. So that's an element of submission suggested in the passage, showing the correct way to go to their husbands in a quiet, peaceful way that's probably largely alien to most of the male psyche.

Read Genesis 2:20-25. Discuss.

- How is the relationship between a husband and wife designed?

Moving on, we see that a good chunk of the rest of the passage is devoted to why this submission is particularly important in a relationship where the wife is a Christian and the husband is not. This must be a hugely difficult situation, and in that case the wife is the most likely means of her husband coming to faith. The role of the wife in her submission is therefore meant to display her purity and allow the Spirit to be seen, a strategy for bringing her husband to God. Note that it says "*without talk!*". Here women are called to such a high role, in letting their light shine to their husbands without even having to say anything. How awesome a responsibility is that?

Read Matt 5:16

Going on, note that submission doesn't mean giving in. Look at v6. It doesn't mean doing things that are wrong against Christian living or morally incorrect in order to submit to the desires of the husband. It means living a pure life irrespective of the situation, and allowing that life to be seen as an example and a guiding influence to the husband. While the man is meant as the head of the family, he is not meant to stand alone, rather the husband and wife are meant to complement each other. They're meant to be one flesh.

I dug this up when I was preparing for this mainly because it's too hard and I am fairly thick. It's long but I found it really useful, so take a squizz at this from Roger Helm at the Christian Resource Institute.. [\[http://www.cresourcei.org/tibdestudy/tb1pet3.html\]](http://www.cresourcei.org/tibdestudy/tb1pet3.html)

*"Peter's instructions regarding submission to government and the relationship of slaves to their masters dealt with areas of life that have not been controversial in late twentieth century Christianity. The meaning of Christian marriage and the appropriate relationship of husbands and wives has been the source of controversy among evangelical Christians in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The rise of the feminist movement, especially in North America, has forced Christians to confront the Biblical passages instructing us on marriage relationships in ways that we have not had to do with the passages on slaves and masters and relationship with the government."*

*Every reader of Scripture interprets Scripture. Reading is an act of interpretation if any meaning is to be derived. Whether a reader realizes it or not he or she develops a method of interpreting in which some verses become general principles and others deal with specific cases and exceptions. There are verses in the New Testament that suggest the equality in Christ of women and men, husbands and wives, and there are other verses that command submission of the wife to the husband. If both sets of verses are interpreted as general principles they contradict each other. It is possible that both sets are specific applications of some other general principle. It is most likely that one set of verses states a general principle and the other set gives specific instructions that are either applications and/or exceptions.*

*I believe that Galatians 3:28 is the general principle that should guide Christian discussion of marriage. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This general principle receives a specific application in 1 Corinthians 7:1-16 where Paul carefully balances his statements to wives and to husbands. This general principle is also reflected in passages that speak of the ministry of women as equal to the ministry of men (such as Acts 2:17-18, Romans 16:1-2, and Philippians 4:2-3). First Corinthians 11:2-16 assumes that women will pray and prophesy in church. The question under discussion is the appropriate dress or head covering for them as they do so. There are five passages that speak in limiting ways of the role of women in either ministry or marriage: 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, Ephesians 5:22-24, Colossians 3:18, 1 Timothy 2:9-15, and 1 Peter 3:1-6. I understand these passages to be stating some exception to the general principle that husbands and wives are one and thus equal in Christ. The exception is based on some specific circumstances that require the special teaching of Paul or Peter.*

*Ephesians 5:22-33 and Colossians 3:18-19 are similar to 1 Peter 3:1-8 in that both have instructions to both husband and wife. The instructions of Ephesians 5 place far more emphasis on the responsibility of the husband. Those of Colossians 3 are about equal and 1 Peter 3 gives considerably more attention to the responsibilities of wives. First Peter 3:1-2 shows that Peter was thinking of the relationship of Christian wives with unbelieving husbands. He presents a strategy that he hopes will aid the Christian wives in helping their husbands come to faith in Christ.*

*The first strategy is to be submissive. This is the same word that has described the response of every Christian to the government in 1 Peter 2:13 and of Christian slaves to their masters in 1 Peter 2:18. It is the same word used in Ephesians 5:21 to describe the attitude that every Christian should take toward any other Christian. There is no implication here that the wife should abandon her Christian faith or worship. Rather, as Marshall (p. 99) states she should "consider his needs and fulfill them."*

*An unbelieving husband will not be likely to grant his wife the freedom in Christ that a believing husband would. If the wife should attempt to demand that freedom from her unbelieving husband it is not likely that he will be attracted to the Christian faith. Marshall further notes, "She must exercise her freedom in Christ precisely by being willing to submit to the restraints imposed by her marriage to an unbeliever." The product of such submission is purity and reverence according to verse 4. The regular usage of the word reverence shows that it is reverence toward God (not toward the husband). The purity of her life will naturally include sexual purity but goes beyond that to encompass the whole range of Christian behavior and attitudes. Thus the motivation of the wife is obedience to God. Davids (p. 117) points out that the unbelieving husband will clearly notice his wife being subject to him whether he is nice or not as long as the matter does not violate her commitment to God. He will also notice her willingness to risk his wrath to do the things that are necessary to maintain her Christian faith. Noticing such consistent living will more likely lead him to faith than servile subjection to his every demand even when it contradicts her religious convictions."*

So on that note, it's probably a good idea to also read Ephesians 5:21-23. Ephesians talks a lot of the husband's responsibility in marriage, whilst 1 Peter concentrates a lot on the wife. Let's keep things in balance, so read about the intended relationship there.

v21 talks about the need to be filled by the Spirit. Taking this in context, it would seem to suggest that a healthy marriage requires the filling of the Spirit to be successful. And according to the amazing Mr Buchanan several months ago, the result of the continual filling of the Spirit is the continual outflowing of the Spirit, like a cup constantly being filled up – it just can't contain it all. And that extends to the marriage relationship.

Other things Deans said about submitting:

- It's not about the superiority of either person, it's a complementary relationship. There's no implication of a man's power over his wife.
- The roles played by husband and wife are dictated by Christ and looking to His example.
- Submission is about dealing with self-centredness.
- There's no calling for the husband to force submission on his wife.
- Marriage isn't a wrestling match, it's a love match.

Note that the husband is also called to a massively difficult role. He's called to love His wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Love isn't always a reaction that comes naturally to men, we usually enjoy playing with our toys and beating things into the ground.. The example set by Christ of love for the church is a huge act to follow, and for a man to love his wife the same way is NOT an easy task. So what we're saying here is the woman doesn't get the only hard job in marriage.. Looking at 1 Pet 3:7, the man's role is also mentioned.

Marriage isn't meant to be easy. It's about two people complementing each other to effectively become one in their relationship. It's like sharing a body, and there's a need for submission and relationship. There's always a need for give and take.

RIGHT, so having looked at bit at submission, let's get on past verse 2, shall we?

v3 onwards continue talking about the role of a wife, including how she should dress and so on. Discuss!

I actually have a slight bugbear about women and the definition of beauty anyway, so I may as well just confess. Realise that you are designed to be beautiful, and no end of hiding from photos or refusing you believe you look good enough will ever change that. Stop just worrying about what the media says and see what you were meant to be from creation. Grrr.

Anyway. Rant over. Let's move on.

This passage is talking not about women being barred from wearing jewellery because it's evil (it's not (it's also not saying that silver is better than gold incidentally..)), it's talking about the definition of true beauty. Wives are meant to display the beauty "of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight", not just the spangly stuff stuck on assorted pieces of anatomy.

So the corny fairytale stuff was true. It really is how beautiful you are on the inside that counts.

- On to v7, how do you feel about the relationship portrayed? Discuss. Note that men and women are portrayed as co-heirs and equals, despite the acknowledgement that women are the weaker partner in the relationship. How does this reflect on the designed marriage relationship we're meant to enjoy and the roles men and women should play?
- How should our relationships with the opposite sex be out with marriage?

Also note the important role given to prayer, and the importance of right relationships within that.

Alright. Onwards!

## Read 1 Peter 3:8-22: *Suffering for Doing Good*

V8-12 focus all relationships and apply to everyone

- Have a think about the qualities listed and compare them to the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5
- Although it's clear that the way we're meant to act is an outpouring of the Spirit from us, how easy do we really find it to act the way we're meant to? Why?

The rest of the chapter focuses on suffering for right actions, suffering for your faith. This is a hard topic as well! It's not easy medicine to swallow!

- How do you feel about v14? Have you been in that situation? Feel free to discuss
- Read James 1: 2-18 and James 5: 7-12. How does this compare?
- How does v15-17 compare to the previous part of the chapter on wives and husbands?
- How do you feel about your evangelism, taking this passage into account?
- What does the phrase "always be prepared" mean to you about sharing your faith? Is this easy?

Right: v18-22 are a nightmare, what on earth are they talking about?

First up, notice the emphasis on "once for all" in v18

- What's your understanding of the significance of the phrase?
- How amazing is that?! And how often do we let ourselves forget about it?

Looking at the nasty and very hard to understand v19-20, it seems like when Christ died on the cross, he became able to preach to certain spirits. This all becomes incredibly horrible to try and figure out, so we'll not go into any depth here – we can ask Deans for some wisdom if you're interested. Basically, there seems to be a lot of confusion about who the spirits are, but the effective point of the passage is to show how, just as God delivered Noah and his family, v20. He will also deliver Peter's audience from their sin, saving them.

- Looking at the grace shown in these verses, isn't it worthwhile to suffer for doing right as described earlier on?
- Look at v22. Does it help put your own situation into context when things aren't so great? What a foundation for your faith!

If you've got time, pray for each other in your situations and worries, and about the passage.

Other things to look at for this chapter because it's really quite hard

Dr Constable's Bible Study Notes: <http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes.htm>

The Christian Resource Institute: <http://www.cresourcei.org/biblestudy/d01pet3.html>

The Bible! It's not always easy but it's the best guide to itself!