

The Gospel and Christian Marriage (including how *everyone* submits)

I. Uneasy Living: Peter's Audience in Real Life

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Pet 1:1-2, ESV)

- **Why was land so important to people in Peter's day? What about in the Middle East today?**
- **What point was Peter making when he called them "elect exiles"? How is this true of us, especially as we think about God's plan for marriage?**

"...following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers...They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven." – Anonymous, Epistle to Diognetus, 2nd Cent., Chapter 5 – The Manner of the Christians

II. How to Live in a Foreign Land

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people...

¹⁸ Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. ¹⁹ For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly... ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Pet 2:11-25)

- **What motive (only one of many!) does Peter give for the good conduct of believers in vv. 11-15? How might marriage (or dating) be one area in our day where this is truly possible?**

III. Important Starting Point - Equality vs. Difference in Gender Relationships

Equality as beneficiaries of salvation: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Gal 3:28)

Equality as Image-bearers of God: *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* (Gen 1:27)

Different roles in marriage structure: *"Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands..."* (1 Pet 3:1)

Different roles in church structure: *"I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man..."* (1 Tim 2:12)

- **How does the earthly ministry of Christ endorse the distinction between essence and roles?**

III. What Went Wrong?

"To the woman he said, 'I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.'" (Gen 3:16-18)

"Sin twists commitment into selfishness, intimacy into secrecy and shame, and interdependence into conflict..."

-Richard Phillips, Holding Hands Holding Hearts, p. 43.

IV. Peter on Marriage

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives- ² when they see your respectful and pure conduct. ³ Do not let your adorning be external- the braiding of hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing- ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

⁷ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.. (1 Pet 3:1-9)

1. What does it mean for women to "be subject" (v. 1) to their own husbands? Does this mean unquestioned obedience? How does v. 1 speak to husbands, too, about their submission?

2. Is Peter prohibiting women from wearing attractive apparel or using makeup in v. 3? How does v. 4 clarify Peter's point? How might men be of service here!?

A. Egalitarian Position = The view of gender identity/roles that stresses the equality of men and women in both essence and function by minimizing the unique significance of our maleness and femaleness. Among the chief examples of sin's defilement is the introduction of an illegitimate hierarchy in the relationship between woman and man which robs women of dignity and ensures male domination. There is no legitimate distinction, in God's kingdom, between male and female.

B. Complementarian Position = The view of gender identity/roles that stresses the equality of men and women in their essence while complementary in their God-given functions and roles. The core of masculinity is a sense of one's benevolent responsibility to sacrificially lead, provide for, and protect women in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships. The core of femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive, and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships.

6. How are we to live with our wives "in an understanding way" (v. 7)? How well do you do this?

7. What are the two truths about women in verse 7 that should guide our attempts to "[show] honor to the woman"? What does Peter say is the consequence of our failure in this area?

"The fact is that women are in a position of vulnerability with respect to men. They are generally more emotionally vulnerable because God has created them with feminine tenderness. Furthermore, in her obedience to God a Christian wife places herself into the hands of her husband. She becomes dependent on him, especially when she bears his children. Instead of resenting the care that must be taken with a woman's heart, a Christian man should value her all the more. Her vulnerability is part of her beauty; she is of great value to him precisely because God has fitted her to bring out the best in his godly masculinity."

-Richard Phillips, Holding Hands Holding Hearts, pp. 74-75