

How many of you have been taking in the Olympics the last couple of weeks? They've been on in the Hamel house, often just playing in the background. We've watched the snowboarders and the skiers, hockey, speed skating, figure skating and curling. In almost every one of these sports, there is a women's division and a men's division, and then some of them have a special category, where men and women work together in unison. There is a unique beauty and quality to the female competition and the male competition, but when they work together in pairs figure-skating, with the man and woman each playing to their strength, the partnership can be spectacular. In many ways, we see Peter address that reality in our passage today, 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

This passage gives us insight into God's wisdom on femininity, masculinity, marriage, and how to let God change our lives to such an extent that those closest to us are able to come closer to Jesus. Because we are talking about gender and marriage and households that are divided in faith, I know this can be a sensitive and tender subject, but the purpose of this passage has nothing to do with shame or condemnation – it was written to build up, to heal, to restore, and to guide. Let's come as open-handed as possible! And let's also remember the context: in 2:12, Peter said, **“Live such good lives among the (non-Christians) that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”** Peter is showing us how to live in such a way toward our spouse that the world would see our marriages and be more likely to come to Christ, and perhaps even a non-believing spouse would see our lives and be more likely to come to Christ. That's the context. Peter speaks to both women and men, let's dive in:

How wives honor God in marriage: (1) Submit to your husband. This can be a difficult instruction to hear. I was in a small group this week with about a dozen people, I was asked what the sermon was on this week, and I said, “Peter begins this passage by instructing wives to submit to their husbands.” And everyone, men and women, alike, said “Oh, boy! Here it comes! You know that's not how it works in our marriage!” Everyone was being light-hearted, but it was almost broadly assumed today that the very idea of a wife submitting to her husband is unpalatable, is a joke, is antiquated, it's demeaning, and even though the Bible says it, it's clearly not something we are going to actually do. What if instead of dismissing this teaching, or assuming it's harmful or irrelevant, we tried to really understand it and trust God's wisdom.

What submission does NOT mean:

Blind obedience — Submission never requires disobeying God, or compromising Biblical wisdom. God is the ultimate authority we all have to submit to.

Intellectual inferiority — Submission is not agreeing that your husband is always right, knows more than you, or is an expert about every decision he makes.

Silence — Submission does not mean you cannot speak up, share your thoughts, or participate in decision-making.

Harmful situations — Submission never includes abuse, manipulation, or anything that damages a person emotionally, physically, or spiritually.

There have been times in the past where submission has been presented in these ways that have promoted this kind of behavior. It has hurt women, and it breaks the heart of God! This is not what the Bible has in mind when it teaches submission!

The Greek word for submission in this passage: **Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands** is *hupotasso*. It's a compound word that simply means **"to order under."** It means to recognize the vision, leadership, or authority of another person, and willingly come under it, follow it, support it. One of the most helpful ways to understand it is to think about like this: **"Stay in alignment with your husband."** A while ago, I noticed that one of my front two tires was balding, so I took it into the shop. They said the tread on those two tires were wearing out way too fast because my alignment was off. One set of tires was going this way, the other was going that way. And even though the misalignment was really subtle, over the course of thousands of miles, things break down. The same is true in a marriage relationship. God did not design a marriage to work with the husband going one direction and the wife pulling in the other. He designed marriage to work with a husband and wife in alignment. And a heart of submission says, "I am willing to let you lead."

How wives honor God in marriage: (2) Pursue virtue. Look at these words: **"When they see the purity and reverence of your life."** These words, purity and reverence, in the original language, mean *holiness in fear of God*. Live as a woman of virtue: of integrity, honor, chastity, and purity. Proverbs 31:10–12 says **"A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life."** A wife's virtue brings honor to both her husband and to God.

How wives honor God in marriage: (3) Cultivate inner beauty. Our culture devotes enormous energy to women's appearance—clothing, makeup, fitness, cosmetic procedures, hair color, hair extensions – endless upgrades to the outer self. And our culture is increasingly critical of women when they don't meet these wildly expensive, time-consuming standards. It's easy to absorb the message that true beauty is something you create and display. Peter offers a radically different vision. He says in 1 Peter 3:3-4: **"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."** Peter is not condemning being stylish or taking good care of yourself. There are many passages in the Bible that celebrate a woman's physical beauty. My wife loves when I tell her she's beautiful; she really loves it when I notice a new outfit. That's a spiritual gift I'm still praying for, but on occasion I get it right! *The issue is not whether you present yourself well; it's where you*

locate your worth—outward appearance or inner character. Many women spend significant time preparing their outward appearance each day—and there is nothing wrong with being well put together. But imagine if we invested equal intentionality in cultivating compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Peter is reminding us that a woman’s character matters a lot more than her closet. Instead of focusing on **outward adornment**, give attention to your **inner self**. Let God—not trends, not social media, not shifting cultural standards—define your beauty and your worth.

How do we cultivate inner beauty? Peter says a **gentle** and **quiet spirit**. This word for gentle is not a “feminine” or “dainty” word. It’s the same word Jesus used to describe himself, as gentle and humble in heart. It’s the word used to describe a horse that had been trained to take a rider, so all that strength and power could be harnessed, brought under control, and leveraged. It was used to refer to a guard dog, with enough ferocity to scare off an intruder, but also soft enough to play with a toddler. Strength that doesn’t fly off the handle erratically but is measured, composed, and under control. The word quiet does not mean silent, but rather *not* obnoxious and combative. It’s the comparison of a river that is 2 feet deep, rushing over rocks, creating white rapids on the surface, a flurry of commotion and activity, or a river that is 100 feet deep, with a strong current, but a quiet surface. This is not about being an introvert, an internal processor, or a wallflower. This is not about personality type, but a cultivated disposition that is settled and calm. Peter says that’s true beauty!

How wives honor God in marriage: (4) Renounce fear. The number one challenge for most women that can keep them from submission, virtue and inner beauty, is fear. Fear of the possible “what ifs.” Fear of losing control. Fear of being hurt. Fear of being rejected. Fear of being not wanted. So Peter speaks right to that and says in 3:6: **“Do not give way to fear.”** That’s what will allow you to become like the godly women who came before us. Numerous clinic studies, across continents, cultures, and ages, have shown women are nearly twice as likely to deal with anxiety as men. For both biological reasons and sociological reasons, fear can take root in a woman’s heart. Peter says don’t focus on fear, focus on Jesus. 1 John 4:18 says **“Perfect love drives out fear.”** Perfect love replacing fear can transform your heart, soul, and body.

Remember, Peter says all of this is testimonial. This not only helps you embrace godly femininity, honor your husband, and have a cross-shaped marriage, it has the potential to help your spouse, if they are not a believer, to be more likely to place their faith in Jesus. Some of you have a spouse that does not believe. This passage is not saying the responsibility for your spouse's salvation rests on your shoulders, you have to be released of that weight! But what Peter is reminding us is that you have the chance to be a living, breathing testimony of the transformation Jesus can make!

One of the pastors I am friends with has a couple in his church named Ed and Mary. For years, Mary was a believer, Ed was not. Mary liked going to church. Ed wanted nothing to do with church. One day, Mary had asked Ed to come home early from work because she had a commitment at church she wanted to keep. He agreed. But called her during the day to tell her he wasn’t going to be able to get home in time, she was going to have to miss church. She got angry, and hung up the phone on him. Listen to him recount the rest of the story in his own words:

“I got angry and decided that I had enough of this church stuff. I was going to put my foot down, go home and make her choose between me or the church. So I worked up a really

nice self-righteous speech on the drive home. When I got home she was in the kitchen doing dishes. I stomped into the kitchen, ready to tangle. But when she turned to me she was crying. She told me she was sorry for getting angry at me and she was wrong for hanging up on me. And would stay home not only that night, but would miss her next church event as well, so she could be with me instead. Without being the sharpest knife in the drawer, I told her she was right. She shouldn't have become angry and hung up on me. And then I went into the living room and turned on the TV. But the more I thought about how she responded, the more perplexed I became. She didn't ask me to get home early very often. I knew how much being at church meant to her. Quite frankly I understood and expected the angry Mary, as I would have been mad if the roles were reversed. What I could not understand was how or why she responded in such a selfless or kind matter. I have always believed this was the first time I allowed the Spirit of God to plant a seed in my heart. And I asked myself, is there something real about this Jesus?"

That's what Peter is talking about! A submissiveness, a quietness, a trust that shows the power of a transformed life! Peter spends most of this section talking to wives, but he concludes by talking to husbands.

How husbands honor God in marriage: (1) Study your wife. Peter says **"Be considerate as you live with your wives."** The Greek word for *considerate* literally means: **"According to knowledge."** It means not just to be conscious of but sincerely curious about her...her story, her struggles, her joys, her burdens, her hopes, her dreams. Become an expert in her. Most men, when they are dating the woman they would like to become their wife, are like Sherlock Holmes trying to find out about them. Their favorite flowers, their drink from Starbucks. When I set my eyes on Keren, I found out she liked Russian literature. So I asked her if we could set up a time to talk about Russian literature. Do you think there is any chance I cared about Russian literature? Absolutely not. But I cared about *her*. I took an interest in her, and anything she took an interest in! It's easy to do that in the romance stages. *Don't let that die.* Don't settle for being an expert on the woman your wife was when she was 25 years old, become an expert on the woman she is today, and the woman she wants to become in the future.

How husbands honor God in marriage: (2) Respect your wife. Peter says this as directly as possible: **"Treat them with respect."** This literally means to recognize her worth and therefore show her honor. Guys, let me give you an analogy that might resonate with you: last month IU won the national championship. When they did, they were awarded **this football** (see the sermon video to view image). Same size and shape as a normal football. But a normal football is made of pigskin, this was of crystal. One's worth \$20, one's worth \$30,000. One is fine to throw around and spike on the ground. One is cherished, handled with the greatest care, and put on display. I asked Keren this week: what are the things I do that show you I respect you? And what are the things I do that show a lack of respect for you? I learned a lot as I listened to answers to both questions. Husbands, let me encourage you to ask your wife the same questions this week. You might be surprised by what you learn!

How husbands honor God in marriage: (3) Serve your wife. The word *serve* doesn't appear in the passage, but it's implied by the phrase: **"Treat them with respect as the weaker partner."** *Weaker* does not mean that she is emotionally weaker or intellectually weaker, it merely recognizes that most husbands are stronger than their wives. He's a pick-up truck. She's a sports sedan. He's

good at hauling things, she has a lot of horsepower, but wasn't designed to carry the same physical load. A godly husband never uses his strength, his voice, or his positional power to take advantage his wife, but like all godly strength, it is used in service! Depending on the marriage this might look like taking out the trash, working on the car, caring for the yard, working extra hours, disciplining the children...you shoulder the heavy weight, so she is not encumbered by that burden and can be freed up to flourish, just as God designed and created her to.

How husbands honor God in marriage: (4) Treasure your wife. More than just respect, Peter says wives are **“heirs with you of the gracious gift of life.”** This is where Christianity was so different from the ancient world. If you read ancient Greek and Roman authors like Cicero, Seneca, Juvenal, and Plutarch, you will see they perceived women as lacking the capacity to reason, ruled by their emotions, given to poor judgment, sexually immoral, untrustworthy, contentious, and slanderous. Not only did they hold misogynistic and derogatory opinions, women were often literally not able to inherit property, only men could. Christianity revolutionized the view of women in the ancient world by teaching that men and women are both made in the image of God and have equal value, dignity, and worth. Furthermore, women are co-heirs, co-recipients of grace and of eternal life. God views your wife as his daughter. Jesus thought your wife was so valuable that he was willing to die for her. That is the value the God of the universe places on her. If he treasures her, you better as well.

The motivation for wives honoring God in their marriage was, “this is for witness,” this could lead to your husband coming to Christ. When the husband converted, the rest of the family almost always followed. The motivation given to husbands is different. Peter says to husbands, do all this **“so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”** In other words, if you don't study, respect, serve, and treasure your wife, there will be an enormous barricade in your relationship with God. And the only way to get right with God will be to first treat your wife the way God has called you to.

I began the message by talking about the Olympics, and how there are men's competitions, women's competitions, and then a few sports where they compete together. Our family watched the pairs figure skating this week. It was breathtaking. And that's from a guy that doesn't like dancing and doesn't like ice...but mix them together and somehow it's spectacular. A woman leaning into her grace, elegance, and incredible feminine strength, as well as following her partner's lead. A man leaning into his masculine strength and the incredible responsibility to lift his partner higher, and also bring her down safely...the two together are exponentially greater than the sum of the parts. That is God's vision for gender and marriage, if we follow the way of Jesus and seek to honor God in all we do!

This entire passage follows Peter's teaching about Jesus. When a wife submits in her marriage, she is following the pattern of Jesus. When a husband honors his wife with sacrificial love, he is following the pattern of Jesus. It has nothing to do with self-preservation or power, it's all about Jesus.