

LESSON 7
1 Peter 3:1-6

“The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Thy servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”
(Psalm 19:8, 10, 11)

Do you need a little joy and enlightenment, as well as a little sweetness and reward in your life? Sure you do. We *all* do! God knows this, and planned to meet this need with His Word and our obedience to it. His Word is readily available to us – so let's take advantage of it.

Review your memory verses. Each day is the best way. (I did it! ___)

Memorize 1 Peter 3:6. (I did it! ___) (Said to _____)

Read 1 Peter at one sitting.

1. From this reading, what would *you* say is Peter's main theme?

Read 1 Peter 3:1-6.

2. To whom is this section addressed, and what are these people told they are to be?

Re-read 1 Peter 2:11-25.

3. Notice that 1 Peter 3 begins with the phrase “in the same way.” What does he mean? In the same way as what? (We *do not* have to conjure up some answer out of the blue!. As we've discovered, 1 Peter is a letter written with continuity of thought. Therefore, a thoughtful look at chapter 2 will let us discover what Peter meant by the phrase, “in the same way.”)

4. What is the purpose of such submission? Verse 1 tells us.

5. Use a dictionary to define the word "may."

6. Is 1 Peter 3:1 an absolute promise? How do you know?

7. Peter mentions outward behavior and speech as well as inner attitudes. What characteristics should each have if we are to be submissive?

<u>Outward Behavior</u>	<u>Speech</u>	<u>Inner Attitudes</u>

8. What does "chaste and respectful behavior" (1 Peter 3:2, NASB) entail for a married woman and why is it important in being submissive to her husband, especially if he is being disobedient to the Word? (If you are *chaste*, you probably won't be *chased*!)

9. Verse 4 speaks of a "gentle and quiet *spirit*." What is meant? (Consider Isaiah 30:15, especially the second phrase.)

10. A gentle and quiet spirit is said to be “imperishable” and “precious.” *What* else, in the earlier chapters of 1 Peter, is described this way? *Not down* the verse numbers where you find these descriptions, please.

11. Use a dictionary to define “adornment.”

12. Read 1 Peter 3:3-4, where two ideas are contrasted. Please explain in your own words what these verses are saying to us.

13. Sarah and the “set-apart” women of former times are used in verses 5 and 6 as examples of being properly adorned. (They really were “dressed for success.”) How would the fact that they “hoped in God” enable them to keep a gentle and tranquil spirit and to be submissive to their husbands?

14. In this realm of submission, what else might we tend to hope in and why would this be detrimental?

15. In 1 Peter 3:6, Peter tells us to do what is right. In general, how do we know what is right? (See the Psalm that’s quoted at the top of page one of our study this week.) What, in 1 Peter 3:1-6, is right?

16. 1 Peter 3:6 also says we can't do right if *fear* controls us. What in verse 5 is the antidote to fear? How does *that* help? (Notice what Psalm 37:8 says about fear or *fretting*.)
17. Let's do some thinking. What are areas of fear that often cause women to not want to be submissive to their husbands?
18. PERSONAL: Write down, using initials, areas where you struggle in marriage because you are fearful. Are these areas causing you at times not to be submissive or not to have a gentle and quiet spirit? (Be honest!) What does God want you to do in each area? What is your plan for obedience?

Submission is not a concept to apologize for. Nor is it for women only. The idea of submission is counter-culture and common sense and logic might tell you it's not a good idea. (Our enemy is the Deceiver.) The submission concept is skillfully and persistently woven throughout Scripture, from Abram's submitting to Lot's choice of the best grazing land (Genesis 13:8-9) to Paul's call for mutual submission to one another throughout his letters to the young churches. This concept is held out to God's own as the way to really live. God's Son, our Lord Jesus, demonstrated for us the dignity of submission (Philippians 2:5-11).

Here are two optional opportunities for those who want to DIG DEEPER. (We hope you will!)

19. How does remembering Philippians 2:5-11 help you grasp the dignity of submission?

20. From the supplemental reading attached to this lesson, what balance do you see for wives?

HOW MUCH SHOULD A WOMAN TAKE?

David and Carolyn Roper, February 1988

It's a major issue these days: physical and emotional abuse and how much a Christian woman has to take. Must she submit to beatings in the name of Christian submission?

Should she take verbal abuse without rejoinder? Is this what Peter means when he writes that women are to be submissive to their husbands as Christ was to those who reviled and battered Him? We don't think so and we don't think that's what the biblical writers mean by submission. In fact, it's our belief that if a woman does not resist attempts to humiliate her, she is participating in her husband's sins.

John Calvin once wrote to a woman being harassed by a cruel husband that she should endure persecution bravely. Whereupon she responded, "...a number of people think your assertions are thoroughly wretched. They accuse you of being merciless and very severe to those who are afflicted; and they say that it is very easy for you to preach and threaten over there, but that if you were here, you would perhaps feel differently."
(From Antoinette Fumee, 1543)

Women like Antoinette do feel differently, particularly if they've been told by their leaders that women must submit meekly to injustice and suffer silently. The real issue, however, is not how one feels but what Scripture says; and the issue is whether or not the Bible has a way to suffer more successfully than merely taking it. We believe it does.

Since 1 Peter 3:1-6 is the passage most often quoted in defense of passivity, we do well to try to understand what Peter is saying to us here. The passage is very familiar: the Apostle affirms the principle of a husband's headship by instructing women to be submissive even to unbelieving husbands. The purpose of such submission is to win their men, if they are to be won at all. The most impelling argument for the truth of the Gospel, Peter argues, is the tranquil, respectful behavior of an unbeliever's wife.

The text is introduced by the phrase, "Wives, in the same way be submissive," which connects the command to the preceding context and the description there of Christ's demeanor when He was abused. The argument is usually explained this way: Jesus, like a lamb led to slaughter, did not open His mouth; women in the same way should not open their mouths when their husbands abuse them. But that explanation doesn't take the text seriously. Nothing is said in the preceding context (2:21-25) about our Lord suffering in silence. The emphasis in that text is not on His silence but rather on the fact that He did nothing wrong when He was unjustly treated. His example lies in the fact that, "He committed no sin... When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats." And, it's a matter of record that Jesus throughout His trial did in fact speak out against injustice (John 18:22,23 Cp. Acts 23:3). He was not servile or utterly silent.

Therefore, we believe that when Peter says that women are to submit to injustice without a word, he is not saying that women can say nothing. He is asking them to say nothing wrong –

that they not revile or threaten their husbands. (Like the woman who, when told by her husband that women were nothing but a nag, a bone and a hank of hair, shouted back, "And you're nothing but a brag, a groan and a tank of air!") That sort of response is improper, but we do believe that abused women have a redemptive way to proceed that preserves a man's headship and yet deals with the offense. Suffering in silence seems to us to be no answer at all. It may, in fact, only make things worse. Some men, as Agatha Christie once pointed out, will be as bad as their women will let them be. To allow such behavior is to enable it. Therefore, the way to save both the abusing husband and the abused wife is for the woman to speak out against abuse whenever it occurs. It's a matter of redemptive concern.

Of course, how a thing is done is often just as important as what is done. One must speak from a quiet spirit, which, it's important to note, is not merely a feminine trait but an attitude that ought to characterize men under attack as well as women. Both men and women are taught by Scripture to be tranquil, gentle and strong.

Whatever one says in response to abuse should be said with respect for the person and without malice. As Paul would say, "The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful, gently instructing those who oppose, in the hope that God may grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-25). A gentle spirit is significant: if truth would penetrate, it must be coupled with grace. As the proverb puts it, "pleasant words promote instruction" (Proverbs 16:21).

But the truth must be declared. It's a matter of holding one's ground. No one has the right to abuse another human being – not even a husband. His right to leadership does not give him that right. To abuse one's wife either verbally or physically is wrong. Therefore, it's proper to put a stop to such treatment. It is very Christian to say to a verbally abusive husband, "It's not right to speak to another person that way." It must be said with "style" – with dignity and grace – but it must be said.

And it's right to put a stop to physical abuse. Although most women are unable to defend themselves against a male assailant, if push comes to shove (so to speak), they can and must resist violence, speaking out against it, walking out if possible and refusing to stay in a house where they are likely to be hurt. And there are legal ways to maintain one's safety until cooler heads can prevail. One can ask, "Are you threatening me? Because if you are I'm going to call the police." You can invoke the law – what Paul calls "God's minister to you for good".

If further help is needed, abused wives may appeal to the elders of their church or other mature men or women for protection and asylum; and in extreme cases we believe a temporary legal separation may be necessary in order to safeguard the family until counseling can be secured. We do stress, however, that the goal of that separation is not the dissolution of the marriage but ultimately its healing. It should be obvious that the principle enunciated above also applies to children. We don't believe that a mother should permit her children to be physically or verbally abused by her husband any more than she would permit a stranger to abuse them. Those under our care are entitled to protection from harm. It's wrong for anyone to abuse a child and it would be wrong for anyone to permit it.

What we're saying is that submission does not entail servility or submission to evil or injustice. It is thoroughly Christian to bring such wrong to an end. (The counter-truth is that it is un-Christian to permit it.) Certainly the Bible gives us the right to defend ourselves against assaults, and an assault by a family member does not vitiate that right. (Jesus' word about turning the other cheek refers to insults for the sake of Christ and not to an assault by someone merely intent on doing us harm.)

We are convinced, then, that a woman has the right and responsibility to protect both herself and her children from verbal and physical attack and she can and must speak up at such times. The manner in which she speaks is very important. As Peter says, she must do no wrong – retaliate in the same spirit, hurl insults or make threats – but she must speak up and confront her husband about his evil. It's our experience that when this is done kindly and firmly it can bring a man to his senses. The alternative is to be an enabler, responsible to some extent for perpetuating another's sin. ❧

HOW MUCH IS A WOMAN WORTH?

David and Carolyn Roper, February 1988

There's a bumper sticker around town that reads, "On the sixth day God created man and rested. Then He created woman and no one has rested ever since." You read the sticker and wince and then weep for the woman or women in that man's life. Somewhere along the way the poor guy bought Archie Bunker's notion that, "Men are worth more than women! Everybody knows that." But it's not the way a real man ought to think about a woman.

There are men who think that way, and even more tragic are the Christian men who are likewise duped into believing that God puts a premium on being a man, and sadly, it shows up in the way they treat their women. This is the era of the emotionally and physically battered wife, or at least the era in which we hear more of it than ever before. It's also the time when more and more women are feeling deprived and oppressed. It's probably that they've always been abused and have felt this way, but now at least we're aware of the extent of the problem.

We wonder at times if the church isn't partly to blame, having abetted the problem by teaching submission of women to their husband, but teaching the concept in a form which our Lord never intended. Please understand we believe in the headship of husbands, an idea clearly taught in the Scriptures. But we also believe that sometimes even well-meaning expositors may turn headship into nothing more than male dominance. We think a thorough rethinking of a woman's worth is in order.

First of all, the Bible teaches that God deems every woman very worthwhile, fully equal in worth to a man. Genesis puts it this way:

*God created man in His own image,
In the image of God He created him;
Male and female He created them.*

*God blessed them and said to them,
"Be fruitful and increase in number;
Fill the earth and subdue it.
And rule over it." (Genesis 1:27,28)*

It's very clear from the poem that man is made in God's image; i.e., "like Him." Psalm 8, elaborating on this notion describes man as "only a little lower than God" more godlike than anything else in the universe.

In the second and third lines of the poem, the poet informs us that by "man" he means "mankind"; "In the image of God He created *him*; male and female He created *them*." An aspect of Hebrew poetry is parallelism in which each successive line intensifies the meaning of the preceding line. In this case the poem begins with man's nobility and then leads us to the conclusion that mankind is meant – man viewed in terms of the polarity of sexes. In other words, men and women are both made in God's image: They have equal dignity.

Furthermore, according to the text, man and woman both rule over creation: "God blessed them and said to them ... rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28). It's sometimes said that the mandate to subdue the earth is given to man alone. The woman is given to him to help him achieve his destiny, but the text cannot be read that way; woman too has a mandate to rule. She's a reigning monarch – co-regent with man with equal authority.

And then there's that other sometimes-abused text in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." The Hebrew text actually says that God provided "a helper according to his need." His need was for companionship; he was alone, which, as God himself observed, was not good. God's provision was that of a helper – a word often used of God himself who is our "help." (In Ugaritic, a related Semitic language, the same word means "one who comes to save.") So man's helper is not one who runs and fetches for him – a "gofer" – but rather one who saves him from loneliness – his best friend.

All of which leads us to believe that women have special worth and must be treated with respect and honor. Men who treat their women like children, monitoring their activities, curbing their creativity, doling out money like an allowance, restricting their freedoms, using them as servants, are not leading; they're dominating. That's why we believe that much of so-called Christian headship is sexist and mere male domination. No wonder women are disaffected; no wonder the feminists rage!

When men in the church or in our culture treat women with disdain or belittle them, or when they think that women, merely because they are women, are troublesome or can be expected to reason in a shallow way, fold under pressure, gossip and be unreliable with sensitive issues or act frivolously with money or time, then they've missed what's being said in Scripture and they've missed the spirit of our Lord.

About 40 years ago, Dorothy Sayers wrote a remarkable essay entitled, "Are Women Human," in which she observed, "They (women) had never known a man like this man (Jesus) – there has never been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered or coaxed or patronized (them); ... who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously; ... (and) who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as He found them and was completely unselfconscious. There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything 'funny' about woman's nature."

The point she is making is simply that Jesus took women seriously and so should we. They are not sub-sets of Christian men, nor are they disciplettes of Christ. They can be grown-up believers, fully man's equal in their capacity to know God, learn from Him, and grow in grace. Paul declares that in terms of Christ's call to discipleship there is "neither male or female" (Gal. 3:28). And Peter refers to men and women as joint heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7). The differences between the sexes ultimately make no difference at all. For a man to think any less of a woman is both unmanly and ungodly. ❧