
1 PETER 3 - SUBMITTING IN HOPE

Peter began his letter by telling believers to live a life of holiness that is based upon the enduring Word of God, because at the end of that life we will see Him for who He is and receive what even angels desire to look into: the salvation of our souls! In chapter two, he encouraged believers to realize that we are *chosen*, meaning we should conduct ourselves as people of God in this foreign world. As such, we are to live in a way that declares the praises of God within our relationships, both inside and outside of the Church.

In chapter three, Peter focuses our attention on the relationship between a husband and his wife; that wives should submit to them and husbands should be respectful and considerate to their wives. Finally, he teaches that all Christians should live in harmony with one another and be ready at all times with an answer when asked for the reason of our hope in Christ.

DAY 1 **Read 1 Peter 3:1-22 | Submitting in Hope.** From the perspective of our secular world, marriage is a two-way street down which man and woman walk together in a fifty-fifty partnership. In stark contrast to this, the biblical perspective requires each partner to give *one hundred percent* to the marriage relationship. Wives are called to submit while husbands are called to respect, so that in all things harmony is the objective. But in a society where a woman is taught early on to believe *you've come a long way, baby* the word *submission* has become a hot-button topic. In fact, it could possibly be the least favorite Christian teaching in the church because it is so often misunderstood.

Biblical submission of the wife does not require blind obedience on her part, nor does it imply that she is inferior. Rather, the wife who is willing to accept her husband's authority is also willing to accept God's design for her marriage, allowing her husband his rightful place of responsibility and leadership in the home.

1. What is Peter's primary reason for asking wives to submit to their husbands?

It's worth noting that in Peter's day, the wives throughout most of the Roman Empire were expected to embrace the religion of their husband. For many, the idea of wives submitting to Jesus Christ first, whether or not their husband approved, was revolutionary. Peter's intended goal was that *without words* the wife would be able to influence or win over the unbelieving husband to Christ.

2. Peter did not intend that a wife was never to speak, but rather that she was not to resort to useless discussions and arguments or even nagging that became counter-productive. What would win over a non-believing husband?

The phrase “conduct accompanied by fear” refers to a reverential fear, or wholesome dread of displeasing the Lord.

3. What should a Christian wife *not* rely solely upon in order to get attention?
 - a. If a woman relies only on her outward beauty regimen to make herself beautiful, she ignores the most important aspect of beauty in God’s eyes. What is it?
 - b. What value does Peter say God places on the inner beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit?

Any Christian woman should be able to make her statement of beauty based upon the person she is on the *inside*—not merely on outward adornments or fashion trends. Her behavior as a Christian *silently speaks* volumes about the power of the Holy Spirit to exert great influence on her husband, whether or not he is a believer. In the case of an unbelieving husband, God is able to use her to win him to the Lord.

4. Compare the time you spend on outward preparation and adornment to the amount of time you spend on cultivating *inner* beauty. Is your priority your mirror or your Bible at the start of your day? How can James 1:21-26 encourage you to concentrate more on inner beauty?

To support his teaching on the importance of wives submitting to husbands, Peter turns to the Old Testament example of Sarah as one of the holy women in Scripture who obeyed her husband. The word used for *obeyed* (verse 6) means “to listen to.” In other words, Sarah took an interest in her husband’s interests. She listened and responded in an appropriate way throughout the course of her married life to Abraham and she is remembered for it. Her response to Abraham as “master” is one of loving submission and willing acceptance to follow him into the unknown by doing what is right.

Nowhere in Scripture do we find the command for a wife to submit to her husband on the grounds of fear, intimidation, or abuse from him. In fact, the NIV translation of verse 6 says that a woman’s submission should “*not give way to fear.*” A Christian wife should not be forced into submissive behavior at the hands of her husband. If she finds herself in that position, she should seek help from those in authority in the church.

5. Peter uses fewer words in addressing the husband, but the responsibility placed on him is greater and in ways more difficult. Finish the sentences below by forming your answers from verse 7. **A husband should:**
 - a. Live with his wife according to what? (Give an example.)
 - b. Give her honor *in what way*?

- c. Treat her as equal in terms of what? (See Galatians 3:28-29)
 - d. What aspect of a husband's spiritual life is dramatically affected by how he responds?
6. If the husband lives up to his role as stated in verse 7, what difference could it make in the marriage relationship? Share your thoughts.
- a. If you are married, are you making it harder or easier for your husband to fulfill his role? Do you have the desire to get along with him and a willingness to be satisfied with less than you may want to have?
 - b. If you are single, what are you learning *now* that will help you later on if you marry?

Modeling Christlike behavior in the church setting means very little if we cannot, as God's chosen people, bring that same attitude and behavior into the home. The homefront is the greatest battlefield! It is here that often the most intense spiritual battles are won or lost.

Memory Verse

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.

1 Peter 3:1 NIV

Which part of this verse resonates most with you today? How or in what way?

DAY 2 **Read 1 Peter 3:8-12 | Live in Harmony.** What believer isn't eager to receive a blessing from God? Peter realized that these believers were about to face some very hard times, causing him to reveal the secret to quietly trusting God while at the same time living in harmony with others. The result of this obedience will be God's blessing every time.

Try reading verse 8 in several different translations. Do the words Peter uses here suggest the idea of teamwork? Peter first approached the subject of loving one another in chapter one. His emphasis here suggests that harmony within the Body of Christ is a deliberate choice that is made with concerted effort on the part of believers.

Harmony is all about getting along and agreeing with one another, which does not happen by accident. Here, we are given the key to harmony: five “BE” attitudes that, if maintained, will help to strengthen unity in the body.

1. Look up each “be-attitude” in your dictionary or other Bible resource. Then look up the scripture references indicated and write a brief statement about each one. Keep in mind that your goal is building harmony.
 - a. Be of one mind (Philippians 1:27).
 - b. Be compassionate (1 Corinthians 12:26).
 - c. Be loving (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10).
 - d. Be tenderhearted (Ephesians 4:32).
 - e. Be courteous (Philippians 2:2-4).
 - f. Do any of your be-attitudes need adjusting? In what way?

Right attitude is essential to maintaining right behavior, which brings God’s blessing. While it may be natural for people in the world to trade insult for insult and evil for evil, Jesus Christ taught otherwise, setting an example for all believers to follow.

2. According to verse 9, what does Peter instruct believers to do and *not* to do? Why?
 - a. When did Peter first hear this lesson taught, and by whom? Read Matthew 5:44.
3. In verses 10-12, Peter quotes from Psalm 34:12-16. In them, he gives the recipe for a happy life. List the four things we are told to do.
 - a. God-honoring speech followed by action leads to good deeds. Helping others leads to building good relationships, allowing us to anticipate problems and deal with them before they get out of hand. When we do our part, what truth can we hold onto?
 - b. What is God’s position toward those who do evil?

DAY 3

Read 1 Peter 3:13-17 | At this point in Peter's letter, the subject of persecution comes into view. Peter asks a rhetorical question, "Who will harm you if you are eager to do good?" He is not saying that if believers do everything correctly they will not suffer persecution, but rather that they may suffer even if they do what is right.

1. What does Peter say about the one who suffers for righteousness' sake? What word of encouragement does he quote from Isaiah 8:12?

The word *blessed* can be defined as *highly privileged*. This has nothing to do with taking delight in circumstances; rather, it refers to the fact that if a believer is living righteously and is persecuted, no one can harm them spiritually or keep them from God's promises. The word *troubled* means to be *disturbed* or *shaken* by emotional turmoil. When we fear the Lord alone, we need not fear anything or become troubled by anyone else's threats.

In verses 15-17, Peter lays out three specific actions on the believer's part that will free us from fear and equip us to handle difficult people and situations.

2. **Set apart Christ as Lord in your heart.** Fear and faith cannot be present in your heart at the same moment—one will exclude the other. Isaiah 8:13 says, "The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy; He is the one you are to fear, He is the one you are to dread." Record your thoughts below.
 - a. Have you given Christ His rightful place as Lord of your heart and life?
 - b. Do you acknowledge that He is in control of the events of your life?
 - c. Does fear or faith occupy your heart at this very moment?
3. **Get ready to answer those that have questions.** Every Christian should be prepared at all times to give a clear and reasonable defense of their faith. We need not worry about being theologians, but we should be armed with the truth of Scripture and ready to give our reasons for believing in Jesus Christ.
 - a. What two words should frame the composition of our presentation of the Gospel? Why do you think this is important?

b. If called upon, would you be able to give a concise five-minute testimony of your faith that includes the main elements of how you came to Christ? In the space below, practice this, using some bullet points that will help guide you. Carry with you a 3x5 card for review until you gain confidence and watch what opportunities God will give you!

4. **Keep a clear conscience at all times.** Any time there is a check from the Holy Spirit in your heart, stop as soon as you recognize it and ask for God's forgiveness. That gentle, inner conviction will help you to keep short accounts with God and keep the channel open for Him to use you.

a. Not only is God working in your heart and mind through His Spirit, He is also working in others. When they insult or berate you as a believer, what effect will your testimony have on them?

b. What conclusion does Peter draw in verse 17?

DAY **4** **Read 1 Peter 3:18-22** | Peter goes on to speak about Christ's suffering on our behalf. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit." We can never exhaust the end of this truth or its application to our hearts!

1. As you ponder the full significance of verses 18-22, consider whether *you* have entered the fullness of all that this means. Share your thoughts.

2. Peter shares two illustrations in these verses to reassure us of Christ's victory and our eternal security. First, after His resurrection but before His ascension into heaven, Christ descended to proclaim His victory over death and God's judgment on the disobedient spirits or angels. Second, just as Noah's family was shut into the ark of God's salvation, the moment a person accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior, they are placed securely into God's eternal keeping.
 - a. The baptism referred to in verse 21 is not that of water (the flood waters didn't save Noah) but rather the power of the Holy Spirit. Water baptism does not provide believers with a clear conscience before God; the Holy Spirit does. How does Titus 3:4-8 help with your understanding of this?
 - b. We have further assurance of our salvation in the fact that Jesus Christ is currently at God's right hand in heaven. He has broken the power over evil. All authorities and powers—good and evil—are subject to Him. In the very near future, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! Is He *your* Lord? How does this knowledge strengthen your faith today?

DAY 5

In Touch with Jesus. This section is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. **Listen** | In what way did the Lord meet you in His Word this week? Be specific.
2. **Learn** | How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?
3. **Live** | What step of obedience will you purpose to take in your walk of faith?

