

1 and 2 Peter Bible Study Lesson 10

1 Peter 3:1-7 Notes

Winning an Unsaved Spouse

Defining Marriage

Current Definition of Marriage from the Internet:

Oxford Dictionary – the legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship (historically and in some jurisdictions specifically a union between a man and a woman).

Dictionary.com - (broadly) any of the diverse forms of interpersonal union established in various parts of the world to form a familial bond that is recognized legally, religiously, or socially, granting the participating partners mutual conjugal rights and responsibilities and including, for example, opposite-sex marriage, same-sex marriage, plural marriage, and arranged marriage.

Cambridge University Dictionary.org – a legally accepted relationship between a man and a woman in which they live as husband and wife, or the official ceremony which results in this.

1981 Published Dictionary Definition of Marriage:

American Heritage Dictionary – The state of being husband and wife; wedlock. The legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife. The act of marrying or the ceremony of being married; a wedding.

Biblical Definition of Marriage:

Unger's Bible Dictionary – the rendering of several words and phrases in the Hebrew and Greek, meaning to be master; to take that is a wife: to magnify, or lift up a woman; to contract; to dwell together; to perform the duty of a brother; to become that is the wife of one. In all the Hebrew Scriptures there is no single word for the estate of marriage, or to express the abstract idea of wedlock.

Marriage is a divine institution, designed to form a permanent union between man and woman that they might be helpful to one another (Gen. 1:27; 2:18). Moses presents it as the deepest physical and spiritual unity of man and woman and monogamy as the form of marriage ordained by God (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6; Mark 10:6-8). Without the marital tie the inhabitants of this world would have been a mixed multitude. The family circle, family instruction, parental love and care would have been altogether unknown.

Christ taught the divine origin and sacredness of this institution. It is more than family duty; it is unifying; the husband and wife become **one** through the purity and intensity of mutual love; common interests are necessitated by common affection (Matt. 19:5-6; Eph. 5:31). The New Testament writers are in harmony with the conduct of Christ respecting the sanctity of the marriage relationship.

Introduction

As we begin to study this portion of Scripture from the apostle Peter let us look at his definition of marriage from 1 Peter 3:7b, “and show her honor as a fellow heir of ***the grace of life***”. This grace of life refers not to eternal life, but to the true and intimate friendship that belongs only to those who are possessors of God’s most blessed gift in this life---marriage. Peter labels marriage the grace of life because grace means “unmerited, undeserved favor” (Rom. 1:5; 3:24; 5:15, 17; 12:3; 15:15; 2 Cor. 8:1; 9:8; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 2:7; 3:2, 7; 4:7; 4:29; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 4:16; James 4:6). Marriage is a divine providence given to man regardless of his attitude toward the Giver. Intimate companionship in marriage, **the richest blessing of this life**, was a foreign concept to the Greco-Roman culture of Peter’s day. Even today we can see the current culture redefining marriage or relational intimacy and claiming whatever they want to fulfill their own desires and schemes. As believers of Christ we have such an awesome calling to be able to represent His light, hope, and truth in the relationships God has given each of us. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:15, ‘But in your hearts set Christ apart as holy---acknowledging Him, giving Him first place in your lives as Lord. Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope and confident assurance, produced by faith, that is within you, yet do it with gentleness and respect.’ (AMP Version)

If believers are to maintain an exemplary testimony in this unbelieving world, they must live blameless in the four major arenas of God ordained social interaction that Peter addresses: society, the workplace, family, and the church. In relation to the three secular dimensions of life, Peter commands believers to be witnesses for the positive sake of the gospel (2:9), as well as negatively, to silence the critics of the faith (2:12-15).

This opening section of chapter three deals with the third and smallest unit of social structure ordained by God, the family. In the other two categories, submission is required to the civil authorities (2:13-14) and to employers (2:18). The subject of submission is also critical in the family, beginning with the wife to her husband. Peter here directs six verses to wives and only one to the husbands, a division that may at first glance seem out of balance. But in Peter’s day when a wife became a Christian, the potential for difficulty was much greater than it was if the husband first became a believer. In that society when women, who were viewed as inferior to men, became Christians without their husbands also becoming saved, the likelihood of his being embarrassed and shamed by what was viewed as an act of defiance by his wife, was predictable, as was the conflict subsequently generated.

In first-century Greco-Roman culture, women received little or no respect. As long as they lived in their father’s house they were subject to the Roman law of the father’s power, which granted fathers ultimate life-and-death authority over

their children. Husbands had similar kind of legal authority over their wives. Society regarded women as mere servants who were to stay at home and obey their husbands. If a woman decided to obey the gospel, that decision to change religions on her own could result in severe abuse from her unsaved husband. When such conversion did occur, a wife needed to know how to respond to her husband so that she might win him to the gospel. Her essential duty was to be submissive, as in the case of civil and workplace relations.

The Wife's Responsibility

First, the believing wife has the responsibility to stay with her unbelieving husband. If he wants to maintain the union, she must not divorce him: "A woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away" (1 Cor. 7:13; Rom 7:2-3). Paul went on to say that unsaved spouses benefit from the divine blessings their saved spouses received from God: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband" (1 Cor. 7:14). However, if an unbelieving husband does not want to stay with his believing wife, she does not need to compel him to remain because such an attempt may produce nothing but turmoil, and believers are called to peace: "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace" (1 Cor. 7:15) When the bond is broken under such conditions, the believer is free to remarry in the Lord, as in the case of death.

In the body of Christ Christian women are spiritually equal to men in Christ, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Still, God has ordained women to have certain responsibilities to their husbands, which Peter identifies as submission and faithfulness, and modesty.

To Be Submissive and Faithful:

The expression **in the same way** refers back to the two previously mentioned examples of submission: citizens to civil authorities (2:13) and servants to masters (2:18). The same verb *hupatasso*, rendered **be submissive** and considered in connection with those two references, appears also here and is a present middle form, emphasizing reflexive action, submitting yourself. The New Testament usage of this word, meaning "to submit", "be subject to", or "rank under", is common (1 Peter 2:18; 3:5; 5:5; Luke 2:51; 10:17, 20; Rom. 8:7; 10:3; 13:1, 5; 1 Cor. 14:32; 15:27; 16:16; Eph. 1:22; 5:21, 24; Phil. 3:21; Titus 2:9; 3:1; Heb. 2:5, 8; 12:9; James 4:7). The apostle Paul, under the Spirit's inspiration, also taught the wives are to submit to their husband's leadership (Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:4-5). Submission does not imply any moral, intellectual, or spiritual inferiority in the family, workplace, or society in general. But it is God's design for roles

necessary to mankind's well-being. Along the same lines, a commanding officer is not necessarily superior in character to the troops under him, but his authority is vital to the proper functioning of the unit. That Peter referred specifically to their own husbands indicates the intimacy of marriage and points out that he was not commanding women to be submissive to all men in every context. Paul also sets forth God's design for authority and submission in men's and women's roles within the church (1 Cor. 11:3:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 14:34).

Disobedient to the word describes the unbelieving husband's condition as a rejecter of the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8-9; Heb. 4:2). Amazingly, in spite of profound enmity of his soul toward the Lord, if his Christian wife will continue to submit to him, she might be the instrument God uses to win him to Christ **without a word**. Peter's point here is that the wife's godly behavior is the most valuable testimony to open the husband's heart to the gospel. He will need to hear the words of salvation, perhaps from her. But it will be as he is able to observe her submission as a faithful wife that she truly commends the gospel to him. How a believer lives in that most intimate relationship helps make the grace of Christ believable.

A lovely, gracious, and submissive attitude is the most effective evangelistic tool believing wives have (Prov. 31:26; Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:15; Titus 2:3-5). Closely related to that is their responsibility to be chaste and respectful, demonstrating their sanctification through Christ by a life composed of irreproachable and pure conduct toward God and her husband. The word respectful is *phobos* (fear), used in 1 Peter 2:17 to define the required attitude of those who give honor to God Himself. This is precisely what is commanded of the wife in Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord." That means she shows honor and respect to her husband as to the Lord.

To Be Modest:

This text does not prohibit wives from styling their hair, wearing jewelry or lovely clothing, which is why the translators added the word **merely**. The bride in Song of Solomon was beautifully adorned (Song of S. 1:10; 4:11; 7:1). The point is that this was not to be the preoccupation or main concern in the matter of drawing an unsaved husband to Christ. In the Greco-Roman culture, women were devoted to superficial adornment, spending much time and money on jewelry to crown their heads to match their elegant clothing. These excesses made no contribution to spiritual transformation. These same outward concerns still consume us today in the present media dominated culture. Instead of being consumed with our external appearance, Christian wives must be devoted to beautifying the hidden person of the heart, the inner beauty of spiritual virtue. The desire for passing earthly fashions, here today and gone tomorrow, can be replaced with 'the inner beauty of the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality and unfading charm of a gentle and peaceful spirit, one that is calm and self-controlled, not overanxious, but serene and spiritually mature,

which is very precious in the sight of God.’ (1 Peter 3:4 AMP). The Lord is most pleased when a believing woman’s modest yet thoughtful and lovely adornment reflects the inner beauty Christ has fashioned in her.

Peter presents Sarah specifically from the holy women of former times as our example to follow. She was obedient to God by honoring and respecting her husband, Abraham, even when he wasn’t obedient to God. She continued to call him **lord** allowing him to lead her. Even though they also lived as aliens in a hostile society, God gave her peace and rest when she was obedient to her husband’s care and leadership.

The Greek word for fear is *ptosis*, a strong word meaning “frightening”, or “terrifying”. The Christian women of Asia Minor are “daughters” of Sarah if they do what is right and do not give way to the kind of fear that results in hatred and hostility. Therefore, Christian women married to unbelieving men are not to despise and reject their husbands, making the household climate one of hostility, but subject themselves to be selfless because of their faith in Christ, and in so doing accomplish God’s better way. Instead of succumbing to such terrors, those who are faithful to submit because it is good and right can be used by the Lord in the salvation of their husbands.

One of the great calamities of our day is the epidemic of wife abuse. If there is ever anger elevated that lashes out to hit, hurt, or verbally threaten to physically harm someone, call the police or sheriff. They are in violation of breaking the law and need to be held accountable for their wrong actions.

God does not call women to be doormats, to be unquestioning in the way they relate to their husband, any more than God calls men to exercise tyranny over their wife. Martin Luther said of his beloved wife Katie, ‘that if God had wanted him to be married to a meek woman, He would have had to carve one out of stone.’ His point was that Katie, who was beautiful and had a great spirit, was no doormat.

Husband’s Responsibility

In the same way refers again to the duty of submission from 1 Peter 2:13, 18, and 3:1. This time it is the believing husband who submit to Christ to serve his wife for the Lord’s sake. Husbands obey that duty by adhering to three basic responsibilities in caring for their wives’ needs: consideration, valor and companionship.

Consideration:

Husbands live with their wives in an understanding way, which means they must be considerate. Understanding speaks of being sensitive, considering the wife’s deepest physical and emotional needs. The word *live* (*sunoikountes*) means “dwelling together”, refers to living with someone in intimacy, cherishing them. Believing husbands must constantly nourish and cherish their wives in the bond of intimacy (Eph. 5:25-28; Prov. 5:18-19; 1 Cor. 7:3-5).

Valor:

A believing husband should also be protective to his wife. Just as submission does not imply inherent inferiority for the ones who submit, so the word weaker does not mean the wife is intrinsically weaker in character or intellect than her husband. It means that women generally possess less physical strength than men. With that in mind, Christian husbands are the sacrificial providers and protectors of their wives (1 Sam. 1:4-5; Eph. 5:23, 25-26; Col. 3:19; 1 Tim. 5:8), whether or not the wives are believers.

Companionship:

The husband is to be a companion for his wife **as a fellow heir sharing in the grace of life**. The Christian husband is to cultivate all the richness God designed into the grace of marriage by showing honor to his wife in loving consideration, valor, and companionship. Peter makes it very clear to the believing husband how crucial it is for him to cultivate love for his wife in the same way Christ love the Church (Eph. 5:21-33). The reward will be that his prayers will not be hindered.

As women we need to ask ourselves if we can get in the way of God's calling for husbands. Do we stand for them or against them? Do we offer them the same unmerited favor, called grace, that Christ pours out on us every moment of every day? Can we acknowledge that their leadership is by God's design to bring protection, care, and peace through God's grace to us?

Conclusion

Although both the Greek moral philosophers and the New Testament speak of "submission", the apostolic definition of it and foundation for it are completely different. The Greco-Roman worldview was concerned with the practical benefits of social stability; the Christian view of submission is concerned with honoring the King of kings and Lord of lords, which ought to capture the heart of every believer and transform us within all of our relationships.

Christian marriage is a lifelong commitment in an exclusive one-flesh union that mirrors the profound mystery of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:32). On this model of Christ's love for His Church and the Church's submission to Christ, marital love is understood as the resolve to live one's life totally committed to the well-being of one's spouse in every decision.

Let us remember this grace of life, the true and intimate friendship that belongs only to those who are possessors of God's most blessed gift in this life--- **marriage**. Intimate companionship in marriage, **the richest blessing of this life!**

References:

MacArthur New Testament Commentary 1 Peter
R.C. Sproul St. Andrew's Expository Commentary 1 & 2 Peter
Baker Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament 1 Peter