

LOVING YOUR HUSBAND

1 PETER 3:1-6

Here's the theme of 1 Peter... "Suffering serves a purpose."

Sixteen times in this short letter Peter mentions the word "*suffering*." Christians aren't immune to tough times. It's a part of our spiritual growth.

Yet right in the middle of a letter on suffering guess what subject comes to Peter's mind? That's right, *marriage!* *Husbands and wives...*

I'm sure you've heard about the three rings of marriage... "There's the engagement ring - the wedding ring - and then comes the suffer-ring."

It's been said, "When marriage is good it's the closest thing on earth to heaven. But when marriage is bad it's the closest thing on earth to... well, *a very rainy day*." To me, it's entirely appropriate to introduce *a section on marriage* even in the midst of *a discussion on suffering* – for when hardship and difficulties strike they'll impact a marriage for better or worse.

Will the couple buckle? Will they *pull together* or *pull apart*? Will it *break* the marriage or make it *better*? As we've said, "Life is a test. It's only a test." And suffering poses a test for every marriage.

Peter devotes the first 7 verses in chapter 3 to marriage. Verses 1-6 are addressed to **wives**. Verse 7 is to **the husbands**. Peter teaches us *how a wife should love her husband*, and *how a husband should love his wife...*

Isn't it amazing that in a letter of 105 verses, Peter devotes only 7 to the central human relationship of marriage - *less than a dozen verses!*

Actually, canvass the Bible, and relatively speaking, you'll find very few verses on marriage. Whereas, go to any Christian bookstore, and you can comb through stacks of books, and CDs, and videos - *opinions abound!*

Hey, the Bible's marital instructions are basic, simple, and doable - and believe me, they work... *If*, we take them to heart and obey them faithfully!

On Father's Day we'll target the men and husbands. Today, I want to speak to the wives, verses 1-6. Apparently, Peter believed, "**Girls' first!**"

Peter provides the ladies *instruction* in three areas... **their boundaries, their behavior, and their beauty...** then he gives them an *example*.

Verse 1 establishes a wife's **boundaries**. Peter writes, "**Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands...**" We learned last time the operative word in all a Christian's relationships is "**submit.**" Citizens should submit to their governing authorities, servants should submit to their bosses.

We'll learn later that church members should submit to their pastors.

Husbands are to submit to God and to the Church.
And in the family, *wives should submit to their husbands.*

Several summers ago there was a billboard on Highway 78 that spit in the eye of tradition. The billboard promoted Virginia Slims' cigarettes.

A young lady with a cigarette in her hand was pictured blocking her husband's path - suppressing his forward movement. The ad read, "**Who cares who wears the pants?**" Let me sound it out for modern ears to hear. There should be no confusion! "***God cares who wears the pants!***"

Hurl tomatoes if you like – try and muzzle the preacher - rip Ephesians 5, 1Corinthians 11, 1Timothy 2, and 1Peter 3 out of your Bibles, but it'll never change what Almighty God has said. The Captain of all Creation has established male headship in the church and in the home. Husbands should *lovingly lead*, and wives should *willingly follow and support!*

The Greek term translated "**submissive**" is the word, "***hupotasso.***" It's a compound term - "***hupo***" means "***under***" and "***tasso***" means "***to arrange.***"

"***Hupotasso***" means "***to arrange under, to work within set boundaries.***"

Rather than *compete* with each other, in a godly marriage a husband and wife learn to *cooperate*. They

honor their God-assigned roles - and live within those roles for the sake of their marriage and the glory of God.

Submission to God ends the battle of the sexes.

Submission for a wife is the willingness to work her lifestyle around her husband. As he pursues God's call on his life, *his pursuits* become *her boundaries*. She's free to do whatever God leads her to do as long as she orchestrates her endeavors around the direction her husband chooses.

She builds her life where he needs to live. She works her schedule around him. She supports him in his career. A wife pursues her ambitions in cooperation, and with the consent of her husband. And when *his objectives* and *her interests* collide, she yields to her hubby.

Rather than march to her own drummer, a godly wife let's her husband set the pace. She's able to *harmonize*. She doesn't try to drown him out, or sing a different tune - she understands her part and sings a beautiful duet.

Ladies, understand a few attitudes that submission is not...

First, ***submission is not an admission of inferiority.*** Men are not superior to women. In fact, from my observation, just the opposite is true.

Most women are smarter than *most men*. If the idea of survival of the fittest were really true, women would be leading men around on dog-chains by now. It's easy for a woman to get the upper-hand on a man. She's usually

more talented - *that's why submission for a woman is so difficult.*

God's blueprint for marriage was designed not because it's the most utilitarian, or efficient arrangement, possible. God has a deeper purpose in mind. God's order for marriage portrays spiritual, eternal realities.

When a husband leads and a wife follows - it paints a picture to society of the Christian's relationship with Jesus. We're the bride and He's the groom. He leads and we lovingly follow. Marriage witnesses to the world. God's plan for marriage calls for **an ordered equality** - *both partners equal in value, but different in roles.* In the home and church God wants men to lead and women to follow. A wife should be by her husband's side – certainly not under his foot – and neither should she be in his face.

Another attitude *submission* is not... **it's not being a doormat and allowing a man to wipe his feet on your unquestioning compliance.**

Ladies, if your husband makes a request of you that's immoral, illegal, or unbiblical - that's when your responsibility to submit to him comes to a screeching halt. A husband's authority is far from absolute. It's secondary to *God's authority*, the *government's authority*, even the *church's authority*.

There've been times when the elders of this church have come to a wife's aid. We intervened in the marriage,

and held her husband responsible for abusing or misusing his authority toward his wife.

In Acts 5:29 when the Jews commanded Peter not to speak anymore in Jesus' name, he defied the order by appealing to a higher authority, **“we ought to obey God rather than men.”** All human authority has limits. Obedience to God always takes precedent over submission to a husband.

Also, **never mistake submission as a sign of weakness.**

To the contrary, it takes great courage to live by principle – to muffle a comment – to trust an imperfect husband to set the direction for your life.

Neither does submission mean a wife shouldn't have input in decisions. A wife needs to let her husband know what she thinks, and why.

A wise husband will recognize that his wife's judgment is invaluable.

My wife, Kathy, not only knows God - but she knows me. *No one this side of heaven knows me better.* This is why her advice is so crucial. She keeps me honest, humble. And she always encourages me to obey God.

A husband will benefit from his wife's wisdom, but he absolutely needs her support. In the end, a wife that wants to please God, and succeed in marriage, will choose to live *her life* in the shadow of her *husband's life*.

God will bless a submissive wife.

Billy Graham's wife, Ruth, once wrote, "The best advice I can give to unmarried girls is to marry someone you don't mind adjusting to. God tailors the wife to fit the husband, not the husband to fit the wife." Peter would agree... a submissive wife will arrange her life around her husband.

Once in a political debate, two rival politicians squared off in a heated showdown. The challenger asked his opponent, "What about those powerful special interest groups that control you and manipulate you?"

The incumbent bristled up, and shouted back, "Now wait just a minute. Enough is enough. You better leave my wife out of this!"

When a wife dominates her husband it's a sign she doesn't trust God.

Nowhere in Scripture are wives asked to *believe in their husbands*.

A wife is required to *submit to her husband* - and *believe that God will lead him, and work through him* to take care of her and her family.

Over the years I've observed most husbands won't fight their wife for leadership. Ladies, if you're always vying to lead, he'll just let you. He'll go fishing. Men are taught from an early age not to fight with girls.

It's only when you decide to submit, that your husband will take seriously his responsibility to lead.

Ladies, it's time you got out from under the steering wheel and back in the passenger's seat. **“Wives... be submissive to your own husbands...”**

Yet I can hear the rebuttal some wives might muster... **“Pastor Sandy, that quote from Ruth Graham doesn't apply to me. That's easy for her to say... She's married to a mighty man of God. Trust me, my husband is no Billy Graham. He's more like a billy goat – or maybe a graham cracker...”**

No one would ever mistake *my man* for a mighty man of God.”

But recognize the context of Peter's words. He's talking to wives married to men who aren't even believers – *pagan, heathen husbands*.

If Peter's instructions apply to the wife of an ungodly husband - then certainly they apply to a wife who is married to a growing, caring Christian.

Peter writes in verse 1, **“Wives likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,”** God doesn't say a wife should submit to her husband only if he's a mighty man of God... He doesn't have to be a man of God at all... He can be a beer drinking, tobacco chewing, pool-shooting - pagan ole' Joe - and the instructions still apply to his wife!

Her submission may just be the key to his conversion.

When the Gospel reached many first-century families the wives embraced Jesus, but the husbands didn't. These ladies were now believers married to unbelievers. *And this placed stress on the marriage.*

These ladies fell in love with Jesus. He was now the most important person in their life – yet they were unable to share Him with their spouse.

These women desperately wanted their husbands to know Jesus. They witnessed to him constantly. They put tracks in his sandwiches. They pushed and cajoled him... *Yet, few people get nagged into heaven.*

The ladies Peter addresses loved their husbands – they didn't want to see him go to hell! These husbands needed to be saved and changed.

Ladies, perhaps your husband is a Christian, but he still needs to make a few changes in his life. You'd love to see him saved from some of the bad habits you abhor. He may be a believer, but the maturing process is going slower than you'd hoped. *And you've been trying to help God out...*

You'd like to join forces with the Holy Spirit in transforming your hubby.

Someone once said, *"The only time a woman changes a man is when he's a baby in a dirty diaper."* But is that true? Ladies, is there nothing you can do? Here's the question, *how can a wife change a husband?*

Well here's one certainty, **nagging gets you nowhere.**

Neither does badgering, or berating, or bombarding. Sticking pieces of paper with Scripture references in his pockets – or in his lunch box – may only make him mad. Playing Pastor Sandy CDs while he's trying to get to sleep - *might help him sleep* - but it may also drive him further from Jesus.

How does a wife win her husband? She'll best influence him not *with words*, but *without them* - by her good, godly, loving, and winsome conduct.

Peter describes a wife's *boundaries* - then he talks about her **behavior**.

Verse 2, “**when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.**” The Greek word translated “**chaste**” means “**holy or pure.**”

Here's the answer to the question, *how do you change a husband?* You change a mate not by *meddling* - but by **modeling** what's good and godly.

In 1805 a missionary from the Boston Missionary Society preached to Indians in upstate New York. After his message Chief Red Jacket replied...

“We will wait a while and see what effect your preaching has upon your own people. If we find it does them good, makes them honest, and less inclined to cheat Indians, we will then consider again what you have said.”

This is how a lot of husbands react to the witness of their wives.

Ladies, your chief, the chief in your teepee – *Chief Expanding Jacket* -good ole *Chief Stubborn Heart* – this is what he may be thinking about you. When he sees the Gospel change your life – make you kinder, gentler, more loving - then he'll pay attention to what the Gospel can do for him.

Peter clarifies a wife's **boundaries** – *she should submit to her husband.*

He speaks to her **behavior** – *learn to affect her husband without words.*

Now he speaks to a wife's **beauty**, verses 3-4, “**Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.**” Ladies, you'll never look hotter, prettier, more sexy to your hubby than when you spruce up in a gentle, quite, submissive spirit.

The real knock-out is the woman who's prettiest on the inside.

Peter would tell us, a sexy figure with a nagging mouth loses its attractiveness in a hurry. These verses remind me of Proverbs 11:22, “**As a ring of gold in a swine's snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.**”

When a husband comes home from work he's been beaten up, bullied, and bruised. He needs a wife willing to be "gentle" and kind toward him.

A godly wife has a "quiet spirit" – she doesn't talk his ear off the moment he walks into the house. She doesn't grumble, and gossip, and complain.

A literal rendering of the phrase translated "quiet spirit" would be "she keeps her seat" or "knows her place." A real beauty is a wife who works at understanding her husband and who loves in an appropriate manner.

Understand, when Peter tells us, "*Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel...*" he is not prohibiting a woman from styling her hair, or sporting jewelry, or buying some hip and fashionable clothes, or using cosmetics.

One of my favorite Bible commentators, Donald Grey Barnhouse makes a comment on this passage. "If a barn needs painting then it should be painted. Likewise, if a woman needs make-up then she should wear it."

This could be one of the reasons women generally outlive men, "*paint makes for a good preservative.*" Peter's point is not that a woman can't look nice. In fact, a woman who completely neglects her outward appearance may be saying something negative about her inner health.

But her focus, her priority should be a **godly character**, not a **gaudy appearance**. Peter wants us to realize true beauty is *inward* not *outward*.

Beauty of the heart is what pleases the Lord.

Ladies, do you spend more time in the mirror than in the Word?

I ran across a quote by comedian, Elayne Boosler. She writes, **“We have women in the military, but they don’t put us on the front lines. They don’t know if we can fight, if we can kill. I think we can. All the general has to do is walk over to the women and say, ‘You see the enemy over there? They say you look fat in those uniforms.’”** Fat comments are fighting words!

Some women are fixated on their figure - and passionate about their appearance. If only they were as passionate about their spiritual shape.

According to Peter rather than spend hours styling her hair – or toning up areas of her anatomy – or accessorizing her wardrobe... the priority of a godly wife should be the cultivation of **“a gentle and quiet spirit.”**

A godly wife should beautify **“the hidden person of the heart”** – adorn herself with **“incorruptible beauty.”** I love this term, **“incorruptible beauty.”**

A skinny waist, and smooth skin, and a creamy complexion won’t last forever. Ladies, it doesn’t matter what you do – *time is not on your side*.

This is why a man who marries a woman for her good looks is like the guy who buys a house for the paint job. In time it's going to chip and fade. Outward beauty is corruptible beauty. But inner beauty is for all eternity.

Verses 1-4 describe a wife's **boundaries, behavior,** and **beauty**...

And as I said Peter's instructions are basic and clear and simple. *Wives, submit to your husbands... Influence him without a word - just with your godly conduct... And cultivate an inner beauty that never fades.*

But knowing what God says and doing it are two different issues...

That's why in verses 5-6 Peter gives us an example of a wife who obeyed God in all 3 areas... Her example should encourage wives today.

Verses 5-6 tell her story, **"For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror."**

Sarah was Abraham's wife. She was fearless and submissive.

She called her husband, **"lord"** – the equivalent of saying **"Sir."** Ladies, I don't think you don't have to go that far! **"Yes Sir, No Sir,"** might be a little extreme. But you need to respect your husband as the head of your home.

Its interesting Sarah is mentioned twice in the NT. In Hebrews 11 she's highlighted for her *faith*. Peter mentions her *submission*. And here's what we learn from Sarah - *it takes faith in God to submit to a fallible husband*.

I love the Amplified Version of verse 6, "And you are now (Sarah's) daughters if you do right and let nothing terrify you – not giving way to hysterical fears or letting anxieties unnerve you." A submissive wife has steely nerves. A husband at the helm can cause some hysteria and anxiety.

This is why a wife has to be fearless. Like Sarah, she has to be brave enough to trust God to work through her husband. Sarah is our example.

Sarah's story begins in Genesis 12. God called her husband, Abraham, to uproot his family and move to a land not yet known. Acts 7 tells us God called Abraham while living in Ur of the Chaldees. Ur was a resort area. It was a cultural, luxurious, vacation setting on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

Here's some trivia. Ur was the first place where bathtubs were used by the populace. Abraham and Sarah were obviously rich and comfortable.

Imagine the day Abraham came home from the office and told Sarah they were moving. A move is hard on a woman. Women have a nesting instinct. They love the security of familiar settings and close relationships. But

without any warning, Abe tells her he's uprooting her and he doesn't even know where they're headed. All he can tell her is "God told me so."

Sarah had a choice. She could trust God and follow her husband, or she put her foot down... And say, "I'm not leaving. We'll err if we leave Ur. Besides, I like it Ur." She could buck her husband, or help him obey God.

Sarah could *support* or *abort* Abraham's vision. She could *get in his way*, or *help him on the way*. Sarah could *assist* or *hinder*. And ladies you have the same choice... *Will you buck him or get on board with your husband?*

The name "**Sarah**" means "princess" - and it implies "*strength, nobility, leadership, intelligence, dignity.*" Sarah was not *spineless*, but a *princess*.

Author Richard Strauss writes of Sarah, "She was an intelligent and capable woman. But when she married Abraham she made a decision. She established as her mission in life the task of helping her husband fulfill God's purposes for him. That was not weakness. It was God's will for her life - true biblical submission." Sarah was a smart, strong, and independent woman, but she willingly chose to live her life through her husband.

Too many wives today undermine God's plan for their husbands.

They refuse to let him lead. They're fearful and faithless. *Oh, her husband can sit in the driver's seat as long as she provides the navigation.* It's sad when even Christian wives decline to trust God, or their husbands.

For a moment let me commiserate with the ladies... Perhaps you've seen, or even tasted, the abuse of male authority. You carry some scars.

You were hurt by *a domineering dad* - or abused by a *violent monster masquerading as a man* – or you were betrayed by *an x-rated x-spouse* – and you vowed to never let yourself be vulnerable to a man again.

Maybe your current husband has been anything but a pillar of stability. You're tired of following a rolling stone. *If he goes through one more mid-life crisis you'll scream!* You don't want to be submissive... *I understand.*

But Sarah had reasons to adopt the same attitude. At times she could've refused to submit to Abraham... *He made some awful mistakes...*

When famine struck Israel, Abraham decided to go to Egypt for food, but he anticipated a problem... In Genesis 12 he told Sarah, “You are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.” This isn't godly leadership. Not even *your husband* has pulled this dumb of a stunt...

At the time Sarah was 65 years-old and Abraham is worried about a hot-blooded, sex-obsessed Pharaoh wanting to add her to his harem.

Sarah was the only woman in history so hot she could shop for a new bikini with her social security check. And she lived before the days of liposuction and face lifts. Sarah was a *knock-out*, but all Abraham could think of was getting *knocked-off*. He told her to lie and say she's his sister. *What a man...* Ole Abraham sacrifices his wife to save his own skin.

And Sarah cooperated. I'm not sure she should have, but her action showed how seriously she trusted God - *and* submitted to her husband.

Sarah must've believed if she submitted to Abraham, God would reward her obedience. Sarah believed God would spare *Abe's life* and *her morality*. For Sarah, obeying her husband was obeying God. She trusted God to provide for her, and to protect her - despite the fact her husband faltered.

Ladies, do you believe God is bigger than your hubby's mistakes?

Listen to what happened to Abraham on his excursion to Egypt. Genesis 12:16, *“(The Pharaoh) treated Abram well for (Sarah's) sake...”*

God *prospered Abraham* for Sarah's sake. He also *plagued the Pharaoh* as long as Sarah was in his house. God *packed Abraham's purse*, and *protected Sarah's purity* – all because of a brave wife's submission.

I heard a true story out of Los Angeles, California. A woman, Patrice Haslip, was charged with shooting her husband in the head – *and why?*

She got mad when he made too many errors filling out the entry forms for the \$10 million grand prize in the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes... Hey, *Patrice takes her sweepstakes pretty seriously...*

Ladies, perhaps your husband's mistakes have also been costly to you!

And though you haven't thought of shooting him in the head... you've refused to let him be your head – certainly, the head of your home...

But God has a different plan. Despite his folly, and foolishness, and foibles - God still wants you to *submit to your husband's leadership*. If you do, God will bless your submission by changing and guiding your husband.

Ladies, *why don't you give it a shot?* **Be a daughter of Sarah!**

Here's a final thought, if little, green Martians landed a space ship in your back yard, and said to your kids, *"Take me to your leader?"*

Would the kids take them to Mom or Dad?

There was little doubt that in Abraham's tent *the buck stopped with the buck*. But it wasn't because he always deserved that leadership – it was because Sarah learned the importance and power of a submissive wife.

As I said earlier, there's nothing complicated in God's blueprints for marriage. The only issue is our willingness to obey. Wives, will you obey God in your **boundaries**, **behavior**, and **beauty**? And will you trust God to lead your husband, and make him the leader your family needs?