

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

1 PETER 3-5

A husband and wife were celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary. They were posing for photos when the husband bursts into tears. *The wife is smiling, while her husband is weeping...* She turns and asks him, “Honey, what’s wrong? Why are you crying?”

He answers, “Fifty years ago today, your dad stuck a shotgun in my back, and said if I didn’t marry you, he’d see to it I spent the next fifty years in jail. It just dawned on me if I’d taken heed, I’d be a free man tomorrow.”***

Well, in Chapter 3 Peter teaches us how to have a “**no regrets marriage.**” *If you follow God’s blueprint;* then fifty years later you’ll be glad you tied the knot.

And its girls first. Peter begins by addressing the wives: their **boundaries**, their **behavior**, their **beauty**.

Verse 1, “**Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands...**” God’s plan for the Christian home calls for **an ordered equality**. Both partners are equal in value, but different in roles. God appoints that in the home and church men are to lead and women should follow,

Of course, this doesn’t mean women are somehow inferior to men, not hardly. Women are often much smarter. But in marriage God is *painting a portrait of Christ’s relationship with His Church*. Husbands are to love like Christ, and wives are to act like the Church.

In verse 1 the Greek word translated “**submissive**” is “**hupotasso,**” it means “**to arrange under, or to work within a**

set boundaries.” The husband is called to pursue God’s will for his life. And it’s those pursuits that then form the boundaries for the rest of the family.

A wife is free to pursue her interests as long as she arranges her activities around her husband. It reminds me of what 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.”**

Wives be submissive to your husbands... **“that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives...”**

Realize, when the Gospel was first preached there were no Christian marriages, because there were no Christians - not yet. Invariably, some folks became followers of Jesus, while their spouses did not.

This put a tremendous strain on their marriage.

Imagine, a lady coming to know Christ. Her whole world changes. She falls in love with Jesus, yet can’t share her most important passion with her husband. She desperately wants him to come to know Jesus too!

These desperate housewives were prone to witness to their man constantly. Put tracks in his lunch box. Stick little papers with Bible verses written on them in his underwear drawer. She pushed and cajoled him. *Yet trust me, very few folks get nagged into heaven.*

Here, Peter teaches Christian wives how to change their husbands: **not with words, but without a word.**

A Christian influences their spouse not by badgering or manipulating, but by godly, loving, winsome conduct.

Peter says you change a spouse “when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.” “Chaste” means purity. You change a spouse not by *meddling*, but by *modeling* grace, and goodness, and godliness.

In 1805 a missionary from the Boston Missionary Society preached to the Indians of upstate New York.

After the man’s message Chief Red Jacket told him, “We’ll 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’ve said.”

Ladies, this may be the approach **Chief Stubborn Heart** - *the one you live with* - is taking toward your newfound faith. When he sees the Gospel change your life, then he’ll pay attention to what it can do for him.

Verse 3, “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.”

I don’t believe Peter is saying a woman can’t style her hair, or sport jewelry, or wear fashionable clothes.

All women love to accessorize!

There’s a funny quote from a woman in the movie, *Steel Magnolias*. She says, “The only thing that sets us apart from

the animals is our ability to accessorize.” Hey, a woman can dress mod, but modest.

Peter’s point is that a wife shouldn’t use her outward attractiveness as a substitute for an inward beauty.

A woman should emphasize *“the incorruptible beauty”* that neither time or gravity can take away.

There’s an old saying, marrying a woman for her good looks is like buying a house for its paint job. Eventually, the fresh paint chips off and fades away.

That’s why if a wife wants to remain beautiful in her husband’s eyes, and in God’s sight, nothing is more appealing than a *gentle, soft-spoken, submissive spirit*.

Verse 5, *“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.”* Wow, Sarah called Abraham *“lord.”* She treated him as king of the castle. *And he loved her in return...*

Realize, *women need love, men need respect.* Ladies, respect your husband and all he does, and *he’ll lasso the moon for you! There’s nothing he won’t do.*

Two politicians were embroiled in a fiery debate. One of them shouted at his foe, *“What about those powerful special interest groups that control and manipulate you?”* The politician under attack shouted back, *“Now, wait just a minute, you leave my wife out of this!”*

A wife does have a powerful sway over her husband. A smart wife uses it to *build him up*, not *tear him down*.

Now Peter addresses the husbands, and he gives **us** three commands for how a husband should treat his wife: **dwell with her, understand her, and honor her...**

Verse 7, **“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them...”**

And I can hear some of the husbands now, **“I got this! I live in the same house, sleep in the same bed, eat at the same table. *I’m dwelling with my wife.*”**

But living under the same roof *isn’t dwelling with your wife*. Too many husbands are at home in body only. God wants us engaged and involved with our families.

Dwell with your wife, and do so **“with understanding.”**

It’s been said, **“Every husband needs to know what makes his wife tick, what tickles her, and what ticks her off.”** *Men do you really try to understand your wife?*

A Harvard University study revealed that the average married couple spends 37 minutes in communication... not 37 minutes a day, but 37 minutes a week...

On a recent flight I picked up a Delta magazine that had a report on the habits of pet owners. It said the average dog owner talks two hours a week to his dog.

That means we talk over three times as much to our dog as we do with our wife. This is why men are clueless. You’ve got to take the time to communicate.

Peter also commands us, **“giving honor to the wife...”**

Treat your wife as special. *Compliment her, brag on her, encourage her.* You know what it means to be appreciated at work for a job well done; well it means even more to your wife coming from her husband!

Peter says, honor her **“as to the weaker vessel...”**

Despite the feminist propaganda we hear today, on the whole most men are physically stronger than most women. There are exceptions, but generally it's true!

Yet here Peter calls women **“weaker”** - *only as a crystal goblet is weaker than a plastic mug.* The mug is durable and rugged, and easy to knock about. But the crystal's finery and delicacy make it more valuable.

A wife brings a tenderness to a family that men lack. Peter is telling us to honor our wife for her sensitivity.

Once, I chaperoned my son's science class on a field trip to Jekyll Island. For three days we learned all I ever wanted to know about marine biology. But one lesson stuck. When a female china-back crab molts or sheds her shell it takes days for a new shell to harden.

This leaves the female vulnerable. Yet for those several days the male crab covers her with his body.

She attaches herself to his underbelly and he carries her, until she's once again is able to protect herself.

And men there are times when your wife becomes vulnerable. She gets *a little crabby*. She needs you to *cover her and carry her*, not *criticize her*. This is what it means to **“honor the wife as the weaker vessel.”**

“And as being heirs together of the grace of life...”

Remember, before she's *your wife* she's *God's girl*. Treat her not as your *servant*, but as a *sister* in Christ.

And for a very good reason, “that your prayers may not be hindered.” Ever tried to pray after a fight with your wife? The only prayer that gets off the ground is “Forgive me.” When there's friction between Kathy and I, there's static on the line with God. *I need to repent.*

Verse 8, “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” Remember our writer is Peter - the disciple who grabbed a sword and tried to split the skull of the Jewish henchman - who came to arrest Jesus.

Malchus swerved his head at the last second, and Peter clipped off his ear. This was sword-slinging Pete.

Now it's the same Peter who's changed his tune. He says don't return evil for evil - bless those who revile you. He's learned a new way of dealing with injustice.

I'm sure it started with Malchus. Jesus picked up the severed ear out of the dirt, and miraculously reattached it to Malchus' head. He returned good for evil, blessing for cursing - *shouldn't his followers do the same?*

In the coming days Peter saw Jesus take all the hate the world could muster, and retaliate with love. And in doing so,

He won our forgiveness. Peter had always wanted to follow Jesus, now he's finally learned how.

Verse 10, "For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit." Hey, **think** before you speak.

Remember the acrostic... **T-H-I-N-K**. "T", is it true?, "H", is it helpful?, "I", is it inspirational or encouraging?, "N", is it necessary?, "K", is it kind?

If it's not all five, then zip your lips!

Verse 11, "Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil." I read where the average American office worker receives 121 emails a day. **Yet, imagine God's inbox!** *How many prayers does He receive a day?*

Yet His eyes and ears are open to them all! He sees and hears everyone who trust righteously in Jesus.

Verse 13, "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."

Repay evil with good, think before you speak, seek peace... these are good traits that should endear folks to you. But even if you suffer for doing right don't be afraid. God can still cause His blessings to abound!

When trouble arises, here's what to do: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear..." Persecution is an opportunity to witness, so *be ready*.

Once my brother, Ken, went downtown to do some street witnessing. He approached a guy in a turban and a long robe. Ken started telling him about Jesus.

But this guy was prepared - *more so than Ken*. The guy started quoting Scripture, yet he twisted it and took it out of context. He ended up painting my brother into a corner. That's when he pulled out a pocket New Testament and waved it in Ken's face. He asked, "Do you know how David killed Goliath?" The man answered his own question, "David killed him with his own sword. Which is what I've just done to you!"

It was at that moment, my brother says he decided to go to school, *to learn exactly why he believed what he believed*. Ken prepared himself to give a defense for the hope that's within him. We need to do the same.

Verse 16, "having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." **Not all suffering is created equal.** I know folks who are persecuted by others and rightfully so.

They act like jerks. There's no merit in that kind of suffering. *If you suffer make sure it's for a noble cause.*

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust...” Jesus suffered to atone for sin. He died in our place once and for all. *“The just for the unjust.”*

Jesus died, “that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared...” Recall, there was 120 years of *“divine longsuffering”* before the global flood.

Noah warned and worked for twelve decades. Don't ever say *God isn't patient!* He wants people to repent.

In Ephesians 4 we're told after Jesus died on the cross He descended to Hades - *not to hellfire per se*, but to Abraham's bosom. It's the place Jesus spoke of in Luke 16 - *the OT home of the believing dead*.

And it was there that Jesus preached of God's grace and His work on the cross. To those OT saints who had believed in God's promise, Jesus' sermon was a validation that God had sent His atoning sacrifice...

To the disobedient spirits occupying the place of punishment, who had rejected God's promise, His sermon was validation that their punishment was just!

Peter continues to speak about the time of the flood, *“in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”* Only eight souls heeded Noah's warning and boarded the

boat. The history of the human race was salvaged by 8 souls: Noah, his 3 sons, and their wives.

Today, the flood of Noah has tremendous historical and geological relevance. A semblance of this story is attested to in almost every ancient culture. And the best explanation of the enormous fossil record in the earth's crust is the massive effects of a global flood.

But the flood's relevance is not only *historical*, and *geological* - it's also **typological**. Verse 21, "There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)" Peter isn't talking about water baptism - *that accomplishes little more than a bath*. It's spiritual conversion that cleanses us inwardly!

In Christ we die to sin; then rise to new life. **A spiritual baptism** does for us what the flood did for its survivors. We escape judgment and receive a new life.

And "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him." Jesus has risen and been exalted to God's right hand. Now all that He died to cleanse is under His authority. All creation now answers to Jesus!

Chapter 4, "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin..." Peter is saying that persecution has a purifying effect on our faith. **It crystallizes our commitment.**

When you're faced with physical loss for following Christ it forces you to count the cost and take a stand!

Ironically, it encourages the believer... verse 2, "that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." Once you pay a price for following Jesus there's no turning back.

Persecution creates an "**all in**" attitude!

"For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries." Apparently, Peter's readers had quite a past. They sound like a frat house.

Sexual lewdness, wild parties, drinking games - *hey, they made a sport out of getting high...* And Peter challenges them... *haven't you wasted enough of your life?* It's time to serve the Lord and count for Christ.

"In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you." "**Dissipation**" is out-of-control partying - a rager attitude... *It's how you use to live!*

If you've been a Christian for any length of time, you've heard what Peter is describing. Folks saying, "Ah, he's no fun anymore." "She use to be cool, what happened to her?" *The snickers of former friends...*

They don't understand why you wanted out...

Yet in the end they won't be snickering. For, "They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." They'll one day meet their Maker!

“For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” Again, Peter is speaking of Jesus preaching to those in hades. In the end they’re judged like men alive today. *Do they believe in God’s promise?*

Everyone gets judged similarly - *do you believe?*

“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.” Peter believed he was living in the last days. *And in a sense he was.*

Since Jesus ascended to heaven nothing else has to happen prophetically before He comes again.

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for **“love will cover a multitude of sins.”**

On our High School baseball team we had an outfielder who couldn’t catch a beachball. Every ball in his direction was a potential disaster. We all cringed.

But he was always in the line-up, *since he could hit*. Hitting was so vital it covered a multitude of errors.

This is what Peter says about love. You can be a bumbling, stumbling believer - with some really rough edges - but **if you love a lot**, God will find a place for you on His team. You don’t have to be skilled or gifted to count for God. He packs his line-up with heavy-hitting lovers! *“Love will cover a multitude of sins.”*

Verse 9, “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” God bestows on each of us spiritual gifts, and we should use our gift! In fact, it’s *use it or lose it...*

And notice the gift mentioned in verse 9... **it’s the gift of hospitality.** Some folks have the gift of making other people feel at home, and loved, and wanted.

God works many a miracle through this vital gift.

Verse 11, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.” It seems there’s also a spiritual gift of speaking God’s Word. If you have it, speak only what He tells you. We need God’s Word, *not more opinions.*

And then there’s also the gift of ministry - or service.

“If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Verse 12, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you...” Don’t be surprised by persecution. If this world nailed Jesus to a tree, don’t expect a red carpet for His followers?

Don’t consider it “*strange.*” All Christians need to *warm up* to the idea of *fiery trials.* We’ve been warned.

And we should be able to “rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”

At times Christians are asked to share in *Christ's momentary sufferings*, but we'll also share in *His eternal glory!* We suffer today, but we'll rejoice forever!

“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.” We live *at a time* and *in a place* where following Jesus is relatively easy. But in short order it all can change - where following Jesus means drawing fire, being treated unfairly, suffering for Christ.

Verse 15, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”

If you suffer as a believer you glorify God, but if you're ridiculed for doing evil, or for sticking your nose in other folk's business - you're a shame to His name.

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...” I have no doubt the biggest obstacle to the evangelization of the world is selfishness and hypocrisy in the Church. We can't draw people out of darkness if we as Christians are asleep in the light!

The judgment of God should start with the Church.

“And if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” If God isn't squeamish about disciplining His own children - don't think for a second, He won't hammer a wicked world.

Verse 18, “Now “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

In other words, if Christians limp into heaven with a poor witness, where does that leave the unbelievers?

We owe it to the world to shine brightly for Jesus.

“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.” Again notice, it is possible to “*suffer according to the will of God.*” Some Christians think any suffering is a sign you missed God’s will - *not so.*

In this world, following God can get you into trouble.

Chapter 5, “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder...” Notice Peter classifies himself “*a fellow elder.*” This is why it’s preposterous for Roman Catholicism to refer to Peter as the first pope.

Peter never exalted himself above “*a fellow elder.*”

And as “*a witness of the sufferings of Christ.*”

Though Peter followed at a distance, he was there when Jesus was tried, and scourged, and nailed to the cross. He was an eyewitness of Jesus’ sufferings.

“*And also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.*” Peter saw Jesus’ sufferings, **and** His glory.

In Matthew 17 on top of Mount Hermon with His disciples, we’re told Jesus was “*transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the*

light.” His humility was peeled back, and the disciples got a peek at Jesus' glory!

These experiences humbled Peter. He wasn't *first* among the elders. He was *a fellow elder* and *a witness*.

And Peter encourages his fellow elders, “**Shepherd the flock of God which is among you...**” The word “**pastor**” means *shepherd*. And it's my job to shepherd the flock of God. I **tend and mend**. I **feed and lead**.

And I'm vigilant. The flock is vulnerable to predators.

Pastors are to “**serve as overseers...**” The word “*elder*” means “**overseer**.” A pastor sees the big picture, and thinks ahead, and looks out for God's people. He should be several steps ahead of the rest of the flock.

There was a time when **our elders** spent most of their time together reviewing finances and conducting business. Today we have other structures to handle those functions. We've freed up the elders to do what God has called them to do - *minister to God's people*.

And they're to serve “**as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly...**” Being an elder isn't a duty! It's a blessing, a privilege, a man should do cheerfully.

And “**not for dishonest gain but eagerly...**” Financial reward should never be the goal of a spiritual leader.

“**Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock...**” An elder or pastor shouldn't have to throw his weight around, or pull rank.

He leads by an example that earns people's trust.

Verse 4, “and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.” Elders and pastors are Under-Shepherds.

Jesus is “*the Chief Shepherd*” - and He promises a crown to the leaders who serve His interests faithfully.

“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” God “opposes” the proud. *He lines up on the other side of the ball. If you’re proud you’re not on God’s team.*

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time...” You work on being humble, and God will exalt you in His time.

Verse 7, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” We all need to turn our *cares* into *prayers*. A friend of mine once told me, “Sandy, always turn your cares over to God before you go to bed, He’s going to be up all night anyway.” **God can be trusted!**

“Be sober, be vigilant...” In short, **be on-guard.**

Why? “Because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

I’ve been told the roaring lion is not the one you worry about. He’s the decoy. When Bambi prances down the path the roaring lion jumps out - snarls and growls - makes fierce noises. *But all he can do is roar.*

He’s the old, toothless lion. He still remembers how to look menacing, but he’s as harmless as a kitty cat.

Yet the roaring lion strikes fear in Bambi's heart. She spins around, and flees in the opposite direction, right into the jaws of the young lions waiting for the kill.

Satan is the roaring lion! He's the toothless one.

Jesus declawed him on the cross. Now by the power of Jesus, Satan is as harmless as a kitty cat. The only way he can defeat us is through fear and intimidation.

Stand your ground and trust in Jesus!

This leads to verse 9, **“Resist him, steadfast in the faith...”** Don't run, **resist!** If you run you turn your back, and expose the only part of your anatomy not protected. Ephesians 6 describes the whole armor of God, and there's protection for every body part, but the back. This is why we can't *back down*. Let's be strong.

Recall James 4:7, **“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”** Muster a resistance - he'll be forced to flee.

And persevere, **“knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”**

We're never alone in our suffering for Christ. There are Christians the world over enduring persecution!

Verse 10, **“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while (and compared to forever it's just a little while), perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”** In Christ, the best is always yet to come. **“To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”**

Now Peter makes a few personal remarks, “By Silvanus (Silas), our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly...” Silas was Paul’s spiritual sidekick on his 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys.

Apparently, at this time Silas was with Peter, and he possibly penned this letter as Peter dictated it to him.

“By Silvanus,” Peter wrote, “exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand.”

“She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you...” It’s possible Peter wrote from the actual city of Babylon. Yet there’s no record or tradition of him ever getting that far east. A better interpretation is that this is spiritual “*Babylon*,” capitol of idolatry, or “*Rome*.”

And here the church at Rome sends it’s greetings.

“**And so does Mark my son.**” Peter had the same kind of relationship with Mark, Paul did with Timothy. Mark was Peter’s young protégé, his son in the faith.

In fact, the early church fathers, Ireneaus and Eusebius, tell us that Mark’s Gospel was in reality the *reflections of Peter recorded by his disciple, Mark*.

The letter ends, “**Greet one another with a kiss of love.**” *Not a lustful, erotic kiss - not a hypocritical Judas’ kiss - but a holy kiss... or for us today, a **good ole elbow bump** - makes for a welcoming gesture.*

“**Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.**”