

---

## Into Thy Word Bible Study in 1 Peter

---

Into Thy Word Ministries [www.intothyword.org](http://www.intothyword.org)

### 1 Peter 3: 1-6: Submission; Christ our Example!

**General idea:** This passage is a tough one to understand in our postmodern, women's liberation culture. We typically see it as harsh oppression and subjugation; however, this is not the point of the passage. Rather, it is about honor, order, and being practical for God's glory. The primary call here is to a Christian wife married to an unsaved husband and the call to hold fast to Kingdom principles with gentleness and love. When we are gentle and loving, we provide an atmosphere of trust that is contagious. When we nag, manipulate, or go overboard with glamour, we create a negative atmosphere and push people away. No one is won to Christ by manipulation, hostility, or pretentiousness. Rather, people are won over by sound reasoning, respectful, godly examples, and the practice of love and kindness.

This is absolutely essential in a marriage. If one person in any relationship is a *nagger*—that is, a person who constantly finds fault in others, is annoying, one who scolds, complains, or is an overly pushy Christian—it creates anxiety and leads the other person away from Christ. This passage is about the essential conduct we are to have because our behavior is our witness. How we treat others shows Christ's work in us.

The second point of this passage is the meaning of real beauty. It is; rather, Real beauty is in how one presents himself or herself, not in how one is fixed up with outward adornment, although this is not prohibited. It is a good idea to look as good as we can (As the saying goes, "If the house needs painting, then paint it!"), but beauty is also about one's demeanor and how we show our love.

**Vs. 1-6:** This passage is about *soteriology* (salvation), how Jesus transforms even the vilest offender from his or her sins to His Way through grace. It is a call to incorporate the godly manners that lead our life and relationships. Our patterns of action are so important to the non-Christian; they must have an example, played out in their midst, to help them make a decision for salvation. We do not contribute in any way to our or another's salvation; rather, God uses us in such a way that we become His example. Christianity was spreading more to the oppressed and women than any other group back then!

- *Wives likewise be submissive.* The context is submission to Christ, not to being domineered or mistreated. It is about the order and structure needed for a happy and fulfilling marriage (1 Pet. 2:13). This type of submission is a relational partnership with spiritual equality, not as a dictatorship or that of a slave or servant (Gal. 3:28)! Rather, it is the loving exercise of love and grace.

Wives are asked to submit—as in giving respect to their husbands as the one who has the role of headship—as a witness for Christ, while husbands are asked to love and honor their wives. A Christian is to do it as an act of loving the Lord (1 Cor. 7; Eph. 5:21-27; Col. 3:18-21; Gal. 2:20-21; 5:22-26; 1 Thess. 3: 11-13; 4:1-8; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; James 4:7-8; 1 Pet. 3:7; 5:5).

- *Without a word* does not mean being silent, or not using the “Word of God (John 5:24);” rather, it is being wise in how we use words, being gentle, sensitive of character and conduct, not argumentative or preachy, and allowing true faith to be exemplified. Although being silent was a virtue for women then, here it indicates respect of the spouse and his concerns while not being rebellious, insubordinate, or condescending. This would allow for the opportunity of the Gospel to be heard and to be an influencer.
- *Likewise/in the same way...obey* refers to the principle of submission that Jesus Christ gives us, using humbleness and love—not domination. Verse seven teaches it is with understanding and love. This also refers to the reciprocal nature of submission (Eph.5:21-25), the context of 1 Peter 2:18-25. It can also refer to a comparison of other kinds of submission as in how Christ submitted to the civil authorities. In context, we are to be like sheep—their gentleness, not their stupid tendencies—in all areas of life.
- *Be won*. A spouse with good character will win them over; a hassling spouse will push them away! Godly behavior always wins out over arguments in witnessing! This was also essential to prove that Christianity was not subversive!
- *Chaste/respectful/purity and reverence* refer to the rules and society-approved behaviors. Back then, women were to be inconspicuous. They were to be enchanting and attractive, such as head coverings in the Middle East today (1 Cor. 11:2-16).
- *Conduct ...accompanied by fear* refers to remaining to your commitment with Christ (Prov. 3:5)!
- *Adornment* is the stuff we put on ourselves to make us look good. This is not condemned, but it is not important and it will fade. However, our growth in Christ will not fade when we continue in Him! A real man, one after God’s heart, is attracted to a woman of virtue, not just to her physical appearance or fashion—and visa versa!
- *Outward*. True beauty is not about makeup or dress; it comes from spiritual maturity exemplified by meekness and a quiet spirit that shows His Spirit. It is about drawing attention to Christ and not to self. Moralists and philosophers at that time also spoke out on women’s over-adornment that led to sexual temptations.

- *Arranging the hair.* This is about being modest, not obsessing on our looks, trends, or fashion. They were cautioned to set themselves off from the pagans who used elaborate fashions, elaborately braided hair, and gold jewelry worn to adorn them so they would please the gods. Many Christian women and men, both then and today, are preoccupied with fashion and looks. The Bible calls us to please the One True God by seeking Christ and producing character. At the same time, be presentable; however, do not let it take away from virtue or become an obsession (1 Tim. 2:9-10).
- *Calling him lord.* This is not god or even godlike; it is like our word for “sir,” a term of respect and endearment in marriage. Sarah was a good example of one who trusted in God, and respected and obeyed her husband (Gen. 18:12; 33:13-14).
- *Daughters,* in context, refers to women who have a “submissive attitude,” like Sarah, and who exemplify the Fruit of the Spirit and confidence in Christ which produces attitude and character that is wondrous and contagious (Proverbs 31).
- *Do good* refers to our allegiance, loyalty, and commitment to Christ. Here, it is seeing the bigger picture of modeling Christ over how the spousal attitude and treatment are.
- *Not afraid* means to stay firm in faith and not allow circumstances to get the best of us. Our unbelieving spouse need not intimidate us when our confidence and commitment is in Christ; we remain loyal to our spouse because of our commitment to Christ. Making sure our respect of them is real and not pretentious shows this. However, this does not mean to purposely marry an unbeliever when one is a Christian; dire consequences will result (2 Cor. 6:14-18)!
- *Terror* refers to the strife and dysfunction that come from a household where submission, respect, and love are not working! In addition, allowing the fears and intimidation to be your focus and not Christ as Lord brings dysfunction!

Peter’s main theme was reducing marital strife, tensions, and allowing respect to create an atmosphere of communion and love. Women were expected to submit; if they did not, they were divorced and left destitute. For women and servants to change their religion was not a big deal as it was for men; for husbands, this was taking a big risk socially. Women could be charged with atheism and, at worst, could lose their marriage. For men, a greater social loss of property and positions could be experienced—even the loss of one’s life.

In Roman and Jewish cultures, the wife was expected to submit to harsh treatment by the husband—almost to the point of being property—and also to

adopt his religion. Here, it is about the spouse being won over through love, not the escalating of conflict. Peter was seeking to balance the norms of society to prevent persecution in the church and strife at home. However, like Paul, he has great sympathy for the oppressed, including women, and offers liberation to women that they would not receive from society until nearly two thousand years later. Talking to women, let alone his instructions to love them was revolutionary back then!

Our lives as Christians are about how we glorify and honor our Lord; we can best do this by applying our faith and growth in Him to our relationships, especially protecting our closest ones. There is a phrase that says, “familiarity breeds contempt.” When we are close to someone, we tend to get careless in relating to him or her with faith and grace. We feel we do not need to, when, in reality, these are the people who need the most from us, even though we usually give them the least. Many marriages fail because of the neglect of effort put forth in them, like refusing to keep a car tuned and maintained. Even the very best car will not last very long if the owner does not care for it.

If you want to be successful in life and marriage, you need to get this point: the primary purpose of marriage is not to please ourselves (yeah, that surprised me too!), but to glorify and serve God. Our desires and pleasures are not God's number one priority! Yes, God wants us to be joyful, happy, and content, but being happy means focusing on Him and not on our circumstances. Thus, to have a successful marriage, you must be aware of what you are getting into and prepare for it. The most important guarantee for it to work is to follow His principles from His Word, not what you think, want, or have experienced. Remember, God designed marriage and us. He knows best (Col. 3:18-19; Eph. 5:21-27; James 4:7-8a; 1 Pet. 5:5)!

Consider this: without the right attitude and perspective on life, without glorifying God and following His Will, you will not find the real, quality love relationship for your life! You will be taking a big gamble that you get what is priceless and precious.

***The Essential Inductive Questions*** (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me? How am I encouraged and strengthened?
4. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?

5. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
6. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
7. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
8. What can I model and teach? What does God want me to share with someone?

***Additional Questions:***

1. What characteristics do you, or did you seek in a mate?
2. Why do some people become obsessive with looks, trends, or fashion? What can one gain from such things?
3. Why would people typically see this passage as harsh oppression and subjugation? Have you? Why, or why not? How is the point of this passage practical?
4. Why would Peter tell women to be submissive? How can this be good advice? How would a typical women today react and why? Is Peter telling women to stay in an abusive marriage?
5. How is being submissive reciprocal, as in “what goes around comes around?”
6. What would happen in a “bad marriage” if one of the partners sought to provide an atmosphere of trust that was contagious and to hold fast to Kingdom principles with gentleness and love? How would this be difficult? How would this pay off?
7. Do you believe that someone can be won for Christ by manipulation, hostility, or pretentiousness? Why, or why not? Why would it be better to win someone to Christ by sound reasoning, seeing respectful, godly examples, and the practice of love and kindness?
8. How would you describe what real beauty really is? How does going overboard with glamour and fashion attract someone? How does it repel? How is beauty shown by our demeanor and our demonstration of love?
9. How can the incorporation of godly manners be essential in a marriage or any relationship?
10. Why do you suppose Christianity was spreading more to the oppressed and women than any other group then?

11. How and why does good character win people over while a hassling attitude will push people away or make things worse? How does godly behavior always win out over arguments in witnessing?
12. Knowing that nagging, being annoying, scolding, complaining, or being overly pushy creates a worse marriage or a negative work environment help you be better in your demeanor? What can you do to work on how you come across to others in a marriage or in witnessing?

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5:21*

© 2005 R. J. Krejcir Ph.D. *Into Thy Word Ministries* [www.intothyword.org](http://www.intothyword.org)