
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 1 Peter

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1 Peter 3: 7-12: The Responsibility To Do Good!

General idea: This passage has two main themes that tie together. The first is the role of the husband whose call it is to love his wife intimately, and with precious care. This is not about being served or even serving each other; rather, it is about co-serving with God to each other and then for others! This is to be a partnership, not a dictatorship. The theme poses the question *do we see our spouse as someone just to take care of our needs or do we see her as our helpmate and co-laborer with Christ?* We are called to see her as precious and not take her for granted. We are stewards of the precious love that God has extended to us; it needs to flow from us to other people in our lives, especially a spouse. This is to be our utmost responsibility, and done with care. It is a call to careful, steadfast love, like caring for a precious, priceless object.

The second theme is like a bookend holding up the theme of submission to God, and harmoniously relating to others. Real submission breeds closeness when it is formed from love. If it is subjugated, such a barrier to God is formed that even our prayers will not be heard! Thus, compassion, care, and love pave the way to effective, relational harmony and blessing from God. Pride and our strong-willed attitude set up a barrier, making all we do ineffective, destructive, and meaningless. If we want God to be attentive to us, we must do our part by being attentive to others without iniquity.

Vs. 7: Submission is respect, and thus is not to exceed the parameters of the will of God or of love and righteousness. As an example, submission is not an excuse to batter or put one's wife down in any way. In the previous passage, Peter spoke to converted wives who had unbelieving husbands; now, it is the other way around. The directive to husbands is even more daunting than that given to the wives! Husbands are called to *love*, which is much greater in importance and prominence than submission! Love is what sets the tone and standard for the relationship.

- *Be considerate* refers to treating a spouse with the utmost care and love. Submission is also a response! Because the husband loves, because the husband cares, because the husband puts his wife's best interests forward, the wife submits, and he earns her devotion. It is the husband's responsibility to set the tone of love and care! Keep in mind that this was called for in a time and culture that considered women lower than farm animals! It was taught in a culture where the "alpha" male (i.e. the lead man of the family) ruled in absolute dominance for order, organization, structure, protection, and community. The mandate to love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) was, and still is to

some, an extreme wake-up call that commands the husband to thoroughly exhibit all of the qualities of biblical character in his relationship with his wife.

- *Weaker partner* refers to the physical condition of women, as in general lower/upper body strength, and perhaps also their social standing. The application is to show more consideration. This is not because of mental, spiritual, moral weakness, or inferiority, or that one is better than the other; rather, it is because God has placed, in the order of creation, the husband as head of the home, just as Christ is the head of the church. They have different roles, yet each one is equal in the sight of God! Thus, when the husband loves and respects his wife and earns her devotion, the result is the continual, mutual respect that builds an effective, strong marriage relationship.
- *As heirs* means fellowshiping together in Christ. This is referring to both husband and wife receiving the beneficiary love from Christ, equal in His sight and purpose, but with different roles. Thus, we show respect to our spouse because Christ has died for her just as He has for the husband (Gal. 3:28)!
- *Hinder your prayers* means the husband who fails to show consideration jeopardizes his spiritual formation. When we refuse to follow God's clearly revealed will or are estranged from others, we become estranged in our relationship with God, thus cutting ourselves off from God's blessings and power. There is a connection that goes deeper than we realize between how we treat others and how God responds to us, especially in a family situation. We are in relationship to Christ through the Church that then flows from the husband to the wife and children (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 5:23-24; 1 Tim. 3:14-15; 5:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:14-17).

In ancient times, marriage contracts would advocate that the husband force his wife to submit with absolute obedience. They could throw out unwanted babies and, in the lower classes, make life miserable for them. In the higher class, there was more social pressure and liberation for women. Some of the philosophers stated since women are physically weaker (this was desirable for cohabitation), and Jewish theologians stated that they were also morally weaker, using Eve as the example.

However, Scripture does not uphold this! Peter and Paul emphasized a very radical idea to the churches and readers when they instructed them to love, and because of love to submit. To Paul, love was a duty (1 Corinthians 13). It was even considered weak by the *macho* mindsets of the times as well as with many people today. But, it is not weak; it is building the strength of a relationship and the bond of a family by creating a mutual partnership!

Vs. 8-12: Peter is concluding his line of reasoning in verses 2:13-3:7 to work within the boundaries of culture with the Fruit and Call from God. The bottom line is to be considerate in all that we do to whomever is in our life. Here, Peter is

actually reminding his congregation to show love as if they have forgotten what Christ and the Fruit of the Spirit are all about. We must use this passage as a template, a Christian living checkup of how we are to treat others and see if we are healthy in Christ and in showing the work that He did in us (John 17:20-23; Rom. 12:9-21). This passage also echoes what James told us in Chapter Four.

- *Harmony* means to show peace in all situations.
- *Sympathetic* means understanding and identifying with another person, putting ourselves in their shoes so we can have real compassion.
- *Do not repay*. This is a call not to seek revenge or to retaliate against those who have wronged us (Prov. 20:22; Rom. 12:17). Peter is, perhaps, directly quoting Jesus in this passage. We are called to bless and do good to those who do not like us or who When we pay someone back to get even, we only end up escalating the issue and thus hurting ourselves and usurping God's authority to judge (1 Cor. 4:12; 6:12; 6:18; Eph. 5:8-10; 1 Thess. 4:1-2; 5:12-15). This does not mean we are to endure abuse or unlawful actions; rather, it has to do with our attitude. It is a balance between the exercise of the Fruits of the Spirit and setting up boundaries to protect us (Prov. 16:32; 25:28; Rom. 13:12-142; Gal. 5:22-23; Tim. 2:22, Heb. 12:2; 13:4; 2 Peter 1:5-7).
- *Insult with insult*. Again, we are told not to retaliate. Nowhere in the O.T. does it say to hate your enemies (Ex. 23:4-5; Lev. 19:17-18; Prov. 25:21-22). Some have used Psalm 139:19-22 as an excuse; however, in context, the request is clearly for those who are wicked. Proverbs 25:21-22 tells us that when we overcome evil with good, it totally disorients those who hurt us, sending them into chaos and confusion, until they are convicted or fall deeper into sin and death. This should give you a wake up call that this is the best revenge; let their own misdeeds haunt them, and let the perfect Judge deal with them!
- *Bless* means to help out (as in lending money), hospitality, various acts of kindness, and, most importantly, pray for them (Prov. 25:21-22; Matt. 5:44-46; Luke 6:27-35; 10:29-37).
- *Whoever would love life* is a quote from Psalm 34:12-16. The point of using an O.T. quote here is to reiterate the importance of this call to the pursuing of peace. This demands an active participation to get involved, not just sitting on a couch and hoping for it.

How many of us have ever ventured into a church that was filled with unkindness, where we were ignored or even mistreated? As a pastor, I have a tough battle to make sure my flock behaves so that Christ would be pleased. I can try my best to set an example and I can teach, but I cannot make them behave! Real, authentic Christian love only comes from real, authentic Christian formation. If someone is not growing in the Lord, they are not willing or able to

treat others with love and respect. Care, compassion, and love will be moot, and the church will be an annoying club of stubborn pride, devoid of harmony and brotherly love.

In the Ephesians passage, the verb for love (Greek: *agapete*) designates a continuous routine of action all of the time, not just when one feels like it. Christ loved the church *not because it was holy, but in order to make it holy!* Thus, we are not only called to find the person who is best for us, but to work at keeping the relationship within the parameters of love, submission, and commitment. Even if you made that wrong choice through impatience, wrong thinking, lust, and/or sin, you still have the call and opportunity to make it right, to make it work with the mate you have! Remember that special something that brought you together in the first place, and that can be rekindled into a roaring fire (Eph. 5:25-33).

The wife is in submission as a response to the husband's love for her and his providing, as well as for having her best interest and care at heart. It is like our response to Christ with love and service because of His free gift of grace. We do not earn salvation for our service; rather, it is a fruit of our gratitude. In the same way, this is how submission works. It is not to be forced, but offered freely in response to love. It is something we replicate as we respond in kindness, so our response to each other is fueling the other's response, and so forth. In this way, we will be escalating love and kindness instead of repression and dysfunction.

Christ and the church are the prime models for us in a lifelong commitment of monogamous marriage. He did not give up on us when things went from bad to worse. His grace, forgiveness, and perseverance came through. It is the model relationship for the home, for the love of children, and for the fellowships and relationships we are to have. The church is the bride of Christ, and He loves her. Your spouse, or spouse-to-be, is your bride or groom with whom righteousness, love, commitment, and holiness are to be practiced and exercised in the best and fullest way possible (Revelation 21:1-2)!

Remember Christ did not give up on us when things went from bad to worse with our sin. His grace, forgiveness, and perseverance came to us anyway!

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 do you have trouble remembering—anniversaries, birthdays, facts and figures, etc?
2. Why is the role of the husband to be in a partnership with his wife and not be a dictator? What happens when it is not?
3. How is love like stewardship? What happens when love is being harmonious to others? What happens when the husband fails to show consideration and/or to follow God's clearly revealed will?
4. Do you believe that the directive to husbands is even more daunting than what has been given to the wives? How so? Why not? Consider the culture and times!
5. How does submission help us be considerate to others? What about in a marriage relationship? Do you think a deeper connection develops when we are considerate? Have you experienced this?
6. Why do you suppose Peter has to remind his congregation to show love as if they have forgotten what Christ and the Fruit of the Spirit are all about? When have you needed this reminder? What can you or your pastor do to remind your congregation?
7. How would you define the exercises of compassion, care, and love? How does this pave the way to effective relational harmony and blessing from God?
8. Have you ever had a problem with pride or a strong-willed attitude in creating and/or keeping good healthy relationships? How does pride set up a barrier that makes all we do ineffective, destructive, and meaningless?

9. If we want God to be attentive to us, we must do our part too, being attentive to others without iniquity. How is this so? How can this be made more in your life?
10. Some men think being considerate to their wives is being weak according to the *macho* mindset. Why do you suppose this is so? What can the church do to help people with this mindset to turn to God's precepts?
11. How is this passage a template, a Christian living check-up of how we are to treat others? How could your church be healthier in Christ and show the work that He did in them? What can you do about it?
12. What can you do to work within the boundaries of your culture with the Fruit and Call from God to be more considerate? What would this look like? Can you think of a specific instance for this?

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings. Proverbs 25:2