

**“Living Hope: A Word to Wives”**  
**1 Peter 3:1-6**  
**Joshua Harris**  
**Sunday, July 4, 2010**

**What is this passage NOT teaching?**

1. It's not condoning abuse or telling a wife to act like a doormat in her relationship with her husband.
2. It's not forbidding the use of makeup, jewelry or clothing in an attempt to be attractive.
3. It's not teaching that men are superior or more valuable than women.
4. It's not teaching that wives should follow their husbands into sin.

**What IS this passage teaching? (1 Peter 2:11-25)**

1. To understand Peter's message to wives, these verses must be understood in the context of 1 Peter 2:11ff.
  - a. In 1 Peter 2:11-12, Peter wants unbelievers to see Christian's good deeds and honorable conduct and to glorify God on that final Day. He wants the unbelieving world to see the reality of living hope in the way that Christians live.
  - b. In 1 Peter 2:13, Peter gives a very specific way in which we are to be honorable in our conduct: we are to be subject (i.e., to submit) for the Lord's sake to every human institution.
  - c. Because we are submitted to the Lord, we should also be submitted to every institution of authority that God has ordained. Peter, then, lists three authorities to which believers are to submit: citizens to government leaders, servants to masters (or employees to bosses), and wives to husbands.
2. Wives, the instruction to be submissive to your husband is not a statement of weakness or inferiority. The husband and wife are equal in value and dignity and yet have different roles. A wives' submission to her husband is part of the "honorable conduct" and "good deeds" that Peter calls for in 1 Peter 2:12.

**Submission (1 Peter 3:1a)**

1. *“Wives, be subject to your own husbands...”* Submission isn't easy. In the context of the passage (2:13-3:1), some unbelievers slandered and persecuted Christians. Some masters treated their servants unjustly. And some wives were married to unbelieving husbands. The theme of all three examples is suffering unjustly, not being treated fairly, not getting what you want.

- a. Our normal, sinful response to unjust treatment is to “fight fire with fire.” If people misuse their authority, then we won’t listen. If they use their power to mistreat, then we want to use power to hurt them.
  - b. Peter understood this “fight back” impulse for each of these categories of authority:
    - i. For citizens to lead a rebellion against Rome and disobey the state
    - ii. For slaves to meet physical violence from his master with physical violence
    - iii. For a wife to disrespect, manipulate and dishonor her husband when he fails to lead her biblically
  - c. However, Peter adjusts our thinking by pointing us back to Jesus’ example. (1 Peter 2:21-23) Being married to an imperfect sinful human being involves suffering. Being a godly spouse is all about doing the right thing even if our spouse is doing the wrong thing. God is calling us to follow the example of Jesus in our marriage and choose to be gentle, patient, respectful and loving even if we are treated unfairly.
2. How do you endure and keep a gentle and quiet spirit when you’re being treated unfairly, when your husband isn’t leading you biblically, when your husband is being inconsiderate? Here’s the answer: entrust yourself to God. Remember that he is the judge. Remember that he will address every injustice. Don’t fight back; don’t revile in return or threaten. Entrust yourself to God.

### **Unbelieving Husbands (1 Peter 3:1b)**

1. *“...So that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives.”* Peter recognizes that some husbands are unbelievers. They don’t obey the word.
2. Wives, your example of quiet submission to your husband is a powerful witness to your him. When you choose to support your husband’s leadership, you testify to the reality of a greater authority in your life. God will reward your faithfulness. He will sustain you. And perhaps God will save your husband by the conduct of your life.

### **Adornment (1 Peter 3:3)**

1. It was true in first century Rome; it’s true today: one of the primary ways that a woman gets what she wants is to highlight or flaunt her beauty and her outward appearance. Female sexuality, female beauty are often used like a weapon.
  - a. It is a natural tendency of the female human heart to fail to entrust one’s self to God and instead to hope in looks and to get what you want—love, care, attention, power—by the way your body looks, by the way you dress, by your style.

2. Peter is saying to women, “Don’t find your greatest joy in feeling sexy. Find your joy in the approval of your God. Don’t make your focus outward adornment; make it inward adornment.”
  - a. It’s not wrong to do your hair or wear jewelry. The point is that outward adornment shouldn’t be your primary preoccupation. You should give more attention to cultivating godly character and a heart that loves God.
  - b. Clothing and style will get the attention of the world, but a quiet heart catches the eye of God.

### **Sarah’s Example (1 Peter 3:5-6)**

1. Holy women are women who hope in God. It is hope in God that enables you to obey an imperfect husband. It is hope in God that enables you not to fear anything that is frightening.
  - a. It is a frightening thing to follow an imperfect husband. But if God is your hope, then you won’t be afraid.
  - b. It’s a frightening thing to give up the world’s values for beauty and spend more time on your character than your next outfit. But you don’t need to be afraid if you’re hoping in God.

### **Fellowship Starters:**

1. Josh drew our attention to pure conduct in the midst of unjust suffering (1 Peter 2:11-25). How do you typically respond when you are treated unfairly, when you are misunderstood or wrongly judged?
2. When being treated unjustly or in an inconsiderate way, how does entrusting yourself to God enable you to keep a quiet spirit and to glorify God in your conduct?
3. Wives, what did 1 Peter 3:1-6 teach you about God’s call to “honorable conduct” and “good deeds” (1 Peter 2:12) in your marriage?
4. Wives, what aspects of submission are difficult for you? What is one area of submission in which you can begin to pursue God’s grace for growth and change?
5. Josh stated, “Clothing and style ... catches the eye of the world, but a quiet heart catches the eye of God.” In what ways do you see a preoccupation with clothing, style and outward adornment in your life? Why is the “imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Peter 3:3) a much better pursuit for the believing wife?