

• *Instructions concerning wives*

The next piece of more detailed instruction concerns wives<sup>☐1</sup> and husbands<sup>☐2</sup>. Peter says more about wives<sup>☐1</sup>, than he does about husbands<sup>☐2</sup>.

☐1 3:1-6  
☐2 3:7

• *One main instruction on both sides*

There is one main instruction on both sides: *'Be in submission to your husbands ... dwell with your wives according to knowledge'*<sup>☐1</sup>. If any couple will obey these two commands, their marriage will improve. Possibly – though I am not so optimistic about this as I used to be! – if even one of them will obey these commands the marriage will come right. It does not mean that their life will necessarily be easy. It is possible to have such physical or emotional problems that – with no sin and with the best will in the world – the marriage is not perfect. But certainly a major step forward will be experienced if these commands are obeyed.

☐1 3:1, 7

• *A major step forward if these commands are obeyed*

**1. Speaking to Christian wives, Peter urges submission to their husbands**

**1. Speaking to Christian wives, Peter urges submission to their husbands.** He says: *'Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your husbands...'*<sup>☐1</sup>. What is involved in this submission? (i) It does not mean treating the husband as if he is in the place of Christ. (ii) It does not mean that the wife does not think for herself. (iii) It does not mean that she must not seek to influence her husband – although this should be no excuse for nagging and stubborn argumentativeness. (iv) It does not mean that she must obey her husband if he asks her to do something sinful (that is, something contrary to the teaching of Scripture that both may read). (v) Submission has nothing to do with lesser intelligence or ability. In any given marriage the wife may have more ability than the husband. (vi) It has nothing to do with timidity or seclusion in the house. (vii) It does not contradict equality of salvation, of forgiveness, or regeneration, or justification. Spiritual status in Christ is not affected by whether one is male or female. Galatians 3:28–29 does not contradict 1 Peter 3:1–6.

☐1 3:1

• *Seven things that submission does not mean or imply*

What then, positively, is this 'submission'? (i) It is a matter of order rather than superiority or inferiority. (ii) It is allowing the husband to be the leader of the home, the 'chairman' of discussions and plans. (iii) It is recognition of the God-given authority of the husband. (iv) It is a matter of having a gentle spirit, a respectful attitude and disposition. (v) In husband-and-wife discussions it is the recognition that after discussion has gone as far as it can go, submission is a matter of letting the husband come to a conclusion and have the last word.

• *Six things that submission does mean or imply*

It might be asked: (vi) does submission mean 'obedience', pure and simple? It ought not to come to that! In a good marriage-relationship commands-and-obedience are not the way things are done. And yet Peter is specially concerned about unconverted husbands, and he does speak of Sarah's 'obeying' Abraham<sup>☐1</sup>. So in the final analysis, yes, submission means 'obedience'.

☐1 3:6

**2. Such submission will have a powerful influence**

**2. Peter teaches that such submission will have a powerful influence.** He says *'Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that though some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the behaviour of their wives'*<sup>☐1</sup>, *when they see your reverent and pure behaviour'*<sup>☐2</sup>. It is obvious that submission has considerable influence on the husband. Here is a husband who is disobedient to God's word. Yet Peter holds out the possibility that the wife will be able to win him over without a word, without preaching, without nagging. If submission can do this with an unconverted husband one would expect it to have even greater power with

☐1 3:1  
☐2 3:2

• Most men are powerfully influenced by feminine submissiveness

• Aggressive 'toughness' is likely to rouse masculine resentment

• Sweetness will achieve more than toughness – words are not the important thing

### 3. A special word about external adornment

• Unimpressive externals

• The 'hidden person of the heart' is more important than time-consuming attractive hair arrangement

• A woman worthy to be called a wife  
• Her saviour who gives her inner strength and power

a Christian husband. Most men are powerfully influenced by feminine submissiveness. I can certainly testify that (other things being equal) any woman – wife, daughter, friend, church-member – could probably get what she wants from me if she is sweet and feminine. But aggressive 'toughness' is likely to rouse masculine resentment. 'Love must be tough'? Well, sometimes love must take tough decisions, but tough ladies are very unattractive. Sweetness will achieve more than toughness. The marriages that are happiest are not marriages with women whose toughness is directed towards their husbands! What wins over an unconverted husband, or even a Christian one in a grumpy mood? Words are not the important thing. The man can be won 'without a word', says Peter. More influential is reverent and pure behaviour. 'Reverent' means respectful of God (not specially of the husband). 'Pure' refers to general goodness of character (it is not purely a sexual matter). It would include freedom from deceit or greed for money, putting loyalty to the husband above attentiveness to other men, control of the temper, patience, responsiveness to the husband's leadership, and affection.

3. Peter has a special word to say about external adornment. The husband is not likely to be specially impressed with special hairdos, expensive jewelry, stunning clothes – especially if he is paying for them! *'Let not your beauty be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes'*<sup>1</sup>, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit'<sup>2</sup>.

This is not a matter of legalism. I doubt whether Peter wanted Christian wives to have shabby hair, dowdy plainness, and tattered clothes. The issues are time ('braiding of hair'), expense ('decoration of gold') and pretentious vanity ('wearing of robes'). The 'hidden person of the heart' is more important than the time-consuming attractive hair arrangement. The gentle and quiet spirit is more valuable than any jewelry.

When the unconverted husband notices day after day that he has a woman who has a gentle and quiet spirit, and who sweetly and affectionately responds to him whether he is in a good mood or a bad mood – if he has any sense he will know that he has a woman worthy of being called a wife. Better still, he may want the Saviour who is her inner source of strength and power.

1 3:3

2 3:4



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