

# 1 Peter 3.1-12 for COB / 08.11.13

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## Introduction

† [Slide 1: Title] *Pray*

- † How many of you have ever tried martial arts training? When I was in college, I tried Tae Kwon Do. That is a good art for a young fellow, who can jump around and kick over his head. I don't think I would do it so well now!
- But when I was in the class, we had people of all ages, from five through eighty. It was strange to have little children, teens, young adults like I was then, and older folk like I am now, all in the same class. Most of the time it didn't matter, because we did a lot of exercises on our own, and they were careful to pair us up with someone of comparable size when we did any sparing.
  - What I hated was sparing with middle aged women. In our class, we were supposed to exercise maximum control by stopping our punch or kick at the last second, so as to not make contact, but every mother of two I ever fought kicked me in the worst possible place. It is embarrassing to get kicked there, it is embarrassing to let a middle aged woman get in a shot like that when you are a young stud, and it is embarrassing to see the middle aged woman blush and stammer an apology. I didn't mind lying back then, so I would pretend I had a bad upper thigh bruise and press on.
- † My wife never kicks me in low places. She is a blue belt in Aiki-jitsu, a blend of Aikido and Jujitsu, like what Steven Segal uses in the movies. If you have ever seen any of those movies, *Under Siege* is by far the best, you will notice he slaps away all attacks and then turns one of his opponent's joints inside out. This is the skill set into which I married, so when we argue, I have learned to put some furniture between us.
- No, really, I do. LeeAnn would never attack first, both by personality and training, but she did not grow up in a house of arguing Italians like I did, so when we first got together she would feel threatened if I got too close and too angry at the same time, and she would poke me hard in the throat or make the claw as if she were going for my eyes. I don't want any part of that.
  - Now you might wonder, how can martial arts fit into a biblical marriage? We will find today that Peter gives us some guidance on marriage, which includes the husband exercising loving leadership and the wife exercising respectful submission. But Peter's idea of submission does not extend to enduring physical abuse. So if I might ever consider hitting my wife, it is helpful to remember that I probably would not make contact before she turned my elbow inside out!
- † If you have a Bible, you can turn to 1 Peter 3 now. If you are not sure how to find 1 Peter, you can use the table of contents; once you get there, turn to the big three. I will be reading from the ESV today; you can follow along in your translation or you can read the slides I have provided.
- Whenever I have heard sermons like this, the pastor has apologized to the young and single people because the topic is not for them. I think that is a terrible mistake: biblical marriage is an essential topic for the young and single, so that they can have the right expectations going into marriage and so they can discuss those expectations with prospective spouses.

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**[Slide 2: vv.1-2] 1-2: Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, <sup>2</sup> when they see your respectful and pure conduct.**

- † In the second word, we see that Peter addressed wives directly, instead of talking about them to their husbands, as would have been normal. Peter is departing from custom to indicate that he believes wives have dignity and value before God and that women were not to be forced to worship or obey by their husbands, because they had the moral choice as a free person in Christ.
- † The Bible teaches that women are equal to men in their dignity as being made in God's image; turn with me to Genesis 1.27, way in the beginning of the Bible:
  - Genesis 1.27 NIV: So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
  - God chose to stress here that he created women in his image, just like he created men.
- † We see in the gospels that Jesus had female supporters of his ministry [Luke 8.1-3], that Jesus also had beloved female friends [John 11.5], and that Jesus treated women with courtesy and respect [e.g. John 4; Mark 5.34].
- † Clearly God has blessed women with tremendous natural abilities and spiritual gifts to rival those given to men. Passages such as Proverbs 31 attest to that. So does experience. I have had female professors in college, graduate school, and seminary who were excellent teachers. I have had female bosses who were excellent at their jobs. There is no doubt that women are equipped as well as men.
- † We also see in scripture that women are just as much heirs of Christ as men:
  - Galatians 3.28-29 NET: <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female— for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise.
  - So we see women have the same value and stature before God as men do.
- † For his own reasons, however, God has given men and women distinct roles in marriage and in the church. This is difficult to understand. But we can see in from the example in the Triune Godhead itself that this is ok. God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in every way, they are of the same essence, they each are God, yet they have different roles to play.
- † **[Slide 3: likewise]** The first word of the verse in Greek is ὁμοίως [ha-MOY-ose], which means “likewise” or “in the same way.” To understand what it means here, we have to remember our context, which might be a challenge for you since we last spoke about it two weeks ago. Peter has just explained in the letter that citizens must submit to the government and slaves must submit to their masters out of reverence to God. So, just as the citizen or the slave was to be motivated by reverence for God, the same is true for wives. Because their hope is in God and they have respect for God, wives will submit to their husbands, who are considered the head of the household.
  - **[Slide 4: subject]** The ESV says “be subject to” instead of “submit to,” but it is the same thing. Trust me, I once spent several hours studying all thirty-eight New Testament occurrences of the Greek verb ὑποτάσσω for a seminary assignment, and I can tell you, it means submit. It is the same verb used to say the church must submit to Christ [Ephesians 5.24], that believers are to submit to God [James 4.7; Hebrews 12.9]. It is the same verb Peter used to say slaves must submit to their masters and citizens must submit to governing authorities [2.13]. Peter also uses this verb to say later in this letter that all the angels and demons are subject to Christ [3.22] and the young in the church are to submit to their elders [5.5]. This command for wives to submit to their husbands occurs four times in the New Testament [Col. 3.18; Titus 2.5; Eph. 5.22].

- Turn with me to Ephesians 5.22-24 NET: Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord,<sup>23</sup> because the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church— he himself being the savior of the body.<sup>24</sup> But as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

† **[Slide 5: come to faith]** Then, as today, a wife might come to faith before her husband. One purpose of the wife's submission in marriage is that, in this situation, he might come to faith by observing her.

- This is consistent with the context of our verse within the letter. Peter calls on all of us to suffer for the sake of righteousness, to suffer for the sake of the gospel. A wife who is in a difficult marriage, even with a non-believing husband, not only should not seek divorce, she should continue to be a dutiful wife, hoping this will help her husband come to Christ.
- Notice that he will be won over without a word. Ladies, if your husbands do not yet believe, do not harangue them or try to shame them. Instead, pray for them and let them see Christ in you. I have seen this work in the lives of friends of mine.

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**[Slide 6: vv.3-4] 3-4: Do not let your adorning be external-- the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear--<sup>4</sup> but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.**

† When you watch commercials and television shows, how many of them advocate working on your physical beauty compared to how many advocate working on your character? What is the ratio?

† Rather than working so hard to be pretty, Peter stresses working to have a beautiful soul, “the hidden person of the heart.” This, he says, is imperishable beauty! You young ladies need to think about this: however beautiful you are now, your physical looks will fade. But your character can be made into a beauty that can last, that can be eternal!

- Whether you are young or old, would you rather be pretty on the outside but rotten on the inside, or would you rather be a little less pretty on the outside but pure and healthy on the inside?
- Your inner beauty or rottenness does shine though. If you are reflecting Christ, you will be attractive to people no matter how pretty you are; but if you are fleshly inside, then no matter what your physical beauty, you will be somewhat repulsive to those who are walking with God and attractive only to others who also are rotting inside. And what is the better example and influence for your husband and children, to see you become like Christ or to see you care more about what is superficial?
- Think of all the time we spend trying to look nice. showering, brushing hair, maybe putting on makeup, choosing clothes with care, putting on jewelry, choosing shoes and purse, maybe other stylistic elements... and all this after the time spent shopping, searching the internet, and watching advertisements. No wonder we struggle to find time to pray or read the Bible!
- How much for a woman's hair cut these days? And how much more if we want to cover up the gray so we don't look as old as the pastor, or if we get a perm or extensions or whatever? How much have you been spending on clothing, jewelry, shoes, getting your nails done, and so on? Could some be better used to improve your character or in serve others? Not all of us should feel convicted by these questions, but surely some of us should.

† Peter says you should develop the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious to God. Why is this precious to God? It is not physical beauty that will reflect the character of Christ or win people to him, but our inner beauty of actually being like Christ.

- In Europe thirty years ago, they had a marketing technique I had never seen before. They tried to attract your attention and shock you, and how they did it need not have anything to do with the product itself. So you might see a billboard of a naked person and then just the word, “Timex.” Beauty attracts the eye, but will it help people come to Christ? Will it help you walk with Christ?
- Outer beauty is what society values, so if your only goal is to make it big in a sinful society no matter what the cost to your character, then you better get with their program and focus on your looks. But I will warn you now, going down this path will cost you.
- But as Christians who have been given new spiritual life, the guidance of scripture and the Holy Spirit, and at least the beginnings of the process of inner transformation or sanctification, we should learn to care about more important things than our looks.
- It is not bad to want to look nice; but we should protect against this becoming our obsession or becoming too important. Our obsession should be to grow to be like Christ. And by keeping our physical beauty simple, we save money which we can put to better use for God’s purposes.
- Though Peter addresses this as an issue more likely to be a problem for women, I think we can safely say the principles hold true for any man who might tend a little too much to his looks. In our day and age, men primp as much as women sometimes.

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**[Slide 7: vv.5-6] 5-6: For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands,<sup>6</sup> as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.**

- † We always need role models. It is human instinct to learn from others. That’s why it is important to provide worthy role models. Our children will be watching us as role models, something we should always keep in mind! They will do what they see us do, not what we teach if the two are inconsistent.
  - Both children and adults tend to seek out people to emulate. These days, we find most of our role models on television or in movies. This is not a good development, since most of those characters do not reflect God’s image very well.
  - Growing up, I wanted to be playful and mischievous like Hawkeye Pierce on *MASH* or Axel Foley of *Beverly Hills Cop*; I wanted to have the intensity of Captain Furillo on *Hill Street Blues*; I wanted to write anguished and ironic songs like Roger Waters of Pink Floyd. The problem was, none of those people were followers of Christ; so as I was striving to become like someone, it had nothing to do with striving to become like Christ. I was getting my life philosophy from our culture, from my flesh, and, since I was deceived about what was important, maybe even from demons.
- † Peter recognized the need in his day to offer biblical role models to replace cultural ones. If we pattern our attitudes and behaviors on television characters, advertising, and cultural expectations, how can we expect to follow Christ well? This is true for men as well as women, though Peter only addresses women here.
  - Peter says women today should follow the example of the Old Testament women who trusted in God and therefore submitted to their husbands in the way he has laid out. This can be tricky, because those women sometimes messed up just like we do, but if you look at the pattern of life in a woman like Sarah or Ruth or Esther, you can see something worth becoming.
- † **[Slide 8: fear]** In the last sentence, Peter stresses doing what is right and not being intimidated or fearful. Since a wife would not anticipate anything to fear from outside the household related to her submission to her husband, most likely this is a reference again to the situation of a believing wife

and a non-believing husband: she submits, but continues to worship the true God and to act righteously, even if that means she will suffer for it.

- † Wives with faith might find their husbands antagonistic to that faith, especially in those days when a wife typically worshipped her husband's gods as part of the cultural household code. Peter calls on wives to continue submitting to unrighteous husbands in the hope of winning them to Christ, yet Peter also clearly expects them to subvert the cultural household code by continuing to worship the true God even if this brings them some suffering within the household. Thus, as with slaves and citizens, we see that submission is not blind obedience, but recognition of authority and obedience right up to the point of when it conflicts with Christian ethics.
  - Peter clearly expects wives to sometimes suffer in the household for doing what is right. But we know that submission to the husband does not include toleration of physical abuse, because Greco-Roman society did not sanction spousal abuse, and a wife who endured it would not be seen as virtuous. Thus, what Peter writes about submission is not a command to endure physical abuse. Physical separation might be necessary in those situations until the church can help the husband walk with God at least to the point of safety for his family.

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**[Slide 9: v.7] 7: Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.**

- † Peter used six verses to talk to the wives and only one to talk to the husbands, but this is quite a verse! As Peter turned to addressing husbands, he again started with the Greek word *ὁμοίως* [ha-MOY-ose], which means “likewise” or “in the same way,” implying husbands also are to be motivated by their reverence for God.
- † **[Slide 10: understanding]** To live with understanding or knowledge is to understand God's will, in this case including God's high view of women and the fact that Jesus always treated women with dignity and respect.
  - Women are fellow heirs in God's grace, equal with men before God, not inferior in stature or importance, made in God's image and saved just as men are.
- † At the same time, husbands should seek to care for their wives, recognizing their own protective role as head of the household and their wives' vulnerability to the harsher realities.
  - **[Slide 11: weaker]** In the Greco-Roman culture, gender-differentiated aptitudes gave husband and wife specific roles in the family function; women were not seen as lesser, but as weaker, with a stress on man's need to protect and nurture her, and to protect her in a society in which she had less empowerment.
  - Even in this non-Christian culture, the expectation was that the husband would not abuse his authority, but instead be responsible for the welfare of his wife.
  - **[Slide 12: hindered prayers]** This is all the more true in Christianity, for the husband who fails in this regard can not expect God's favor, and might find his prayers go unanswered! Yikes! This tells us how seriously God takes this issue: honor your wife or you might find God ignores your prayers!
- † Paul wrote that husbands were to love their wives sacrificially:
  - Ephesians 5.25 NAU: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...

- You husbands are to sacrifice for your wives. So if you could buying something to bless yourself or something to bless your wife, which do you choose? You sacrifice to bless your wife. If you just got done with VBS week and your wife is desperate for a quiet night at home, but you were offered tickets to the Phillies game, which do you pursue? You sacrifice to bless your wife.
- † From what Peter and Paul wrote, we see that marriage is a lifetime union similar to Christ's relationship with the church, so the husband must proactively care for his wife and she must submit to him, and they must focus on blessing each other.
- † What does this hierarchy look like in a real life healthy marriage?
  - Example one: skit in which wife makes decisions without any deference to authority or wisdom of husband.
  - Example two: skit in which husband browbeats wife into submission and misery.
  - Example three: skit in which wife disagrees with husband but submits to his decision.
- † As the leader of the household, I have to keep some things in mind: I love my wife; God has entrusted me with the role of caring for my family and of representing him to my family; every family decision I make should be for the glory of God and the blessing of my family, not to serve myself or my own desires. I am supposed to sacrifice for my family, not they sacrifice for me; I am supposed to serve my family, not they serve me; I am supposed to protect and nurture my family, not protect my ego and nurture my golf game or my career. Men, do you hear me?
- † Sometimes LeeAnn and I are unsure of what to do or we have different ideas. Because we have equal dignity before God, we each are free to fully express ourselves; because we are both seeking to be obedient to God, we each choose to express ourselves with courtesy and mutual respect. This is not always easy in the heat of debate, but we are getting better at it because we are sincerely seeking God's help and because I am afraid of the claw.
- † There are situations when LeeAnn is right instead of me. I have to admit I am wrong and do what she was advocating. I am not being a good husband, nor a good leader representing God as the head of the household, if I am too proud to admit my mistakes or correct my errors. This was hard for me: I had a lot of pride and I was insecure about admitting mistakes, but now this has become one of my strengths: as soon as I realize I was wrong, I relish taking the step of learning and growing, and so I am free to admit my mistake and apologize. Submitting to God brings sacrificially loving your wife.
- † There are situations when I am convinced I am right instead of LeeAnn. Then I have to stick to my decision, which I made only because I thought it was the best way to honor God and bless our family; and LeeAnn has to defer to me as the one God placed as the head of the household. This can be just as hard for LeeAnn as it was for me to admit I was wrong. For nine years, LeeAnn was the only wage earner in the family, and yet I was the final authority on financial decisions. Submitting to God brings submitting to your husband.

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**[Slide 13: v.8] 8: Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.**

- † You might recall that Peter's readers were suffering persecution from the pagans in their community. In this letter, Peter calls on them to create a better community in the church, one that is created on God's principles.

- Therefore, they are to seek unity in faith as a group, sharing a brotherly love that goes well beyond affection to really caring for each other, and being humble toward each other instead of fighting all the time.
- God puts a high value on stability of the community, not on selfish aims or individualism. This goes against what our culture teaches, and thus against our developed instincts. We have to learn to think in terms of blessing each other instead of ourselves, just as is true for the husband and wife in a marriage.

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**[Slide 14: vv.9-12] 9-12: Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.<sup>10</sup> For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit;<sup>11</sup> let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.<sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."**

- † It is not enough to love each other within the church. Peter also instructs his readers to show love to their persecutors.
  - Part of this is to not antagonize back [v.9; see also Luke 6.27-28], a startling reaction then and today. When someone pushes us, we want to push back, but we do not, because we are empowered by the Holy Spirit so we can follow the way Jesus reacted to his persecution. Recall from a couple of weeks ago in 1 Peter 2.21-25 that we all are called to suffer like Christ.
  - Not all translations make it clear here in v.9, but Peter's Greek suggests God called us to this purpose, that we would bless our antagonists and so receive a blessing from God in the end.
  - Our purpose in this time period between Christ's first coming and his second at the time of judgment is to share and live out the gospel before others. Thus we do not retaliate when others antagonize us, but rather we bless them, as Christ blesses us.
- † In vv.10-12, Peter quotes from Psalm 34.12-16. He earlier had alluded to this psalm [2.3], which is about putting one's hope in God and receiving God's deliverance. God delivered David from his time living among the Philistines, and God would deliver these Christians from their time living among hostile Romans, and will deliver Christians today from their struggles, though perhaps not until physical death.
- † Peter gives us action steps to pursue even when we are suffering: Turn away from evil [including a hostile tongue], and do good; Seek and pursue peace.
- † It is unclear if Peter is talking about seeking a temporal blessing [now] or one in the eternal kingdom. Certainly, if we want to be blessed with a life of intimacy with God, we need to pursue God's values and not the world's; and beyond intimacy, this leads God to consider our prayers. We cannot expect blessing if we disregard our relationship with God and the way of life he has for us.
  - This is not a promise that God will smooth away our troubles; obviously, Peter's people were suffering, and Peter did from time to time as well. Rather, the idea is that we suffer now, but we return love for hate and blessing for curse, because we are connected with God, and by doing so we remain in intimacy with him and experience true life with him.

## **Conclude in Prayer**

**Skit #1**

Wife comes in talking: "Oh hi, Honey, guess what! I bought new curtains today and they are so pretty..."

Husband: "But..."

Wife, talking right over him: "and since they don't match the carpets, I asked the carpet guy to come out on Monday. We might have to get a new couch too, we'll see."

Husband: "But we can't afford these things."

Wife, ignoring him: "And look, I just bought our middle school aged daughter this string bikini!"

Husband: "I don't want her wearing that!"

Wife: "Oh, honey you worry too much! I am going to give it to her right now, she will be so excited!"

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**Skit #2**

Wife comes in.

Husband, in angry voice: "Where have you been?!"

Wife, meekly: "The grocery store."

Husband, still angry: "I don't want you going out unless I say so, you understand?"

Wife: "O-ok. Can I have lunch tomorrow across the street with Pat?"

Husband: "No! I don't want you picking up all the pagan ideas of these neighbors! I have to protect what goes in your mind, you know."

Wife: "I can't just sit here all day!"

Husband: "You'll do as I tell you!"

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**Skit #3**

Husband: "Honey, I think we have to cancel our cell phones."

Wife: "I don't like that idea."

Husband: "What troubles you about it?"

Wife: "Everyone calls me on my cell and I like having it for emergencies if I am out on the road."

Husband: "I understand. What if I could get you a cell phone that you could use in emergencies, just not all the time."

Wife: "That would take the fear out of this, but I still am not happy to give up the phones we have now."

Husband: "I know, but money is tight right now, and we are spending over two thousand dollars a year on these smart phones and data plans. That's money I think we need to have for other purposes."

Wife: "I'm not sure I agree. But I understand."