**HEIRS WITH YOU OF THE GIFT OF LIFE**

**(The Beautiful Partnership of Husbands and Wives)**

1 Peter 3:1-7

Key verse 3:7

*“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”*

Why did I choose this key verse? Do you think I chose it because it’s about husbands? But there are six verses about wives and only one about husbands! This passage is not about husbands! It is not about wives either! This passage is about husbands *and*wives. **(Slide2)** It is about the beautiful partnership God has established between husbands and wives. But, sadly, this beautiful partnership has been broken because of sin. As a result, the divorce rate in America is nearly 40 percent! And, for believers it’s not much better--about 30 percent. God cannot be pleased with this! However, today’s passage is like a promissory note from God for the restoration of a beautiful partnership between husbands and wives. Through this passage, we can have hope and vision for our marriages; that God would make them shining examples to the world, and that God would use husbands and wives as prayer partners for extending the gracious gift of life.

Let’s pray ...

Again, this passage is about the beautiful partnership between husbands and wives. But, behind this beautiful partnership is a little something called submission--we can call it Christian Submission. **(Slide 3)** This is the issue Peter first brought up in chapter 2, saying, *“Submit ... to every human authority ...”* (2:13), and then, *“Slaves ... submit ... to your masters …”*, and it is the same context here. The reason Peter begins with wives and includes six verses for wives is because the context is Christain submission!

**(Slide 4)** Look at verses 1. *“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands ...”*

Just as wives submit to every human authority, to submit to their husbands is part of their submission to God. Here Peter used the phrase, “in the same way” What is the way? Jesus is the way! In the previous passage, we saw how Jesus set the perfect example of Christian submission at the cross. **(Slide 5)** Look at 2:21-24.“Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps! And, what was his example? He committed no sin and no deceit! He did not retaliate! He made no threats! And, He bore our sins!” And, what was the purpose of HIs submission? Healing! *“By his wounds you have been healed!”* The purpose was healing! That we would die to sins and live for righteousness. And, with healing comes unity; to come to God, to come together, to make one. God wanted to make unity beginning with believers; unity within the church, unity within the Christian home, and a beautiful partnership between husbands and wives. This is why Peter said, “Wives ... submit to your husbands.

**(Slide 6)** Look at verses 1-2. “ ... submit yourselves to your own husbands, *so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,* ***2*** *when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.”*

In the early church there might have been many believing wives married to unbelieving husbands. The vast majority probably married before they became believers. Some of these women may have been confused about what to do. Did they have to submit to an unbelieving husband? Maybe they could divorce their husbands in order to follow God better? What was God’s answer? “ … submit yourselves to your own husbands …” The husbands they married were their own husbands--for better or for worse--believer or unbeliever. They were the husbands God provided regardless of the time or circumstances of their marriage. They should not consider divorcing them. They should submit to them. There could have been some greater will of God for their marriage. Perhaps God wanted to use these wives as His holy instruments to win over their unbelieving husbands.

If believing wives need to submit to unbelieving husbands, how much more to believing husbands? At least their husbands are believers! Their job is not to win them over with the word, but to pray for them with good deeds! Whatever weaknesses their husband has, they are their husband and God placed them as the head of the household.

**(Slide 7)** Look at verses 3-4. “ Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. **4** Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.

In order to make a beautiful partnership between husbands and wives, wives should know the source of true beauty. True beauty does not come from this world, but from God. It is not outward beauty, but inner beauty. It is not fading beauty, but lasting beauty. In Peter’s day, some believing wives were busy adorning themselves with beautiful hairstyles, jewelry and clothing, but were neglecting to make themselves beautiful before God. In today’s culture, women are constantly bombarded by images of outward beauty through TV, film, video, social media and advertisement. One of the latest big trends is skincare. Many women are running after elaborate beauty treatments for their skin. Not that skin care isn’t important, it is. But, no matter what lotions, or serums you use, the beauty you achieve is still just skin deep. But the beauty that comes from God is different. It is the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit that is of great worth in God’s sight

**(Slide 8)** Look at verses 5-6. *“For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands,* ***6*** *like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.”*

Here, Peter called attention to the examples of holy women who put their hope in God. These women submitted themselves to their own husbands. The prime example is Abraham’s wife, Sarah. When we read the book of Genesis, we see that Abraham was far from the perfect husband. For example, Abraham lied about his wife, not just once, but twice. He said that Sarah was not his wife! He even told Sarah to say that she was not his wife. Abraham did this to save his own skin, because his wife was very beautiful, and he thought that he would be killed because of his wife. Then what happened? Sarah was taken away by other men--first Pharaoh, king of Egypt and then Abimelek, king of Gerar. Sarah was almost forced into adultery and could have been raped. What Abraham did was terrible and caused his wife a lot of suffering, but Sarah obeyed him. She didn’t divorce him, but submitted to his leadership.

There are many wives that want to change their husbands. They are tired of suffering because of their husbands. But their words--even trying to teach the words of God don’t help, and even come across as nagging. If they want to change their husbands, the first thing they need to do is to submit to their husbands. No matter how painful it sounds, that could be the only way, and it is Jesus’ way.

Look at verse 6 again, *“ ... You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.”*

Here to do what is right is to submit to their husbands. To not give way to fear is also to submit to their husbands. The reason why it is difficult is because of fear--fear of suffering. When their husbands don’t do the right thing, they will have to suffer. When their husbands make mistakes, they will suffer. When their husbands don’t take leadership, they will suffer. When their husbands take leadership, they will suffer. The only solution is to submit to their husbands by trusting their husbands. Jesus said, trust in God, trust also in me. Wives can also sometimes go by, trust in God, trust in your husband.

What about husbands?Husbands have the greatest responsibility in the beautiful partnership between husbands and wives. They have to love and serve their wives.**(Side 9)** When Peter first brought up the matter of Christian submission, he said in 2:11, “... abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.” This is the first way in which husbands need to submit to God! They need to submit to God by abstaining from sinful desires! Sin is what breaks the beautiful partnership between husbands and wives the most. The real war is not against their wives, but their sinful desires. And, the real warzone is not in their home, but in their soul. They must fight the war against sinful desires in their soul. After sinning, a lot of husbands fight with their wives and cause their wives a lot of suffering. **(Slide 10)** Husbands are in a position of authority, but they should not use their authority in the wrong way. In 2:16, “... but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God’s slaves.

**(Slide 11)** Look at verse 7. *“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

Husbands should be considerate of their wives and treat them with respect. This command could also be based on prior commands. Previously, Peter stated “Show proper respect to everyone …” (1 Peter 2:17). Wives are due proper respect from their husbands. For husbands to properly respect their wives, they need to first respect themselves. **(Slide 12)** In the passage from chapter two, Peter basically started out with the words “... abstain from sinful desires …” and then finished with “... show proper respect to everyone …” (1 Peter 2:11-17). In order to respect his wife, the first thing a husband should do is to abstain from sinful desires. Then, as he respects himself before God, he can also respect his wife. **(Slide 13)** When a husband respects his wife, he will be considerate of her; considerate of her physical and spiritual needs, considerate of her thoughts and feelings, considerate of her viewpoint, opinions and suggestions. Just because a wife should submit to her husband, doesn’t mean that a husband doesn’t have to listen to his wife. A good husband listens to his wife and considers her input carefully before God. He wants to please God, but also please his wife in accordance with God’s will.

Husbands should be considerate of their wives and treat them with respect, because they are the weaker partner. In using the words “weaker partner”, Peter emphasized that this is a partnership. It is not a dictatorship, but a partnership. Wives may be weaker in terms of position of authority within the household, but they are no less important and are equality valued in the sight of God. It doesn’t mean that husbands are stronger spiritually or have a special gift of leadership over their wives. It is merely a matter of their positions assigned by God for the purpose of glorifying God. **(Slide 14)** Simply put, husbands are called to love and serve their wives as Christ loved the church, and wives are called to submit to their husband as the church submits to Christ. Look at Eph 5:24-25. Husbands loving their wives is the right response to wives submitting to husbands. In fact, husbands should love their wives first sacrificially if they want their wives to submit to them. Husbands should protect, serve and provide for their wives in the love of God. In this way, the partnership of believing husbands and wives reveals God’s love to the world.

**(Slide 15)** husbands should be considerate of their wives and treat them with respect, because they are heirs with them of the gracious gift of life. Husbands and wives are called to make a beautiful partnership for serving the Lord. As such, husbands must recognize the importance and value of their wives Their wives are mutual heirs of the gift of life and of the kingdom of God. Therefore, they are equal in the sight of God and share the same mission. Husbands should never take advantage of their position of authority. They should never treat their wives as slaves, but treat them as fellow heirs. They are called to form a beautiful co-working ralationship. They are heirs together, so they must work together as equals.

Husbands should be considerate of their wives and treat them with respect, so that nothing will hinder their prayers. When husbands value their wives as heirs together of God’s kingdom and don’t take advantage of their weakness in terms of position of authority, then the two can pray together with one mind and heart.

Husbands and wives are equal partners before God. They are partners and heirs together of the gracious gift of life. They are precious co-workers. They share the same fellowship and ministry. So they must work together and pray together. This begins with husbands loving their wives; loving them as their own bodies and giving themselves up for them. There is nothing that hinders their prayers like sin. So husbands should open their spiritual eyes to see the true inner beauty of their wives. They should love them by loving their soul, and serve them like a precious daughter. When there is a disagreement Husbands should humble themselves first, they should repent first. They should apologize first. They should honor and cherish their wives as their beautiful partners in the Lord. Then they can have a beautiful partnership with nothing to hinder their prayers.

One word: the beautiful partnership of husbands and wives.