

How to Win Your Unbelieving Spouse

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:1-7

Code: 60-31

Tonight in our study of the Word of God we come to a very important subject and a very important text. And I want to encourage you to open your Bible right now to 1 Peter chapter 3. In 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 1 through 7 we have the subject, "How to win your unsaved spouse...how to lead your partner to Christ." How to witness or give testimony to your mate. This is a very instructive passage, a very important one, one that applies to all of us directly or indirectly because we are either married to an unsaved person or we know someone who is and have the opportunity to share these truths, I trust, with them.

Now as we approach the passage let me give you just a basic grasp on the flow of thought in this epistle because it's necessary for interpretation. One of the elements of Bible interpretation is context. You cannot interpret any given passage apart from the context of other passages in which it is set.

Now Peter is writing to some Christians, Christians who have been scattered and are under going certain persecutions. In fact, those persecutions are in some cases quite severe. So Peter is writing to persecuted Christians with the goal in mind of encouraging them...encouraging them on how to live in the midst of a hostile society, how to conduct yourselves in a world that is set against you.

Generally he tells them to sort of elevate themselves and turn toward their living hope in Christ. In other words, get out of the world mentally, emotionally, spiritually and focus on what is eternal, what is heavenly, keep your mind on the eternal Christ, keep your mind on His glorious future for you on His glorious resources, don't get caught up in the fuss down here, get your focus upward.

Now he directs their attention in three ways. In the first part of the book he says, "Now I want you to focus on your living hope in Christ, first of all, by remembering your great salvation." And in chapter 1 verse 1 through chapter 2 verse 11 he focuses on remembering our great salvation which is the basis of our future hope. Secondly, he moves from the past to the present and from chapter 2 verse 12 on he basically says, "Remember your example before men." In the past you remember the great salvation which provided your living hope. In the present you remember your responsibility to be an example before men. And that subject goes from chapter 2 verse 12 all the way through verse 6 of chapter 4, and we're in the middle of that section, and he is saying in the midst of hostility and persecution and rejection in a society that doesn't believe the way you do and makes it difficult for you, remember the necessity of your example before men. And then the final section of this great epistle, from chapter 4 verse 7 to the end says look to the future and remember Jesus is coming.

So you have three perspectives in looking at your living hope, remember your past salvation, remember your present witness, and remember in the future Jesus is coming. That's how we're to live. Now we find ourselves, as I said, in this middle section. We are discussing this whole matter of living in the world in such a way as to reach the world for Jesus Christ. It is important that we maintain our testimony.

Now the bottom line is this, that if we are going to have an exemplary testimony in the world, the hostile world, and if we're going to be used to win people to Christ, then our lives have to be characterized by a certain basic characteristic. What is it? Would you notice verse 13, the first word? Submit. Verse 18, servants, be submissive. Chapter 3 verse 1, wives, be submissive. Now Peter says is this, you're going to be caught up in a hostile world and that hostile world will manifest itself in all social relationships of which there are three primary ones...the government, the work place and the family. Those are the three. Those are the three social environments in which we live...going from the greater to the lesser. The biggest social environment in which we live here is the United States of America. And we are therefore answerable to the government and the government of the state as well and the city and the local municipalities and so forth. The next arena of social relationship in which we exist is our work place. We have responsibility within our employment to submit ourselves to those in authority over us. The smallest location of our social involvement is in the family. And in each case he says submit. In verse 13 of chapter 2 he says submit to the government. In verse 18 of chapter 2 he says submit to your employer. And in chapter 3 verse 1 in regard to marriage he says submit to your partner.

The bottom line in our testimony in this society in which we live is submission. That's the key word. You will notice also in verse 7 it says, "You husbands likewise," and the likewise picks up the same thought of submission. Now this is a very basic and essential concept. If we are to have an impact in our culture, we must submit to the social order, to the social structure and the social patterns that God has designed. We cannot be rebels. We cannot demand our rights. We cannot feel superior to social order.

Now let me review the problem for you just briefly. A person becomes a Christian. Immediately because they're a child of God and because they now have a higher authority, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, and because they now have a higher standard of living, the Bible, and because they are now citizens of heaven, and because there's a sense in which they've been translated out of this world, they could easily feel, first of all, superior to their society. As a result of that they could be indifferent to the dictates of that society. They could say, "Look, I belong to God, I'm a Christian, I'm a citizen of heaven, I don't belong here, I'm a stranger and an alien...as it says back in verse 11...and I'm really not interested in paying any attention to governmental laws, I'm not interested in coming under the authority of any employer and I'm certainly not interested in listening to some unsaved spouse or deferring to them. I live on another plain." You could feel sovereign over the law, sovereign over

your employer, you could feel sovereign over your mate and that is the very opposite of what you ought to feel. You see, we've only been left here for one reason and that is an evangelistic purpose. We are here to make Christ known to this society. We are here to make Christ known in the work place. We are here to make Christ known in the family. Those are the three environments of our existence. And the principles of conduct are given here that can lead to the most effective Christian testimony. If we want to be effective in the society in which we live, if we want to be effective in the state, then we must submit...verse 13 says...to every human institution.

In other words, we must show that we are not rebels, we are not problematic. We are not superior. We are not indifferent to society's order. We are submissive. We are model citizens. In verse 18 we are to be model employees, submissive to our masters with all respect whether they are good and gentle or whether they are unreasonable. And now we come to this third and smallest area of social responsibility...the family. And the question is: what does a wife do when she is married to an unsaved husband? What does a husband do when he is married to an unsaved wife? Does he feel superior? Does he lord it over her? Does he treat her with indifference because she is not a citizen of the Kingdom? And what does she do? Does she reject his authority who is a non-Christian husband because she has another authority, Christ? Does she demand her rights both physical and spiritual because she has now been elevated? What is the proper responsibility of each partner when married to an unbeliever?

Now please notice these verses in chapter 3 are not a discourse on male and female status. They are not a discourse on Christian marriage. This is not even a discussion of Christian marriage, this is a discussion of a mixed marriage, where you have a Christian partner and a non-Christian partner. That's the whole context here. How does a Christian live in an unchristian society? How does a Christian live in a non-Christian place of employment? How does a Christian live with a non-Christian partner? That's the whole context of this passage. This is a very very important matter. Now remember, we are to live a certain way in our society...why?...so that people will observe our lives, says verse 12, and glorify God in the day of visitation. In other words, they'll be saved. We are also to be submissive to our masters or our employers for this will find favor with God. How? By making gospel truth real as people can see it through our lives. And the same is true in the family.

Now we begin with wives. And Peter, I want you to understand, is not biased but he gives six verses to wives and one verse to husbands. Now somebody might say, "That's a little out of balance." But it isn't. And there's a very important reason why. And that is because when a wife became a Christian the potential for difficulty in the marriage was much greater than when a husband became a Christian because a husband was already in charge any way. And in that society if a husband became a Christian, the wife would dutifully accept that since she had no mind of her own, at least that she was not allowed to have one. So the potential for conflict was greatly lessened. But when a woman who was viewed as a slave or an animal, and not much more, because a Christian independently of her husband, the potential for conflict and embarrassment and difficulty was much greater and that is why

Peter gives much more attention to that particular problem. Becoming a Christian can pose some serious problems today, it posed some serious problems then. A woman becomes a Christian and all of a sudden she feels superior to her husband, she feels like now that she knows what the Bible teaches and belongs to God, she knows so much more than he does, how can he be the leader in the family? Not only that, she keeps meeting these wonderful men at church who are fine outstanding Christians and she becomes envious of them and she becomes indifferent to her own husband and much more attracted to other men who love Christ because she sees in that the potential for such a wonderful life. This can lead to great serious problems.

In the Greek culture in which Peter lived and the people of course to whom he wrote were scattered in the Greek world, for a woman to change her religion without her husband doing it was unthinkable. Why? Because in Peter's day women were treated like sheep and goats. Their opinion was considered irrelevant, immaterial and unwanted. There was a basic principle called patria potestas and what it means was that while single and living in her father's house, a woman was under her father's power. He could literally kill her if he wanted and when she became married she was under her husband's power and he could literally kill her if he wanted and in both cases there was no legal recourse. So the woman was thought of merely as one who served the needs of the male population.

But all of a sudden a woman, let's say, becomes a Christian and she understands the principle of Galatians 3:28 which says, "In Christ there is neither male or female, we're all one in Christ." She realizes that in Christ she has reached a level of living that her unsaved husband knows nothing about. She is free in Christ. She has a new Lord and a new master. And it would be easy for her to treat her husband with disdain, with indifference, or even with rejection. If she's not careful he can become very distasteful to her and even repulsive. But this is no different than the situation of a worker who has an ungodly employer, who feels the surge to put him in his place, who feels superior because of conversion. The society in which Peter lived would say things like this, this is an old quote, "Women must remain indoors and obey their husbands." I mean, that's what they thought of women. Women were often abused. They were often killed.

So, it was important then to realize what life must have been for a woman who became a Christian independently of her husband. The abuse could escalate. It would be immensely embarrassing to the husband because no woman ever did that independently of her husband. So he would be very embarrassed among his peers. He would be very non-plussed about this mystical relationship she had with this Jesus Christ. For her to be bold enough and brave enough to do that could put her in a position where she would suffer abuse. In the early church there were a lot of secretive meetings and some are prone to think that they were secrets not only to hide from the government but to hide from the husbands because there were many women who gave their lives to Christ. So the reason that Peter directs these six verses at women is precisely because of this potentially difficult social problem. And again I say, if a man came to Christ while the woman tacitly and at least outwardly if

not inwardly would affirm Christ, she really didn't have an opinion in that culture anyway so it wasn't of great consequence, he would still be in charge, he would still be the authority, so there wouldn't be quite the difficulty. But for a woman to come to Christ was extremely problematic.

So that's the issue. How then does a Christian wife relate to her unsaved husband in such a way as to fulfill her mission? And what's her mission? What's our mission? To win people to Christ. How is she to conduct herself to win that unsaved husband to Jesus Christ? Let's look at the answer here in our text. Before we see what Peter tells her to do, let's see what Peter doesn't tell her to do, right? Number one, he doesn't tell the Christian wife...please note this...to leave her husband. He doesn't tell her that. He doesn't say, "Well now that you're a Christian, get out of there and find yourself a Christian man. Find somebody who thinks like you do who loves Christ like you do, have a happy union with that person. Shake that husband, get out." No. He doesn't say that. And it's a good thing he doesn't say it because it would be wrong. First Corinthians chapter 7, do you remember this? Verse 13, a woman who has an unbelieving husband and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. What does that word mean in the Greek? Let her not...what?...divorce him. If you have an unsaved husband, don't divorce him. Paul says that's forbidden by God. In fact, the next verse 1 Corinthians 7:14 says, the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife.

In other words, the blessing of God will spill over on that man just because God is blessing you, he'll get the benefit. You see, a non-Christian man married to a Christian woman doesn't know how fortunate he is because she's a child of God and God is pouring out blessing on her because she is so blessed and she is so enriched, he benefits. It doesn't mean he gets salvation through that means, it simply means outwardly in this life he is blessed. This is not inward sanctification but outward grace that spills over on him because of her. So the unsaved husband may stay and if he wants to stay, it says, that that believing wife should let him stay...that's God's plan. You say, "What if he wants to leave?" Same text, 1 Corinthians 7, it says if the unbelieving one leaves, verse 15, let him leave, the brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. If he wants out, you've got to let him go. You're not in bondage. That is the bond is broken. For verse 15, "For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband, or husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?" In other words, the point is this, if he wants to stay, let him stay. But if he wants out because he can't tolerate your Christian testimony, let him go. And then you say..."Well now wait a minute, I want him to stay so he'll get saved." And Paul says, "But look, you'll have nothing but war in the house and that is counter-productive and you don't really know whether he'll get saved anyway. So don't try to hold that thing together if it creates confusion and chaos." That's the point. So Peter says basically the same thing by saying nothing. He doesn't tell the woman to leave. Don't rebel, don't leave...stay and do all you can to win that husband. But if that husband wants out and leaves you, you're not under bondage anymore, the marriage is broken. Don't fight tooth and nail to hold it together thinking you're going to lead him to Christ in an uncomfortable, chaotic confused warlike environment. That's not productive.

Second thing he doesn't say...he doesn't tell her to preach at him. He doesn't tell her to argue with him. He doesn't tell her to harangue about the gospel. He doesn't tell her to put Bible verses on the bottom of his beer cans. He doesn't tell her to stick evangelistic tracts under the pillow in his bed. He doesn't tell her to badger him about the gospel. He doesn't tell her to call her pastor and have the pastor come to the house some night when she knows he's home alone, loaded with all his guns. Peter doesn't tell her that. He doesn't say glue Bible verses on the refrigerator. He doesn't say anything like that.

Thirdly, he doesn't tell her she is now equal to the man so she should demand her rights. He doesn't say that either. She is equal, of course, to any other believer spiritually but she still has a marital role to fulfill. In Christ there is neither male nor female, they are one. But in marriage there is headship and there is submission.

So you say, "What does he tell her?" Well let's find out. Verse 1, "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Word...that is they're unsaved...they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives." That's the basic point. He says if you want to win that husband to Christ, if you want to do all you can and only God knows whether that will happen, but if you want to make the maximum impact on the life of an unsaved man, then be a submissive wife. That's it. If you want to make a maximum impact on the society in which you live, then be a model submissive citizen. If you want to make the maximum impact in your job, then be a model submissive employee. And if you want to make a maximum impact on your unsaved husband, be a model submissive wife. It's the same principle...same principle.

Three specific duties are outlined here. Let's look at them very briefly. Number one, submission and its intention, and that is verse 1. "In the same manner," it says or it could be translated "likewise." In the same manner as who? Verse 13, the same manner as citizens submitting. Verse 18, the same manner as employees submitting. Here it says in the same manner or likewise you wives be submissive...hypotassomeans to be in subjection, to line up under, it's used in military context. Realize that you have to take your place as subordinate to the leadership and the headship of your husband. This is God's design for marriage. Women are not inferior in character. They are not inferior in intelligence. They are not inferior in virtue. They are not inferior in spirituality. They are not inferior in giftedness. They are not inferior in any way period. They have been simply given a role that puts them in the place of submission to a headship which is residing in their husband.

Please note this, "Be submissive to your own husbands." And every time in the Bible such an injunction is made, always it says your own husband, always the possessive pronoun is there, the intensive possessive pronoun. Be submissive to your own husband which speaks of the intimacy and the bonding of marriage. This is God's design. That's, of course, what 1 Corinthians 11 says, Christ,

of course, is the head of man, God is the head of Christ, the man is the head of the woman. That's what Paul wrote to Timothy, "I permit not women to teach, nor to be in authority, not to take authority over men, they are to learn in all subjection," 1 Timothy 2:11 to 14.

Now the reason for this is so that, verse 1, "Even if any of them are disobedient to the Word..." by the way, it's a first-class conditional in the Greek which means it's a reality, it could be translated "since they are disobedient to the Word," it assumes that that is the case. And the word here, I think, means the gospel, the Word of reconciliation, the Word of salvation. They are basically unregenerate, disobedient to the gospel. The issue is submit to them anyway, just as you submit to government, just as you submit on the job, for the sake of their salvation. Look at the end of verse 1, "In order that they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives." Now please note this, he is not saying they will be saved without THE Word. He's not saying they'll be saved without THE Word...not at all. Because back in 1 Peter 1, do you remember what he said in verse 23? "You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is through the living and abiding Word of God." Salvation comes through THE Word. What he is saying here is that they may be won without A word, not THE word. They can only be won with THE word. But from the wife's viewpoint it is more important what you are than what you...what?...say. That's the whole point.

They are lost because they obey not THE word but they might be saved without A word. What do you mean by that? Without conversation, without harassment from the wife. Simply by the behavior of their wives. My what a wonderful wonderful insight. The lovely gracious gentle submission of a Christian woman to her unsaved husband is the strongest evangelistic tool she has. It's not what she says, it is what she is. The woman is to submit to her husband's leadership, that is a God-designed principle. Wives, submit to your husbands, Ephesians 5:22, wives, submit to your husbands. In each case your own husband, Colossians 3:18. The same thing comes from Paul in Titus 2:4 and 5, "Young women are to be subject to their own husbands." Again that possessive pronoun is there every time such a statement is made. The woman is to submit to the husband's leadership. This is her greatest tool of evangelism, the virtue of her wifely character.

You might be interested to know too that this contributes to the happy marriage. Obviously the Bible wouldn't advocate it if it didn't. I was interested in reading a McGill University department of psychiatry report, McGill University is a great Canadian university in the city of Montreal. And in the report from the psychiatry department of McGill it says this, "In the most successful marriages the husband is emotionally stronger than the wife and there is a clear-cut division of authority and responsibility between them. It was noted that marriages in which wives were emotionally dependent on their husbands almost always produced happier better adjusted children," end quote. Obviously that's true because that's consistent with God's design.

The first duty of the wife then is submission. To put it another way, voluntary selflessness and dependence. There's a second responsibility in verse 2, let's call this faithfulness. Number one is submission, number two is faithfulness. Verse 2 says, "As they observe your chaste and respectful behavior." Now that's a very basic spiritual truth for a marriage. He's talking here about a pure life. What does chaste and respectful behavior mean? Well it basically means irreproachable conduct, faithful to her God, faithful to her husband. Don't break trust. You want to win your unsaved husband? One, be submissive...two, be faithful...that's what chaste, respectful behavior means. Chaste means pure. It means you're not fooling around with anybody else. It means you're pure. Respectful, it means you have respect for him. You demonstrate that respect. You never get involved with anyone else and you show him proper respect.

The third principle comes in verses 3 through 6 and it is modesty. You have submission and its intention which is to bring him to Christ. You have faithfulness in verse 2 and then you have modesty. Please notice verse 3, 4, 5 and 6. In verse 3 it says, "Let not your adornment be merely external, braiding the hair and wearing gold jewelry or putting on dresses." Now he comes to a very important matter for the Christian wife trying to win her unsaved husband. He says..."Look, the normal...and I want to say this knowing there's a risk involved...the normal preoccupation of women is with the outside." And I think we would all agree with that. Certainly in our society the normal preoccupation of women is with the outside, adornment. He says, "Let not your adornment be merely external."

You say, "Is he against combing hair?" I don't think so...I don't think so. You say, "Is he against wearing gold jewelry?" I don't think so. I don't think he's against that, after all the beautiful woman, the bride in Song of Solomon was bejeweled and wonderfully so. "Is he against putting on dresses?" No, I don't think so. What he is saying is let not that be your incessant preoccupation to the disregard of the character inside. Boy, they got really carried away and I don't have time to give you all the insight, but in the Greek and Roman world there was an immense preoccupation with the outside.

Cosmetics were big. Have you ever seen the punk rockers with the purple hair and the green hair and all that? Nothing new. They had it in Greece in the Roman time. Women dyed their hair purple and they dyed their hair red and green and yellow and all kinds of colors. They waved it, they braided it elaborately. They piled it higher and higher and higher and higher in one of those beehive things. They wore wigs. And they were especially fond of wigs made of blond hair taken from people outside of their particular part of the world. They wore hair bands, they wore pins, they wore combs, they wore ivory tortoise shell jewelry in their hair, they wore gold and pearls, silk, incense and emeralds and diamonds and all that kind of stuff, they really laid it on. It wasn't any different than the fashion plate mentality of today. People literally tied fortunes up in their clothing. And since they were pretty well decked from neck to feet in a garment, most of it showed up on their face and their head where it could be seen and where their wealth and their pride could manifest itself most visibly.

This isn't anything new. Listen to the Lord's indictment of Israel in Isaiah 3, listen to this: "In that day...verse 18...the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, headbands, crescent ornaments, dangling earrings, bracelets, veils, head dresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets, finger rings, nose rings, festal robes, outer tunics, cloaks, money purses, hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans and veils. Now it will come about that instead of sweet perfume there will be a putrefaction; instead of a belt, a rope; instead of well set hair, a plucked out scalp; instead of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth; and branding instead of beauty." Pretty straight forward stuff, right? Women have always tended, fallen women, to be preoccupied with the outside.

But that's not the true beauty. And I'll promise you, ladies, that external beauty does not capture the heart of your husband if there's nothing on the inside. Peter doesn't condemn all outward adornment. But what does he say? Verse 4, "Let your adornment be the hidden person of the heart." That's where the true beauty is. Hey, when you got married it wasn't long before you really weren't too conscious of what she looked like but you became very conscious of what she was like inside. That's the true beauty. Christianity has always existed in a world of luxury and a world of decadence. And Peter says don't you spend your time and money adorning your body. And you know, that's a temptation. Here's a woman, she's got an unsaved husband, she doesn't have much of a happy relationship with him and so she simply turns the other direction and spends her life indulging herself to make her external beauty all that it could possibly be and more. Peter says don't do that, that's not how you win him to Christ. If you're going to be preoccupied, let it be the hidden person of the heart. What do you mean? I mean the inner person...the inner person, character, virtue. First Timothy 2:9, "I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing...that is they ought to be clothed in a modest way...modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly garments but rather by means of good works as befits women making a claim to godliness," 1 Timothy 2:9 and 10. Work on the virtue of your life...work on your character. That will make you far more beautiful.

By the way, the most beautiful women on the inside tend to be very beautiful on the outside. Have you noticed? Have you ever noticed how makeup can't change an ugly disposition? And have you noticed how makeup can't enhance a beautiful disposition?

What is it that we are to do in adorning the inner person? Look again at verse 4, "You are to adorn the inner person with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit." Gentle means meek, quiet means just that, peaceful, calm, in control. The word spirit means disposition. The most beautiful kind of woman is the woman with a meek, gentle, peaceful, calm, quiet disposition. That is the inner virtue that a woman is to pursue and that is what wins the heart of a man. Not only that, would you please notice it is precious in the sight of whom? Of God. It is highly valued by God. Now again he's not forbidding all outward adornment, he is saying that you must work on the inside. Don't confuse spirituality with tackiness, or sloppiness. That too calls attention to the outside and betrays a heart unconcerned to reflect the beauty that God has given to a woman. But the fact is you're to be modest and to work on the inside.

Look at verse 5, he gives an illustration. "In this way in former times the holy women also who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands." Who are the holy women? Old Testament saints. They hoped in God. What does that mean? That they were true believers. He says I'm not telling you anything new, but in Old Testament times those women set apart unto God who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. In what way? Submissiveness to their husbands, that's the proper adornment. They're the models to follow.

I think about that when I think about all of the magazines. Patricia and I were walking through a market the other night and I walked by the magazine rack and I saw all these magazines, she commented on it...all these magazines with women on the front of them. I can't even tell you the names of them. I remember Self was one of them. Madam Moisselle was another one. And Something Woman...and Something Woman...and this woman and whatever and every one...I didn't see the picture of a man on any magazine, every one of them had a picture of a woman. And we call those women models, don't we? Models of what? For mercy sakes. Models of virtue? No. Models of character? No. Models of purity? No. Models of inner beauty? No. Models of modesty? No. Models of submissiveness? No. Models of what? They're mannequins. Whatever there is is hanging on the outside and there's nothing on the inside that you'd want to follow in most cases. So if you want a model, don't buy Madam Moisselle, get your Bible and look for the holy women who are submissive to their own husbands. They are the models that you are to pattern your life after.

And he names one in verse 6...Sarah. Sarah is a model. She's a model that you ought to look like. She's a model that you ought to pattern your life after. Why? She obeyed Abraham. She's a model of obedience. She called him "lord," that wouldn't be real popular today. "Yes, lord, what do you want?" You see how far you women have drifted? It's biblical. Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him lord, master. She's the model. By the way, "calling him" is in the present participle, present tense, constantly calling him lord, constantly in submission to him.

Why does he choose Sarah here? Because of the next statement. "You have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear." He knows that if you're a believer, you're a child of Abraham by faith, right? You remember that, don't you? Very clearly outlined in Romans 4:11 and 12, in Galatians 3, we are the children of Abraham by faith. And so he's just kind of tagging on to that and saying you not only will be the children of Abraham by faith but you'll be the children of Sarah, Abraham's wife, by following her. So he's saying Christian women who follow the pattern of Sarah can be called Sarah's children, as well as Abraham's children. You're not only children of faith but you're children of submission. You not only follow the faith of Abraham, but the submission of Sarah if you do what is right. That's what he says in verse 6, if you do what is right, without being frightened by any fear. What do you think that means? Intimidated. I believe every single society since the Fall has tried to intimidate a woman who wanted to be submissive to her husband. I don't think that's new. There are fears in being submissive...potential fears. If you're a Christian wife and

you had an unsaved husband, you might be afraid to totally submit for fear of where it might lead you, into what sin it might result...you have to stop short of that. But Peter says don't be intimidated, don't be frightened, don't be fearful, just do what's right and what is right is to submit to your husband. That's the principle. It's the principle of submission. It's the principle of purity. It's the principle of modesty. That's how you win your husband without a word.

You want to win that unsaved spouse? Be submissive, follow the beautiful pattern of Sarah, calling him lord, doing what is right. Be pure and faithful to him in the physical and the emotional area. Be modest, decorate the inner beauty that may manifest itself on the outside and don't get preoccupied with trying to fix the outside when the inside isn't what it ought to be. That's how you live as an alien and a stranger in a marriage with the hope of influencing your husband for Christ.

Finally, verse 7, turn the tables. How does a husband win an unsaved wife? That's less frequent but does happen. "You husbands likewise..." What do you mean "likewise," Peter? You submit too. There's a submission on our part. Go back and read Ephesians 5:21, "Submit yourselves to one another...wives to the husbands, husbands to the wives." We don't submit to the authority of the wife, we don't submit to the leadership of the wife, to the headship of the wife, but we do submit...listen to this...to the needs of the wife. We subordinate our own little world and our own little agenda to meet the needs of the woman who is our wife, even if she's not a Christian. Verse 7 says, "You husbands likewise, you have to submit just like the wife, just like the employee, just like the citizen." He's talking to Christian husbands..."you husbands"...means he's writing to the scattered believers, you're the Christians. And you've got to take care of your wife. By the way, in that culture a man could just kill his wife, as I pointed out. Cato, according to Roman law, says if you were to catch your wife in an act of infidelity you can kill her without a trial. But if she was to catch you, she wouldn't venture to touch you with her finger, she has no such right. So you could just kill your wife if you wanted to get rid of her.

But what is the responsibility of a Christian husband when he has an unsaved wife? Should he bolt the situation and say, "I'm going to find me a Christian girl, you're out of here?" What should be his attitude? Three things. Number one, very briefly, consideration. "Live with your wives in an understanding way." Present tense, constantly be continuing to live with your wife in an understanding...that's gnosis again, that's knowledge, deep experiential knowledge. What do you mean? Sensitive to her needs, sensitive to her feelings. And I believe it includes the sexual aspect as well. It includes intimacy because knowing someone means having an intimate relationship. Remember that? Cain knew his wife and she bore a child. You are to live with your wife in the most intimate way possible, sexually, emotionally, that doesn't change. "Live" is the word sunoiken, it means to be together with someone in the house, stay intimate, stay close. By the way, that same word, sunoikenis used in the Septuagint for intercourse. So he is definitely talking with sexual overtones. You are to live with your wife in a deeply intimate way, don't cut yourself off from her deepest physical emotional needs just because she's not a Christian. You fulfill that dimension. Far

from abusing her or ignoring her or being indifferent to her, you are to be sacrificially sensitive to that unsaved woman. You are to be thoughtful. You are to be respectful.

That would frankly be a revolutionary thing in that culture...for a man to become a Christian and then all of a sudden become totally respectful and sensitive and feeling toward his wife who didn't want anything to do with Christ would really be cross-grained. But that's exactly what it says. You are to nourish her, in the words of Ephesians 5, cherish her, protect her, insulate her, maintain that deep deep sensitive intimacy.

Secondly...secondly, not only is there to be consideration but there is to be chivalry. That's a good old word, isn't it? What does he say in verse 7? "You have to live with her as with a weaker vessel since she is a woman." She's a weaker vessel. What do you mean by that? Well first of all, weaker is a comparative, what's it compared to? Weak, so just keep that in mind, she's weaker but you're...what?...weak. So don't get, you know, over confident about your great abilities. You're weak, she's weaker. What does it refer to? Physical, emotional, natural weakness...a woman is physically weaker. She must be protected. She must be provided for. She must be nourished. She must be cherished. So, husbands, you have an unsaved wife, maintain deep intimacy with her, sensitivity to all of her needs and understand that she needs your protection, she needs your provision.

Third word, companionship. Consideration, chivalry, companionship...I love this. "Grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life." What's the grace of life? It's not eternal life, it's not saving grace. Grace simply means a gift. What's the best gift that life has to offer? Marriage, that's God's grace gift to everybody. You're heirs together. That's a very important statement. He's not speaking spiritually here, he's speaking maritally. We know he's talking about an unsaved wife because he says "you husbands likewise," and he ties it in to 3:1 where you've got a Christian in an unsaved environment, 2:18 where you have a Christian in an unsaved environment, 2:12 and 13 where you have a Christian in an unsaved environment. So he is saying, "Look, you must live with her as a fellow heir of the grace of life...cultivate companionship, friendship, respect her as heirs together of the grace of life, the best that life has to offer, the topping on life." This calls for fellowship, partnership, friendship, companionship, communion...that too is foreign in Peter's day. Women were not allowed at all to associate as friends, even of their own husbands. They were at best to clean the house and bear children.

So he says, "Husbands, do that and if you are not considerate and if you are not chivalrous, and if you are not a companion," look at the end of verse 7, "Your prayers will be...what?...hindered." What do you think he's praying for? He's praying for what? The salvation of his wife. But that prayer is going to be hindered if he is not treating her in this way, with deep intimacy, with great protection, provision and with friendship, companionship. Then his prayers won't be hindered.

So how do you win an unsaved partner? By living an exemplary Christian life, just that simple...just that simple. Whether you're in the government, seeing yourself as a citizen, on the job as an employee, in the home as a marriage partner, the role is always the same...you submit to God's ordained pattern for that social relationship and you live it out to the maximum to please God and God will honor you as a testimony wherever you are. Let's bow together in prayer.

Lord, thank You for such straight forward and encouraging advice and truth. Lord, we understand that there are some even gathered with us in this wonderful service tonight who are in the situation outlined right here, so, Father, we pray not so much for the salvation of the partner as we pray for the virtue of the Christian in that marriage. Bless those wives who have unsaved husbands, make them all that you want them to be. Bless those husbands that have unsaved wives, make them all that a husband should be in order that they might win that partner, in order that their prayers for the salvation of their mate might not be hindered for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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