

# **ELECT EXILES**

“Wives and Husbands”

1 Peter 3:1-7

By David Ritchie

Sunday, June 14, 2020 (Ordinary Time)

## **Welcome**

Good morning, and welcome to Redeemer Christian Church!

*The mission of Redeemer Christian Church is to **declare** the gospel of Jesus Christ with our words and to **display** the gospel of Jesus Christ with our lives to our **neighbors** and the **nations**.*

During this time of pandemic, we have continued this mission. We are proud to announce that our church and *Refugee Language Project* have both contributed key roles in the upcoming *Panhandle Refugee Celebration* [[Show graphic for Panhandle Refugee Celebration](#)]. This will be a televised event that will honor and celebrate our refugee neighbors who live among us. This hour-long program will air on Panhandle PBS on Saturday, June 20, at 2pm. Then, it will also be available for streaming on the online platforms of the organizations that helped make this event happen that same evening at 7pm.

Also, as many of you know, next Sunday, June 21, we will be holding in-person services in our church facility, for the first time in thirteen weeks! I know many of you are eager to worship together in our building, and I want you to know I am eager to worship with you too! For more information about the modifications and health protocols we will be observing, you can visit our website at [RedeemerChristianChurch.com](http://RedeemerChristianChurch.com).

For those that are not ready or willing to attend an in-person gathering yet, you can Livestream our services on Facebook Live as they happen, or access them on our YouTube channel later on Sunday after we are able to upload our video there. We love you and will be here for you when you are ready.

Lastly, I do want to remind you consider financially giving to support our mission. Every dollar given goes to directly support our ministry to our church family, our city, and people across the world. You can give online at **RedeemerChristianChurch.com**. You can give by texting “**RedeemerGives**” to **77977**. Or you can give by mailing a check to our physical property at **3701 S. Soncy**.

We sincerely thank you for your support!

## **Preface**

Today, after a two-week break, we will be continuing our sermon series on the New Testament book of 1 Peter. The title of this series is “Elect Exiles.”

To bring you up to speed, the Apostle Peter is in the city of Rome. He hears about a group of Christian churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) who are experiencing persecution for their faith in Jesus. The culture around them is misunderstanding them and maligning them. And against this backdrop, Peter writes them a letter of pastoral encouragement that today we refer to as 1 Peter.

In this letter, Peter calls Christians to embrace their identity of “elect exiles” (1 Pt 1:1). They are to live as God’s chosen and beloved people, who are nevertheless living a world that is not their own. As elect exiles, Christians are to allow the hope of the gospel to saturate their hearts in such a way that it drives them toward a holiness in their lives that looks distinctly different to the world around them. In other words, we are not to look like the kingdom of the world, think like the kingdom of the world, or value what the kingdom of the world values. Rather, we are to display a way of life that is possible only through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Whereas the kingdom of this world values the tactics of power and coercion, Christians are to display the radical power of sacrificial love and humble submission, as a way of imaging the cross of Jesus Christ. As we have seen, this posture of sacrifice and submission gives us a radically counter-cultural way to engage our neighbors, to engage politics, to engage the workplace, and, as we will see today, it gives us a radically counter-cultural way to understand the relationship between wives and husbands.

So, with that in mind, let’s turn our attention to 1 Peter 3:1-7.

### **Scripture Reading**

*“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, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— 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. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. 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” (1 Peter 3:1–7, ESV).*

*Our Heavenly Father, you are the author of all creation and the author of our redemption. You have loved your people with steadfast, faithful love. Today, may your Holy Spirit give us eyes to see and ears to hear, as we submit our hearts before your word. Confront us where we need to be confronted. Comfort us where we need to be*

*comforted. And lead us into the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, your Son, and our Lord. AMEN.*

## **Introduction**

Jesus was traveling toward Jerusalem one last time, and vast crowds began to follow him, hoping to hear his teachings and witness his power.<sup>1</sup> On this journey, a young Judean man approached Jesus to ask him a very serious question [show image of Armenian Icon of Christ and Rich Young Ruler].

The young man was ambitious and eager. You get the idea that when he set his mind on something, he achieved it. At this moment, his mind was set on the most ultimate and holy of aspirations – eternal life. And he knew that if anyone had the answer, it was Jesus of Nazareth.

So, he asked Jesus, “*What good deed must I do to have eternal life?*”

Jesus told the man that really there is only one who is good, and that is God himself. However, if this young man wished to enter into the life of this good God, he must keep the commandments of God.

The young responded, “Which commandments do I need to keep?” Jesus said, “All of them.” Then, the young man said something shocking. He told Jesus, “I have kept all of these commandments, but what do I lack.”

And the crazy thing is that Jesus didn’t correct this man for being a liar or a self-righteous hypocrite. Instead, Jesus turned to this young man and said, “If you want to be complete, go and sell all that you have, give it to the poor, and come and *follow me*” [Show image of “Christ and the Rich Young Ruler” by Heinrich Hoffman (1888)].

The young man heard the stories about Jesus. Jesus was a good man and a Godly man. Jesus was a man who spoke the very words of God. Jesus was a man who moved miraculous power and wonder. More than that, Jesus was loving, kind, and caring – a man who befriended the outcast fed the hungry and healed the sick. And now, as he has called his twelve disciples, Jesus personally calls this rich young ruler to follow him as well.

But the tragedy of this story is that he couldn’t follow Jesus [Show image of “For He Had Great Possessions” (1894) by George Frederic Watts]. He wouldn’t follow Jesus. His possessions, his achievements, his wealth meant too much to him. He wanted eternal life, and he wanted to follow Jesus. *But Jesus asked for too much.* And, so, the rich young ruler walked away with sorrow.

I bring up this story today because I once heard a fellow pastor say that the topics of ***sex, marriage, and gender are to our culture what wealth was to the rich***

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<sup>1</sup> See Mt 19:16-22

**young ruler.**<sup>2</sup> As a society, we may think that there is a lot to appreciate about Jesus. But when he dares to assert his lordship over aspects of our lives that we consider untouchable, we revolt.

With great sadness, I have seen people who have come to this church, people who I love and who I consider my friends, with whom this scenario has played out. They are attracted to Jesus. They are drawn to the teaching of God's word. They long for Christian community and aspects of the kingdom of God. But when it comes to what the Bible teaches about sex, marriage, and gender, it's a deal-breaker.

And I encourage you, if this is a sensitive subject for you or someone you love, open your heart to the possibility of God's word. *If there is a God who is wise and good, wouldn't it make sense that his truth would challenge us from time to time? Is it possible that the places where his truth initially seems most offensive us are also the places where his truth is most able to set us free from our own cultural biases so that we might live as elect exiles?*

A few years ago, our youngest son Simon Peter tried to run into the street. My wife told him to stop, but he kept going and was purposely disobeying her. As a result, my wife had to speak loudly, firmly, and correctively to him. When she did this, he cried and said, "Momma, you broke my heart!" He did not and could not understand that what to him looked like a game, my wife saw was a life or death issue. You see, two cars were coming from both directions. If they were to hit him, they would have killed him. So, my wife spoke words that were authoritative, strong, and urgent. My wife limited my son because she loves him.

Our culture plays a lot of games with marriage, sexuality, and gender. God's word might break your heart. But he speaks corrective truth and limitation because he loves us more than we could imagine. We need to believe that maybe God sees consequences that we can't see.

The passage of Scripture we are studying today is counter-cultural, to say the least. But when you sign up to walk through a book of the Bible, you can't just skip the sections that are hard to hear.

Today, we are going to talk about how wives and husbands are to relate to one another within the context of a Christian marriage. Needless to say, our culture is very divided and very confused when it comes to gender roles and marriage. Thus, it is very important for Christians to discern a specifically biblical understanding of this topic.

### **Exposition**

So, with that in mind, I want to ask three basic questions of our text, as it relates to the relationship between husbands and wives: 1.) *What does the Bible teach about wives and husbands?* 2.) *How does this look in real life?* and 3.) *Why does it matter?*

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<sup>2</sup> Vassar, J.R. Acts 29 West Texas Regional Quarterly Event. Redeemer Church in Lubbock, Texas.

## 1.) What does the Bible teach about wives and husbands?

Now, as a whole, the Bible teaches that men and women are absolutely equal in God's eyes in regards to their dignity and value. However, the Bible also conveys God created men and women differently in a way that complements one another. Thus, men and women are fundamentally equal, but also different. According to Scripture, the genders that we refer to as "man" and "woman" are not constructs of society, but structures within the fabric of God's good creation. That may so sound simple and obvious to some of you, but this view is actually a direct confrontation with both *ancient* and *modern* views of gender.

Verse 7 of our text today teaches that women are to be viewed with men as equal "*heirs*" of the "*grace of life*." That statement would have been a challenge to the dominant way of thinking in the ancient world. In the ancient world, to be a woman was to be a second-class citizen with less inherent worth and rights as a man. The philosopher Aristotle even taught that women were a lesser form than men.<sup>3</sup>

The Bible, on the other hand, taught a high view of women that was unparalleled in the ancient world. The Bible contains examples of women who are warriors (Deborah), diplomats (Esther), Biblical scholars (Priscilla), and the very first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus (Mary Magdalene). You can't look at a chapter like Proverbs 31 and say that the Bible has a low view of women or the potential of women in society. But the Bible isn't afraid to unconditionally affirm the value of women being wives and moms either. *This unqualified value for all women regardless of their role or occupation is the truest form of feminism.* And, in fact, you may be surprised to know that the earliest forms of feminism in the U.S. were birthed out of evangelical churches and led by evangelical leaders, like Susan B. Anthony [[show portrait of Susan B. Anthony \(1820-1906\)](#)], who wanted to see women have voting rights and equal pay for equal work.

But the Bible challenges today's culture as well. And there is no doubt that a text like 1 Peter 3 is very much a challenge to our contemporary society's more extremist versions of feminism. Particularly, the phrase "*wives be subject to your own husbands*" can be very hard on modern ears (1 Pt 3:1a). But what such a statement shows us is that while the Bible teaches that women are equal with men, there is such a thing a difference in roles, especially as it relates to the home.

Here, Scripture is calling women to a voluntary and non-coerced posture of submission, not to all men, but to their "*own husbands*." It is less like a private obeying the orders of a sergeant and more like letting a man "lead" in a dance. There is a mutuality of love, with deference, respect, and honor.

I really appreciate my wife Kate's take on verses like this. Now, my wife has a professional degree from a liberal arts college in Ohio. She is very talented and has the

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<sup>3</sup> Wright, N.T. *The Early Christian Letters for Everyone: James, Peter, and Judah*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 75

capacity to earn a significant income if she so desired. However, in this season of life, we have three young children, one of which has special needs. Thus, she and I feel like it is the best decision for her to stay at home while I work for our income. Other couples in similar situations might come to different decisions, and that is *okay*.

But my wife feels like Scripture passages like 1 Peter 3 portrays the *value* of what it means to be a wife and a mom in ways that mainstream culture does not. In the last several years, I have watched the miracle of my wife carrying children, delivering children, and nursing children. I could never do this. The distinctly maternal love that she gives to my boys is something I could never give them. These aspects of her femininity shouldn't be looked down upon as wasted potential. Now, can a woman be a woman without being a wife or mom? Of course. However, such distinctly feminine virtues should be celebrated and valued aspects of womanhood that are not interchangeable with men.

But instead, too often some more recent forms of feminism define "women's liberty" by embracing some of the worst aspects of masculinity like sexual promiscuity, selfish ambition, and workaholism.

The other side to this coin is that Scripture challenges men to be servant-leaders in the home who model sacrificial service in their marriages. Now, the concept of male headship in marriage is, again, a tough idea for modern minds. But we must view the responsibility of leadership in light of the ultimate leader who was Jesus [show image of "Jesus Washing Peter's Feet" (1852-56) by Ford Madox Brown]. When his disciples wanted to argue about who was the greatest among them, Jesus wrapped his waist in a servant's towel and proceeded to wash the feet of his disciples (Jn 13:3-15). This is true leadership, and it should be the aspiration of every married man to serve his wife in the same way.

Now, I want to be very clear these verses must never excuse abusive or degrading situations. You should never submit to your husband if he would lead you to sin against God. You should never submit yourself to an abusive situation. And if you are in a situation like that, please contact the church, because we are here to help you.

Nevertheless, what Peter is saying that when Christian women submit to their husbands, it is a way that they proclaim the gospel with their lives. In its original context, the primary aim of this passage was to equip Christian women to evangelize non-Christian husbands: "...so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives" (1 Pt 3:1b). In fact, the influence of Christian women in marriage is a major reason that Christianity grew despite the best imperial attempts to crush it.<sup>4</sup>

## **2.) How does this look in real life?**

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<sup>4</sup> Wright, 74.

Now, I do not think in anyway Peter is giving a comprehensive guide to biblical womanhood or manhood in these seven verses. But I do think he gives us a few major ways to embrace our various roles, by showing both men and women major pitfalls to avoid.

The first charge is toward women in the way that they see *beauty*. Look at verses 3 and 4: *“Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—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.”*

These words are pushback against an ancient view of women that believed women were good for nothing other than to look pretty. Peter believes women are image-bearers of God created for more than what ancient society thought. Now, there are two ways to misunderstand Peter: a.) to think that he is banning Christian women from trying to look nice, or b.) to not take Peter’s warning seriously

In essence, Peter desires for Christian women to be liberated from slavery to body image. To the women watching this, culture may tell you that your worth is in your sex-appeal, but culture is wrong. Outward beauty is not a bad thing, by any means. But if you are a Christian woman, you should ask yourself: how much thought, time, intentionality, and energy do you give toward your spiritual development versus the development of your outward beauty?

The second way Peter challenges Christian women is to be liberated from lives that are led by *fear*, and he uses the Old Testament character of Sarah as an example: *“For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening” (1 Pt 3:5-6).*

Perhaps there are many of you watching or listening, who would say that anxiety is your greatest challenge in life. It was certainly a challenge for Sarah, who was consumed with anxiety about having a child. That anxiety even led her into great sin.

However, Peter uses Sarah as a positive example. Why? Because she respected her husband enough to call him “lord.” Now, this was a lower-case “lord,” which was simply a term of respect, like “sir” or “mister.” Sarah certainly didn’t deify or worship her husband. And the only time she ever called her husband “lord” was in Genesis 18:12 when she was speaking to God about her husband. Now, this is interesting on a few levels. The context was that God had just told Abraham that in one year – even though Abraham and Sarah were in their nineties – they were going to have their first son together. Sarah laughed at the thought, and God called her on the carpet. But God’s response to Sarah is profound. He said, *“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”* (Gen 18:14).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Helm, David R. *1 & 2 Peter and Jude: Sharing in Christ’s Sufferings*. Preaching the Word commentary series. Ed. R. Kent Hughes. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 105-6.

Maybe you are in a hard marriage situation, and it is filling you with anxiety. Maybe you are tempted to be led by fear in your life. Today, God gives you the same word he gave to Sarah: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

I’m not saying to trust the Lord is easy. But if God is sovereign and good, it means that you can be liberated from being controlled by fear. You can trust in him, because he is trustworthy. Do what is right, even when you are scared.

The next challenge is for Christian husbands. So, for Christian husbands hearing and watching this, you need to know that God wants you to live with your wife “*in an understanding way*” (1 Pt 3:7). This means that married men are to be humbly considerate and passionate pursuers of their wives. Here, Peter is giving some much-needed pushback against the sinful tendencies of both abusive machismo and irresponsible passivity of men.

Living in an understanding way means that you must take the time and effort to emotionally draw close to your wife; to understand her hopes and fears; to help her feel safe, secure, and loved; to serve her; to seek to understand her perspective. Practically this demands regular rhythms daily and weekly moments of connection (i.e., talking about your day, your week, going over each other’s schedules, date nights, and praying together). This means that you are to intentionally create a space for disagreement and pushback. If your wife is afraid to talk to you about important things or is never allowed to disagree with you, *you are failing in this area, and you need to repent.*

Now, what about this comment concerning women as “*the weaker vessel*”? Is Peter devaluing women? Not at all. Peter is simply pointing out that, typically, most adult men are, on average, larger and physically stronger than most women. And in his mind, rather than this being a reason to be domineering toward one’s wife, it is a reason to treat her as precious and utterly unique.

When Kate and I registered for our wedding, we registered two types of dishware. The first set of dishes were plastic plates and bowls from Target. They are tough, durable, and cheap. They have been through a lot, and if they were to break, it wouldn’t cause us any emotional distress. But the second type of dishware we registered for was china. And we treat this dishware much differently. We’re not going to give our four-year-old a bowl made out of china for him to use to eat goldfish crackers in the backyard. We’re going to treat that type of dishware with care because it is precious and valuable.

Simply said, husbands, you are not to speak roughly to your wife or treat her commonly. As David Helm writes, “*Your wife deserves nothing less than your most elevated and intimate care, concern, love, and honor.*”<sup>6</sup>

I’ll look at one more thing before we move to the next point. Let’s read all of verse 7: “*Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to*

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<sup>6</sup> Helm, 107.



*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.*” Now, the term “your prayers” is a plural term. It presumes that Christian men are praying for and with their wives. It means that part of being a Christian husband is to cultivate spirituality within the marriage. But even more, it provides a powerful motive for being a godly husband: *“that your prayers may not be hindered.”* If you fail to lovingly lead your wife, God will oppose you. And you don’t want to be opposed by an Almighty God.

### **3.) Why does this matter?**

Gender roles within marriage are not a prison imposed by society or a pick your own adventure created by self. Gender is created by the Creator. Gender is not an arbitrary construct of society, rather it is one of the key ways in which we bear the Image of God. Genesis 1:27 says, *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

Thus, when a Christian wife submits to a godly husband, the world can see a glimpse of Eden before the fall. Adam (the first man) was designed to serve his wife as a servant-leader. Eve (the first woman) was designed to come alongside Adam as a co-equal, who, nevertheless, submitted to her husband’s leadership.

But, then, a serpent came into the equation. He deceived the man and woman into believing that God’s design and God’s law could not be trusted [show image of the stained-glass window]. He distorted God’s truth and tempted Adam and Eve to sin. Adam should have led well and intervened when the serpent approached his wife, but instead, he passively abdicated his role and responsibility as a husband. Eve should have submitted to the word of God, instead, she submitted to the deception of the serpent (cf. 1 Tim 2:13-14). So, they sinned against God, and their failure in the garden is the source of all the brokenness and pain in our fractured world.

But there was another character in the Bible who faced a similar challenge in the garden. He was tempted to say “no” to God and “yes” to his preferences [show image of “Christ in Gethsemane” (1886) by Heinrich Hoffman]. But although he was totally co-equal with God the Father, Jesus Christ submitted to the will his heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Rom 5:12-21). Though he was Lord, he submitted himself even to death, he became marred beyond recognition, and without fear, he pursued his bride in love.

In the first garden, the act of one man brought sin in the world. In the second garden, the act of one man brought redemption into the world. The question for us today is: *whose image will we choose to bear?*

Redeemer Christian Church, may we be a people who bear the image of Christ, our humble Lord. May we be a people who invite God to rule and reign in every aspect of our lives! May we be a people whose lives and marriages reflect the hope of the gospel! As elect exiles, may our lives shine as lights that point to a better way, a better savior, better kingdom, and a better love that is to come! AMEN.

## **Discussion Starters for Gospel Communities**

- 1. Re-read 1 Peter 3:1-7 and summarize the main ideas of this passage.*
- 2. How does this theme of submission continue a theme established earlier in this letter (see 1 Pt 2:13, 18)?*
- 3. In what ways should this passage challenge Christian women?*
- 4. In what ways should this passage challenge Christian men?*
- 5. Why is a Christian vision for marriage important, but often contested by both ancient and modern cultures? How does this passage fit into the theme of Christian's being "elect exiles"?*

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