

A man named Stumpy and his wife Martha went to the state fair every year and every year when Stumpy saw the antique bi-plane he would say, "Martha, I'd like to ride in that airplane."

Martha always replied, "I know Stumpy, but that airplane ride costs 10 dollars, and 10 dollars is 10 dollars."

One year Stumpy said, "Martha, I'm 81 years old. If I don't ride that airplane, I might never get another chance."

Martha replied, "Stumpy, that airplane ride cost 10 dollars, and 10 dollars is 10 dollars."

The pilot overheard them and said, "Folks, I'll make you a deal. I'll take you both up for a ride. If you can stay quiet for the entire ride and not say one word, I won't charge you anything: but if you say one word its 10 dollars."

Stumpy and Martha agreed and up they went. The pilot did all kinds of twists and turns, rolls and dives, but not a word was heard. He did all his tricks over again, but still not a word.

When they landed, the pilot turned to Stumpy and said, "Man, I did everything I could think of to get you to yell out, but you didn't."

Stumpy replied, "Well, I was gonna say something when Martha fell out, but 10 dollars is 10 dollars."

I'm not a marriage counselor, but it seems that neither Stumpy or Martha truly recognized the value of each other, and that's what we are going to look at this morning as we pick up where we left off in **1 Peter**. Now if you recall back in November, before we took our Christmas break, we explored some passages related to the very unpopular topic of submission, and this morning we are going to continue with that topic, and since some time has lapsed, I feel it's important that we first take some time to revisit the meaning of submission from a biblical perspective.

That word "submit" is the Greek word "*hupotássō*" which is a military term that that literally means "*to rank under*." It speaks of the way that an army is organized among levels of rank. You have generals and colonels and captains and sergeants and privates. There are levels of rank, and you are obligated to respect those in a higher rank. So, it carries the idea of recognizing one's role and willingly yielding to the authority of another. That's what it means, and the interesting thing about submission is that it does not diminish one's importance, or dignity, or honor. For example, a sergeant may be more talented than a general, but he is still under the rank of the general and has to submit. And as an ultimate example to think about, as a child, Jesus willingly submitted to His parents Joseph and Mary, and yet He was God in the flesh. He willingly subjected Himself to their authority.

Now if you remember, we also looked at two applications of submission – the first being a command to submit to the governmental authority that God had established over us, and the second command pertained to slaves submitting to their masters – even harsh masters. Granted, these were hard commands to follow, especially under difficult conditions, but submission was required none the less, except when a believer was ordered to do something against God’s clear expressed will.

This morning we are going to tackle yet another difficult application of submission – an extremely unpopular one – this time as it pertains to marriage. Just so you know, Peter will be starting with the wives and I will do the same, but there will be some direction for the men as well, so no one should feel ignored or left out this morning, and I will give everybody a reason to be angry with me. So, turn with me to **1 Peter, Chapter 3**, and we will begin with **verses 1-2**.

¹In the same way, you wives, be subject to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won over without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²as they observe your pure and respectful behavior.

Before we dive into this passage, I need to put it into some context for you. In Peter’s day, during the early church, wives frequently came to Christ when their husbands had not, and as you might imagine, this became a significant issue for these Christian wives because a husband expected his wife to follow his customs and his religious practices – often times involving pagan worship rituals. And if the Christian wife had different beliefs and refused to worship like her husband did – which was unthinkable in those days because she had no rights, she could expect serious marriage problems and maybe even persecution. This is what these Christian wives faced, they were confused, and they needed some guidance in what to do. So, Peter gives some instruction to these Christian wives of unbelieving husbands but his guidance also applies to Christians wives of Christian husbands just as well, because there are several other passages in the Bible that teach this.

So, if you notice, Peter begins by saying, “**In the same way, you wives, be subject to your own husbands**” meaning, in the same way you are called to submit to governmental authority, in the same way slaves are called to submit to their masters – in the same way that Jesus submitted to the will of His Father – wives are to submit to their husbands. That’s what we are told. God wants Christian wives to be subject to their husbands – even unbelieving husbands. Granted this is very unpopular, it’s counter-cultural, and some may even suggest it’s outdated, but as I see it, it is the most accurate interpretation of this passage,

and Peter is not alone in his guidance, as the Apostle Paul also speaks on this same topic several times as well. As one example, Paul says in **Ephesians 5:22-24**:

“Wives, subject yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.”

Paul says the wife is to accept her role in the marriage under the leadership of her husband whom God has placed as the head of the family team. That’s God’s design for marriage, but listen up, that in no way suggests that wives are inferior to their husbands. They are not inferior in character. They are not inferior in intelligence. They are not inferior in spirituality. They are not inferior in talents. They have simply been given a role on the family team that places them under the leadership of their husband. They are to submit to their husbands; however, just like in the previous commands related to submission, if the wishes, or desires, or the needs of a husband involve a clear and direct violation of the Word of God – then submission does not apply.

So, what is the purpose for all of this? Why would a Christian wife submit to an unbelieving husband? Well, let’s look at **verses 1-2** again. Peter says,

¹In the same way, you wives, be subject to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won over without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²as they observe your pure and respectful behavior.

In context, the reason is evangelism. The goal is the salvation of the unbelieving husband, and Peter gives a strategy that has two parts – a *don’t* and a *do*. The *don’t* is: don’t nag. Sorry for being blunt, but that’s what he means when he says *“if any of them do not believe the Word of God, they may be won without words.”*

Peter is picturing a husband whose wife has repeatedly shared the gospel with him, but there comes a time when the effort and the pressure can actually become counterproductive. So, the strategy is – if the husband rejects the Word, then the wife should just momentarily back off and commit herself to evangelism without a word.

The *do* part is for the wife to create an atmosphere in the home were the husband sees the changes that Jesus has made in her life. It may actually be more effective for the wife to submit as God says – to be faithful and respectful towards her husband, and to allow God to have His way with her husband so that he may be

more receptive to the gospel. Remember it is God who draws people unto Himself, it is God who convicts, and it is God who saves.

Then Peter continues with his guidance to wives and he says in **verse 3**,

³Your adornment must not be merely the external—braiding the hair, wearing gold jewelry, or putting on apparel; ⁴but it should be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

There are some who consider this passage to be a ban by Peter on braiding hair, putting on makeup, or wearing jewelry, but I know that's wrong, because if it were a ban, then it would also include the wearing of clothing as Peter mentioned – and that could be a problem. So, that's not what Peter is telling women.

The desire for outward beauty is natural – and it's not a bad thing to want to look your best – to look attractive, and sometimes we need a little help from cleansing and grooming products and beauty aids. Peter is not banning the use of these things or adornments as he calls them, but he does stress the need to put them in their proper place. In other words, don't go overboard with all your effort and all your time trying to patch up the outside while totally ignoring the inside. Don't get so preoccupied with your looks, spending 5 hours in front of the mirror and only 5 minutes in your Bible and in prayer. Peter is telling these women to recognize that the inner beauty of their character is far more valuable and important and actually more attractive than mere outward appearances. Peter says, that's where true and lasting beauty really lies.

Carre Otis was once among the world's top super models for 17 years, beginning her career at the age of 14. To prepare for each photo shoot, she routinely binged and purged, took laxatives and diet pills, and exercised intensely. Being extremely thin made possible a modeling career that earned her \$20,000 a day, but she became dependent on cocaine and heroin to keep her on a diet. The actor, Micky Rourke, married this top super model, but her outward beauty couldn't keep them together. Soon after they married, they divorced, and her destructive lifestyle led to a mental and emotional breakdown.

After treatment at a mental institution, Carre Otis emerged committed to changing her life. She began eating normally and abstaining from all drugs and alcohol. She gained 30 pounds, went from a size 2 to a size 12, and became successful as “plus size” model.

Some time ago, on her 32nd birthday, a friend invited her on a humanitarian mission to distribute clothes and toys to kids living in orphanages in Nepal. For the first time she saw what starvation really was. Looking back on her experience, she explained to reporter Cynthia McFadden:

“It wasn’t about somebody being concerned that they were going to fit into a size, and that’s why they weren’t eating. It was because there wasn’t food to be had. There was no money to get food...”

*Then Carre said, “If somebody asked me, ‘**When did you feel the most beautiful?**’ I would say, when I was traveling through the Himalayas in dirty clothes, dirty hair, hadn’t had a shower in a week, and was giving kids clothes. That’s when I felt like the most beautiful woman, and the woman I’ve always aspired to be.”*

True beauty, lasting beauty, comes from the inside – it comes from the heart – a heart set apart for God. Let’s look at **verses 5-6**.

⁵ For in this way the holy women of former times, who hoped in God, also used to adorn themselves, being subject to their own husbands, ⁶ just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; and you have proved to be her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

To encourage wives, Peter refers to **the holy women who hoped in God**. As we have discussed in prior messages, the word “holy” means “*set apart*.” These women were set apart to God, their hope was found in God, not necessarily their husbands. This is what Paul alluded to back in **Ephesians 5:22** when he said,

“Wives, subject yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”

This is so important, so please listen. What Paul is saying is the wife’s submission to her husband is actually an act of her worship and a holy service to the Lord. In other words, she is not submitting only to her husband, she is submitting to the Lord Himself – for His sake, for His reputation, for His honor.

Now back in our passage in **1 Peter**, Peter singles out Sarah – the wife of Abraham as being a godly example for wives to follow. Although Sarah made some crazy mistakes, her attitude was one of loving submission to Abraham throughout the course of their married life, especially as she willingly followed Abraham into uncharted territory. So, Peter encouraged these wives to follow Sarah’s example, and the example of other holy women to **do what is right**, adding that their

behavior towards their husbands should not be out of **fear** – and this leads us to the men in **verse 7**.

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

So, if you noticed there were six verses devoted to wives but only one verse for the husbands. Maybe the wives needed more detail, but don't brag men, because apparently, God knew we needed a threat tagged to the end of our one verse.

The subject of submission by the wife is often misunderstood, distorted, and even abused by well-meaning Christian men who have damaged their marriages, assuming it is their God-given role to get their wives to submit, but interestingly enough, God never said it was the husband's role to get their wives to submit to them. It's not written anywhere. Contrary to what some might think, husbands do not have unlimited authority and do not have the right to mistreat and bully and dominate their wives under the guise of submission, and husbands who treat their wives in this manner are abusing their role and have no biblical grounds to stand on. I just wanted to put that out there before we looked at our one verse.

If you noticed, just like for the wives, Peter uses the phrase “**in the same way**” again. **Does that mean husbands should submit to their wives?** Yes, both are to imitate Christ and submit to each other. Paul said in **Ephesians 5:21**,

“Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”

Husbands you are to submit to your wives – but in a different way. Husbands don't submit to the leadership of the wife because that is not her biblical role on the family team, but they do submit in other ways as they live with their wives.

Husbands, in submission, you have to care for your wife, you have to be considerate of her needs, you have to be sensitive to her feelings, to study and understand her, to be thoughtful and respectful of her. That's how husbands are to submit – putting aside their own interests in order to love and serve their wives.

So, both the husband and the wife are to submit to each other in their own way, and remember Eve did not come from Adam's head nor from Adam's heel – she came from his side. We are to be loving and respecting and considerate companions to our side-kicks – our spouses. This is what submission looks like in a marriage.

Now, when it comes to the wife being described as **someone weaker** or a weaker vessel, Peter is not referring to her moral character or intellectual ability or to her spiritual perception. Rather, generally speaking, he seems to be referring to the difference in the physical qualities between men and women.

Consider this contrast as an explanation. Husbands are like Ford F-150 4x4 trucks that you throw bricks and lumber in. It's strong and rugged, you can take it off road if necessary, and you can push and pull with it. The wife on the other hand is like a Corvette. Finely tuned and delicate, stunning on the outside and soft on the inside, super complicated, very responsive in handling and expensive. It's not made for strength, it's not made for off road adventures, it's not made to carry cargo, it's not made to push and pull – it's weak that way, but it's extremely fast and it will drive circles around a Ford F-150 all day long. They are different and, in a marriage – that's actually a benefit. That's valuable.

Husbands, we need to recognize the value of our wives because they are joint heirs with Christ just like us, and because we are given a threat. Yes, it had to come to that – God knows men are so hard-headed that we need to be threatened.

Peter tells us that if husbands don't get their act together and treat their wives as they should, their prayers will be hindered – in other words, a husband will be unfit to pray. To put it bluntly, a husband's spiritual health depends, in a significant way, on how he treats and values his wife.

Some years ago, Reader's Digest published a fictional story called "Johnny Lingo's Eight-Cow Wife." In the story, a reporter traveled to a remote island in the South Pacific, and as the reporter interviewed various islanders, everyone he spoke to talked about this one man named Johnny Lingo.

The islanders explained to the reporter how Johnny had come to the main island during the fall festival time to find himself a wife. And find one he did – he paid 8 cows for her!

Now the reporter knew enough about the island customs to be thoroughly impressed. He knew that 2 or 3 cows would buy a fair to average wife, and 4 or 5 cows could buy a really good one.

"Goodness," he said to the islander, "8 cows! She must have a beauty that takes your breath away!"

The islander replied, “Well, she wasn’t ugly, but she wasn’t a beauty either. Sarita was scrawny. She walked with her shoulders hunched over and her head bowed down. Her cheeks were pale with no color in them. Her eyes never opened beyond a slit and her hair was a tangled mess. She was afraid to speak above a whisper, and she never interacted with the others.”

“She was three months past the age to marry when Johnny came and no one had made an offer for her. Her father was worried that no one would want her, and he was willing to accept only 1 cow for her.”

The reporter asked, “But how did he get 8 cows for her? Isn’t that an extraordinary number?”

“That amount has never been paid before,” said the islander, “and everyone here has been confused ever since. We can’t figure out why Johnny paid 8 cows for a girl any man here could have bought for only 1 or 2.”

“Some say he was blind with love. Others suspect trickery – something in the punch that muddled Johnny’s brain. Sarita’s father was convinced that Johnny had gone mad and decided to seal the deal, before he came to his senses.”

“Johnny took Sarita back to his house on the neighboring island, and we haven’t seen him since.”

“8 cows,” the reporter thought to himself. “Unbelievable!” He had to meet this Johnny Lingo. So, the next day he set sail for the neighboring island.

When the reporter met Johnny, he seemed so earnest, so sober, so unlikely to go mad. He wondered even more what had made him behave with such recklessness on the main island.

So, the reporter said to Johnny, “I heard so much about you. . . and your wife. No one can figure out why you paid 8 cows for her. I wanted to ask you, why?”

There was a long, awkward pause. And then the reporter saw this woman. She was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. This lady was different. The fresh flowers that pinned back her lustrous black hair, accented the glow of her cheeks. She walked with dignity – her shoulders back and her head held high. Her eyes sparkled with pride. As she turned to leave, she moved with such grace and enchantment that she looked like a queen.

The reporter could barely utter a word, “She’s glorious. Who is she?”

Johnny responded, “That’s Sarita. My wife.”

The reporter looked at Johnny with a blank stare. Surely this was not the same woman the islanders had talked about. He thought to himself, “How could she be so different from the way the others had described her?”

Johnny broke the silence. “Do you ever think,” he asked, “what it must mean to a woman to know that her husband has met with her father to settle the lowest possible price for which she can be bought? And then later, when all the women talk (as women do), they boast of what their husbands paid for them. One says 4 cows, another maybe 6. How does she feel, the woman who was sold for 1 or 2? This could not happen to my Sarita.”

“Don’t get me wrong. I loved Sarita and no one else. I wanted her to be happy, of course. But I wanted so much more for her than that.” “I wanted an 8-cow wife.”

Husbands and wives, with most everything to include marriage, maybe especially marriage – you get out what you put in. If you want an 8-cow spouse, if you value your husband, if you value your wife, if you want the very best for your marriage, then imitate Christ, follow God’s word – and yes, submit to one another.

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