

1 Peter 3:1-7

“Asserting Your Rights, Or Honoring Your Role?”

Paul the apostle said, “...*the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,*” 2 Cor 10:4-5 Now when we think of spiritual weapons of warfare, certain elements/instruments or tools that have been entrusted to us so as to fight the good fight of faith, pull down strongholds and cast down arguments, there are a couple of things that come readily to mind aren't there? For instance we think of prayer and the power therein, prayer can pull down strongholds and break chains, remove scales from eyes and calluses from hearts so that people can be free to see Jesus for who He really is. We think of the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, how that it's able to cut to the quick like a surgeon's scalpel piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. God's word gets straight to the heart of the matter which is always what; a matter of the heart...

But I would suggest to you that there is a 3rd weapon of our warfare that's often times overlooked and not employed because perhaps it's not seen as assertive though it is aggressive. Perhaps we'd consider it to be more passive aggressive, it's sort of a covert kind of operation, it's a little more on the stealthy side of things, it's the secret weapon of *submission*.

Something that society deems as a sign of weakness, however when placed in its proper place within the believer's arsenal it becomes a very powerful weapon through which we fight the good fight of faith silently showing Jesus to everyone who's within the sphere of our influence.

How is it that we're to show the kindness and character of Jesus to those who are around us even those who are in authority over us? By the sweet spirit of service through the means of *submission*, but understand this; submission isn't only a *service* to those *around* you and to those in authority *over* you, it's also a *strategy* that Christ employs *through* you to draw others to Himself. So Peter has been exhorting us that when it comes to our role as believers who are *in* the world but not *of* the world that we're to keep our conduct honorable. We're to be submissive to government authority, we're to be submissive to employers as employees. However it doesn't end with the way I conduct myself publicly there's also order that God has established in my family that I (as a husband, a wife or a child) am to submit myself to accordingly.

Now understand that when we talk about biblical submission we're not implying a giving way in light of a dominant/overbearing force in my life. In the world of MMA (mixed martial arts) there are 2 ways you can win a fight, 1 is by knockout, the other is by submission. However in that environment the word "submission" implies the fact that I'm doing everything I can to achieve the dominant role, yet because of the fact that you have overpowered me, you've left me with out choice but to submit to you. You've got some sort of hold on me and if I don't *submit* you will seriously injure (or if it were a street fight perhaps kill) me therefore I submit to you. That is not at all the idea behind Christian submission. Submission as a believer is to be done willfully, in humility; not because you're better than me or are dominating me, but because I want to obey the word of God, display the grace of God (by the power of the Spirit of God) and the character of Christ in me to you. Again be it in a secular society or at home in my family that's my role, so with that...

Vs1-2

It's true, our society is one that kicks against submission, but you guys if you want to find fulfillment in your family, if you want to have things function efficiently than you're going to have to establish your home biblically. There has to be a willful compliance with scriptural authority. Now I want to say this delicately because it can be twisted quite easily but as believers we need to be way less concerned about our human rights and way more concerned with our biblical roles. Remember the illustration of Christ back in Ch 2 Vs 21-25, we discussed it last week. Jesus didn't concern Himself with His rights, He concerned Himself with His role in God's plan and submitted Himself accordingly.

Now, "Wives, likewise be submissive to your own husbands," 2 things. #1 We want to emphasize again this word, "submissive." What does it mean, what doesn't it mean? The word means in a military sense, "to rank under." As a soldier I have people who rank over me therefore I submit to them accordingly...Now that doesn't mean that the person is necessarily superior to me. I might be in better shape physically, I might be sharper intellectually yet because he or she has been given a role of authority I submit myself willingly. In a non-military sense it speaks of "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden". In this regard Christ (though completely equal *with* the Father in dignity, importance, honor and glory) submitted Himself *to* the Father so as to cooperate with His plan and carry the burden of our sin. Jesus was subject to His parents on the earth, yet wasn't lower than them in any way. So when we read of the command to wives to be submissive to their husbands we should never receive from that an implication of inferiority in the wife personally or that she is somehow lesser spiritually. There's complete equality yet varying roles.

When God created Adam and Eve you don't find where God said to Adam, "Here, have dominion over the earth and I've created this woman to be your slave." There was unity there, a oneness; we read, "*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'* So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, '*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*'" Gen 1:26-28 So there is a union and a unity in the husband/wife relationship, a oneness, yet there are distinct and definite roles that God has established in that bond.

Ultimately we know that God established the role of the husband and the wife would demonstrate the role between Christ and His church. How that Christ is the head of the church, He loves the church and has given Himself for the church, and the church acknowledges Him as the head of this family and we submit our lives to Him accordingly. God caused the marriage relationship to demonstrate the love relationship between Christ and His bride; the church.

The 2nd thing I want to point out in that very 1st phrase of Vs 1 are the 2 words that qualify the parameters of the wife's submission to the husband. They're the words, "your own," women aren't called to submit to men in general. Male headship is the principle and practical reality that God has commanded for the structure of the church and of the home, but not for society in general.

From a biblical perspective it's no problem for a woman to be the CEO of a company, the President of the United States or anything else in society. However pertaining to the church and the home, God has established that man is to be the authority and the one who bears the weight of accountability before Him on those issues.

Now, wives; here's where it gets a little sticky for ya. Because most godly ladies (I believe) want a godly man to lead them, they want a man that's submitted to God to be the head of their home, and in that arena they would be eager and willing to submit to His godly leadership and sacrificial service for them. Wives if your husband loves you as Christ loved the church you'd have no problem standing behind, being supportive *of* and submissive *to* such a man. But Peter says here that you're to submit to your own husbands, "that even if some do not obey the word, they, with out a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives."

What do you mean, “won”? He’s speaking of wives winning their unbelieving husbands to the Lord. Here’s the idea; your submission will show him Christ. You see the bible demonstrates that success in marriage has way more to do with *being the right person* than it does being *with* the right person, it’s not about asserting our rights; it’s about honoring our roles.

Here Peter presents a scenario of an unbelieving husband and wife, the wife comes to Christ, the husband does not, what does she do? Should she leave him, should she change her behavior toward him assuming superior mindset since she’s in Christ? Peter in essence says, “Don’t *flee from* him, *fight for* him, don’t consider yourself superior; be submissive.” Paul said the same basic thing in 1 Cor 7:13 when he said, “... *a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.*” Don’t look for excuses to flee from your marriage, do everything you can do to fight for your marriage and for the soul of your spouse.

Even if your husband is avid, or purposed in his disobedience *to* the word of God and refuses to allow himself to be persuaded *by* the word of God, that’s what Peter means when he speaks of husbands who don’t obey the word. I don’t know why it is but I’ve discovered that when a man comes to Christ, 90% of the time his whole family will follow him (occasionally it doesn’t happen, but most generally it does). But when a woman comes to Christ it’s common for the husband to hold out and almost fight against it. I don’t know if it’s a testosterone thing, he feels like he’s got to be the one in control or what, but it just seems to happen that way.

Peter is saying, “Either way, submit to him.” Now we realize that if he directs you to sin, you can’t submit in that case, you have to obey God rather than man, other than that, be supportive *of* Him and stand *by* Him.

But here’s what you don’t do, do preach *at* him, don’t nag *on* him about his need to come to church or to receive Christ. You can win him “*with out a word.*” It’s not arguments or attitude that will convince him of anything, it’s not hounding him with scripture that will cause him to open up. It’s not making sure that Christian radio is playing that will help him to see the error of his ways. It’s the sweet spirit of submission, it’s being understanding, it’s love, kindness and patience that will preach to him. That will show Christ to him, because those things can’t be manufactured by my own will, it’s the fruit of the Spirit of God in my life, and that will minister to him. Now I’m not saying that you can’t invite him to church, or share God’s word with him.

But be sensitive to the Spirit in those things and wait on the Lord to open the door for that, don't force the issue. Solomon said this, "*A foolish son is the ruin of his father; And the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping.*" Prov 19:13 He said, "*Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.*" Prov 21:9 and Again, "*Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman.*" Prov 21:19 Here's my point, that's how your unbelieving husband will feel if you're all the time beating him down with the bible or making him aware of his need for Christ. and In your effort to draw him in you'll push him away. It's not your persistent preaching, but your consistent conduct that will win him over. Notice Vs 2

Vs2

When he observes your "upright, above board, pure from fault and free from carnality" conduct there will be something that resounds in him concerning the rightness of the relationship. He knows that you're different since you've given your life to Christ, the question is the difference created something better for your relationship or something worse? If the Holy Spirit is having His way in you how can one argue against the fact that things are better since you've submitted to Christ and in so doing you've submitted to your husband. You see, in every arena of submission, we do what we do as our service and worship to the Lord. You don't submit to your husband as a reward for good service. You submit to Him because you love the Lord and it's your worship and your service to the Lord. Paul said, "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*" Eph 5:22 He said, "*And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.*" Col 3:23-24 Here's the point: when he sees that out of respect for him you're submissive to him that will impact his life tremendously. It may not happen immediately, it may take years, but God will use it to show Him Christ in your life. Paul told the Philippians, "*...let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ,*" Phil 1:27 That's what Peter is saying here. Ladies (men as well, but as it pertains to the context) let your conduct in your home, before your husband be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Vs3-4

Is Peter saying that fixing your hair, putting on makeup and wearing nice clothes is out of line with God's heart for you? No, not at all, there's not a thing wrong with fixing your hair nice, wearing clothes that your husband appreciates, putting on a little perfume and applying some makeup. The problem comes in if you try and make those things your primary source of attraction, there's nothing wrong with wanting to look good. One man said, "Be not the first by whom the new are tried, Nor yet the last to lay the old aside." Probably some pretty sound advice.

Peter here is simply saying that a Christian wife might think she really needs to kick it up a notch if she wants to attract him and influence him toward the Lord. But in reality it's not what's going on outwardly that will really be appealing to him concerning Christ but what's going on inwardly. It's a reiteration of the fact that our primary emphasis should be placed upon the inward man, not the outward man. Jesus said we're to focus on seeing the inside of the dish made clean, then the outside. The psalmist said, "*Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,*" Ps 51:6 Peter is saying that our outward man grows corrupt, that is, makeup will only carry you so far for so long. But true beauty from the heart doesn't fade away but to the contrary grows more and more throughout the yrs. The word emphasizes the outward, the Lord is looking to and will work through the inward man of the heart.

Therefore where should my priority lie? Here's a challenge for you ladies, think about how much time you spend each day looking in the mirror so as to adorn your outward appearance; 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 45 minutes? Now, compare that to the amount of time you spend gazing into the mirror of God's word so as to adorn the inward hidden person of the heart? Where is the priority, truly?

Vs5-6

The idea here being that he's not pointing out some new thing that's foreign to women of God. This is the way God has ordained it since the beginning, he goes all the way back to Abrahams wife; Sarah. He could've called on any # of godly women, Hannah, Rachel, Ruth, he selected Sarah as the model of a holy woman (remember the overall arching context has been practical holiness).

And he speaks to the fact that Sarah adorned herself with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quite spirit, entrusting herself to the Lord through submitting to her husband. Now she wasn't simply silent all the time, never allowing her opinion to be heard. She told her husband what she thought, sometimes it got Abraham in trouble, other times God told him to listen to her. You see submission isn't simply "shut up and obey." You're free to share your opinion, and your opinion should be thought through and prayed over, but in the end respect your husband's decision, if he makes a wrong one, he'll know soon enough. Don't beat him up over it, stand beside him and let him learn through it, hopefully next time he'll listen to you 😊!

Maybe you're thinking, "Sarah submitted to her husband, that's great; my husband is no Abraham!" Perhaps you should be thankful, Sarah was a "biblical babe" and in order to save his own skin Ab gave her up to a Pharaoh to be a part of his harem on more than one occasion... But God protected her through it and the family was enriched because she trusted in God in the midst of it.

That's what it speaks of here in Vs 6, "...if you do good and are not afraid with any terror." If you submit to your husband because you love the Lord, and you trust the Lord even in the wrong moves he makes. Your family will be blessed because of your obedience to the Lord.

Now, do you have to call your husband, "lord."? He might like you to, but you're not required to. 😊 Again it's that he knows he has your respect.

Vs7

You see, headship is not dictatorship, we're "heirs together," the man and woman are made by the same Creator, from the same basic components and both are made in God's image. We're to be partners not competitors.

Now, why 6 Vs for the ladies and only 1 Vs for the men? Well, if you were to go to a pet store and pick out a pet pig, you'd probably get a food bowl, a water dish, perhaps a cage and a booklet that contained detailed instructions on how to tend to your pig. The pig however would leave the pet store with out much (if any) instruction because it's always the brighter of the 2 that's entrusted with instruction... 😊 In reality it was the women who faced the greatest obstacles in the Roman world to which Peter was writing so he took time to detail more instructions where the greater difficulty was at.

But "likewise" again your demonstration of submission in the relationship will be in the way that you tend to and take care of your wife, loving her as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her (Eph 5). You're to dwell (husbands) with your wife with understanding. (I know the scripture you're thinking of...[with men this is impossible] 😊 j/k).

Here's the deal guys; ignorance is dangerous in *any* area of life, it can be fatal in a marriage. It is your duty (husbands) before God to know your wife, that's is to *comprehend* her, to have an *understanding of* her. What makes her tick, what ticks her off, what are her dreams, what are her fears, you need to know her feelings, her hopes. That doesn't happen because you sat down once and said, "What are your dreams honey? How about your fears and feelings?" You need to communicate with her, spend time with her, here's the thought, develop a *relationship* with her... You're to be considerate of her, and give honor to her, that is you're to ascribe worth and value to her, she needs to know that you really *love* her, that it's your heart to protect and provide for her.

“As to the weaker vessel...” Now ladies don’t get in a panic over that statement, Peter isn’t saying you’re a *lesser, or inferior* vessel, he’s simply saying that as a general rule women are weaker, physically/emotionally than are men. It’s a simple fact of life, not a slam on your person, it’s saying to husbands that you are a precious, priceless porcelain in which treasure is stored and your husband is to be careful to tend to you, take care of you. It’s a call to gentleness for men.

Martin Luther said this – “The Christian is supposed to love his neighbor, and since his wife is his nearest neighbor, she should be his deepest love.”

“As being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” Some think this exhortation applies to the man, the word “your” is the 2nd person plural which would indicate to me that it applies to them both. Wives, this is your role, husbands this is your role, learn to embrace it and walk in the reality of it or your prayers will be hindered. How’s that for motivation? Who here would like a hindered prayer life??? Than of paramount importance is the priority of your home, your relationship to one another as husband and wife. Don’t concern yourself with the question “Did I marry the right person” focus on this, “Am I being the right person in this relationship?” Let’s not assert our rights, let’s honor our roles, and so honor the Lord...

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for Your word, for Your mercy, Your goodness, and Your grace. May we walk in the Spirit, lay down our rights, and embrace the role You’ve given us realizing that true fulfillment will be found in walking in obedience to Your word. May You strengthen the marriages in this body, and of those who may hear this study separately but need Your healing hand upon their marriage relationship. Jesus teach us to submit to You as the church, trusting that in Your love for us, in Your giving of Yourself for us that You’re going to take care of us, provide for us, and meet our every need.

If you’ve not submitted to Christ, if you’ve not entered into a love relationship with Jesus than today I want to invite you to do just that. The Lord has demonstrated His love for us in the giving of Himself for us at the cross. He poured out His blood for us, that we might know Him, be forgiven *by* Him, and walk in intimacy *with* Him. Let God forgive you of your sin today, salvation awaits you in Christ, is today your day?

Based on what Peter wrote, here are some questions to help us take inventory of our marriage relationships.

1. Are we partners or competitors?
2. Are we helping each other become more spiritual?
3. Are we depending on the externals or the eternal? The artificial or the real?
4. Do we understand each other better?
5. Are we sensitive to each other's feelings and ideas, or taking each other for granted?
6. Are we seeing God answer our prayers?
7. Are we enriched because of our marriage, or robbing each other of God's blessing?

(Wiersbe)