

## **Suffering in Marriage (Wives)**

1 Peter 3:1-6

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, September 24, 2017

You can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of first Peter. And as you're doing that, this morning, we are currently in a series called "The Suffering Church" where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. We're talking about how it should handle trials and difficulties. We've been in this series since the month of April and we're just over halfway through, and I feel like I've just kind of scratched the surface on this thing, because the Bible has a lot to say about suffering, doesn't it? It has a lot to say about pain. It's interesting, every time I start a sermon series, I wonder on the front end, "Am I going to have enough to stay on this subject? Am I going to run out of material somewhere about in the middle?" And every time, I don't. You never run out of material when you study the Word of God.

I was talking with a family member who asked me one time (not a believer), she said, "Do you ever get tired of teaching the Bible? Does it ever get boring?" And I said, "Never." You never run out of stuff to say. You never run out of stuff to learn. It's like climbing Mount Cheam, you can't take it all in in one trip, right? You got to go back two or three or four times to get more. The Word of God is like that. Especially when it comes to subjects like this one, you've got to go back for more.

In fact, we've said this before in this series, you could make the argument that suffering is the theme of the Bible or how love conquers suffering. How good triumphs over evil, which means there's always something more to look at on this topic. Especially, if you want to tie it into things like death and dying. It's been said, if you want to see what a man believes, you need to watch him die. You can fake a lot of things, but you can't fake death, right? You can trick a lot of things, but you can't trick your last words.

For example, just a few examples of this, right before he died, the famous atheist, Aldous Huxley said, "It's a bit embarrassing to have been consumed with the problem, the human problem of suffering and evil all my life, only to find at the end that I have nothing more to offer you by a way of advice than this, be nicer to each other." That's what he said at the end of his life. Study this my whole life, he said, "All I can tell you is be nicer." Another example of this would be Sigmund Freud. On his deathbed, Sigmund Freud, the founder of modern psychology, said, "My life has left me starving." That's a paraphrase, but when he died, he said, "I don't have anything to offer you either, my psychoanalysis has left me cold and empty." Voltaire, the famous cynic and hater of Christianity who said that Christianity would die within another century of its existence, tight before he died, he said, "I'm abandoned by God and man, I would give everything I have for six more months to live, then I can go to hell and you can go with me."

Wow. You think it would be better not to say anything at all than to say that. Listen, friends, this is why we study the Bible, because we don't want to talk like that on our deathbed, amen? And this is why you study Scripture. Because you don't want to feel abandoned and beg for more time when you're in a state like that. You can compare this to the way Christians died by the way. One

ancient sceptic of Christianity said, “You can say what you want to about Christians, but they die well.”

And just an example of this in history, a couple of Christians in their last words, John Owen, the puritan said, “I'm going to Him who my soul loves, or rather who has loved me with an everlasting love, which is the sole ground of my consolation.” In other words, “I know where I'm going, I've seen it in Scripture. I know what I'm going to see and I can't wait to get there.” That's the way to die, amen? J. Gresham Machen, another scholar, founder of Westminster Seminary, he died on a speaking trip to North Dakota in wintertime. And he died all alone because his friends couldn't get to him and he should have been in despair. But this is what he said, he said this in a telegram to a friend, he wrote these words, “I am so thankful for the active obedience of Christ, there is no hope without it.” John Knox said, “Live in Christ, die in Christ and the flesh need not fear death.” John Bunyan said, “Weep not for me, the Father receives me through Christ.” David Brainerd said, “Build me a hut, I'm going home.”

Here's the point, friends, the Bible helps you talk like that. It prepares you for death. It allows you to enter that door with your head held high to the Father, through the Son. And that brings us to the book of first Peter. First Peter is a book written to prepare you for death. It's written to prepare you to suffer.

There are books in the Bible to prepare you for joy. I was talking with someone the other day who said, “You know what, with this series in First Peter, I'm listening to Philippians in the evenings, because it has joy.” So, I thought, well, I was going to do Job in the evenings with the ... pick you guys up off the ground after all this ... Boy this church is hard. This Christianity stuff is hard. There's books in the Bible on joy, but this is not one of them. The point of First Peter is to prepare you to suffer. And if you want to see this in chapter 2:13, we'll read through chapter 3. Just a little context for what we're going to talk about this morning. Peter writes, he says,

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but to those who are unreasonable. 19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 who committed no deceit, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while

suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

### Chapter 3

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, they may be won without a word by the behavior their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be nearly external - braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it 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. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

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.

We'll stop there.

Summarizing all of this, Peter says, "You get ready to suffer, you get ready to die by looking to Christ. And just like the saints of old, you prepare for the next life by looking to Him." Verse 21 says, "He is your example." Verse 24 of chapter 2 says, "He died for you, by His wounds you were healed." Verse 25 says, "He is your Shepherd and Guide. He leads you through times of suffering." Particularly if you look on the surrounding passage that we just read, He helps you suffer in the areas of government and work and marriage. The verse on Christ, the passage on Christ there is kind of tucked in the middle of all those.

Verse 13 talks about suffering and the government. Verse 18 talks about suffering in the workplace, servants and masters, employers, employees. And then chapter three begins to talk about suffering in the home, which is what I want to talk to you about this morning. I don't have to tell you that people can really suffer in their home, can't they? You can really suffer in marriage. It's been said that marriage is nature's way of keeping us from fighting with strangers. I think that's true, right? You had no spunk left when you leave the house because all the spunk was taken out before you, you know ...

In preparing for this sermon, I came across a good example of this. It was a list of things you shouldn't buy for your wife. And it said, "Don't buy things that plug in. Anything that requires electricity is seen as utilitarian. Don't buy clothing that involves sizes. The chances are one in 7,000, that you'll get her size right, and your wife will be offended the other 6,999 times says." It says, "Don't buy jewelry. The jewelry your wife wants you can't afford, and the jewelry you can afford, she doesn't want." I'm going to start ducking behind this pulpit here in a minute. I saw a

cartoon one time, it said, “Today's sermon is going to be on marriage and divorce.” And it had a preacher with a coat of armour on. Finally, “Don't spend too much, she'll say you can't afford it. But if you spend too little, she'll wonder, ‘Am I worth more than that?’”

I thought that was funny until I came across a list of things that a wife shouldn't buy their husbands, and I realized this problem goes both ways. So, here's things you shouldn't buy your husband. Don't buy him a manicure because he doesn't even know what that is. Don't buy him a kitten. I've already said my piece on that. Don't buy him a self-help book, that might offend him. Don't buy him a movie you like, because chances are he won't like it too.

Listen, here's the point, marriage is tough, right? We can't even agree on what to buy each other for Christmas. We can't even agree on what movies to watch or what a manicure is. Because of this, the CBC News website said four out of ten marriages in Canada end in divorce. And for the first time in history, there are more unmarried adults in this country than married ones. People don't even want to try to get married anymore. Because of that, the number of people living alone is on the rise here in British, Columbia. Something like one in three people live alone.

You could even add to this, that now people don't even know what marriage is anymore. They don't even know who should get married to who, and where do you draw the boundaries? Where's the line? Which raises an important question, what does the Bible say about this? What does it say about suffering in marriage? It has so much to say on suffering, but how does it tie into the specific areas we're looking at in this passage, particularly in the home?

I need to tell you (and you know this), marriage is a good thing. In the book of Genesis, when God created the earth in six days, He kept saying, “It is good, it is good, it is very good.” And then you get to chapter 2, and the first time He says that something is not good, is when He said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” Which means it is good for him to be married. It's good for him to be with someone. But here's the question we're going to wrestle with today, but what are you supposed to do when it doesn't feel good? Right?

The question to answer, what do you do when it feels bad to be married? And that's what we're going to talk about this morning. So if you're taking notes, In First Peter 3:1-6, I want to give you some ways to suffer in marriage. It's a pretty simple outline here; just four ways to suffer in marriage, particularly as it pertains to wives. Next week, we're going to talk about suffering for husbands. But this time, we're going to talk about suffering for wives. And the first one is this (and we just read it in the passage): be submissive to your husband. It's the first way to suffer well in marriage for a wife; be submissive to your husband.

If you look in chapter 2:13, it says, “To submit yourself to the governing authorities.” In your Scriptures, in chapter 2:18, it says to do this with your boss at work, with your manager or supervisor. And in chapter 3, in that vein, it says, “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, so even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won.”

That word “be submissive” in the passage sounds pretty harsh in this day and age. It sounds like we're going back to the dark ages or caveman days, right? So, let me just give you some background for this. Wives were in a tight spot in the first century. They were in the dark ages

back then, I mean, it was caveman days. Because their husbands had almost total control over them. In fact, the Romans had come up with a law, they actually wrote this into their constitution called *patria potestas* or “the father's power”, which said that your father had total control over you if you were his daughter. He had total power - life or death power. To the point that if your dad wanted you to live, you lived and if he wanted you to die, you died. And if you got married, the power transferred over to your husband. Now, your husband had that kind of power over you. And because of this, wives were expected to adopt the religions of their husbands with no questions asked. They were expected to worship his gods and go to his temple. Which means that when you refuse to do that, almost anything could happen to you. I mean, the sky is the limit for all the consequences that would come to a wife who wouldn't give in to that.

But Peter says, “You don't need to give in to the religion of your husband”, which was revolutionary at the time. You don't follow him and that you follow Christ, He is your Lord. And by the way, the reason this passage is so long ... If you're looking at First Peter 3, you notice, there's six verses for wives. There's only one for husbands. Well, the reason is because wives suffered so much more in the first century. It's not because he's beating up on women here, it's actually because he's trying to help. Husbands didn't suffer that much. Wives did.

Peter says, “You follow Christ, you follow the Lord.” That's the first two chapters of this book. But when it comes to issues that don't pertain to Christ, when it comes to things that are not mentioned in Scripture, you put yourself under your husband's authority, and that's what he's saying here. That's what the word “submit” means. It means to put yourself under someone. It's a compound verb in Greek from the word *hupo*, which means “under” and *tassó* means “to put”. You willingly, voluntarily put yourself under someone. Not like a dog, but like a human being. Not like an animal that gets kicked into it, but like a member of the government. In verse 13, like a member of the company.

To highlight this, if you notice in your Bibles, this is a command for wives, not for husbands. In other words, wives choose to do this, husbands don't choose it for them. They submit, but they're not submitted. There are religions (and I'm not going to quote them here) that will say, if your wife is not submissive, you beat her. That's actually written in some holy texts of some very popular religions right now. That is not what this is saying. This is a voluntary thing. Peter is talking to wives in verse 1, he's not talking to husbands. He doesn't do that until later.

You also notice, Peter says, “You wives, be submissive to your own husbands.” Meaning you don't do this for any random guy who comes along. This is only for your own husband. It also says, you do this, even if your husband is disobedient to the word, meaning you don't wait until your husband is perfect. You don't wait until he's Mr. Right. Which is hard to do, isn't it? I'll take your silence as a yes. This is not an easy command to follow.

In fact, of all the commands in the Bible that people don't like today, this may be one of the ones at the top of the list. It's up there. I've actually heard people tell me they will not become a Christian over passages like this. Or, they will become a Christian, but they'll take this out of the Bible. You can actually buy translations of the Bible that have this either taken out of them or completely reworded to say something else.

So, it might be helpful for just a moment, maybe to go up a couple of thousand feet and talk about what submission is and what it's not. It's not dejection. And what I mean is, it doesn't make women inferior to men. That's not the point of it. If you look down in verse 7, we're going to get into this in a couple of weeks. But directly after this, it says in verse 7, it says, "You husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker." Now, you read that in English and you say, "Boy, it was insulting in verse 1, now it's really insulting." But actually, this is not an insult. The word "weaker" is *skeuos* in Greek, which means a "weaker vessel" or a "weaker piece of pottery". The idea was a weaker piece of pottery is more expensive than a tougher piece of pottery. Fine China is more expensive than regular China. And husbands should treat their wives that way, like fine China, like something expensive.

Verse 7 also says for "husbands to show honor to your wives." I don't know of a religion in the ancient world that ever told husbands to show honour to their wives. And he goes on and says, "As a fellow heir of the grace of life." In the old world, a father's inheritance passed directly to his son, the daughter got nothing. I mean she didn't get an inheritance. And in God's world, in God's plan of doing things, verse 7 says, this is different, the daughter gets an inheritance too. She is a co-heir of the grace of life, which means this is not a derogatory command.

You guys remember the Scriptures that talk about, was it the Sadducees that came to Jesus and they say, "What's going to happen in heaven with husbands and wives?" And Jesus says, "They're going to be like the angels, the distinction won't be there anymore." The point was, you go to heaven the same way; wives, husbands, men, women. You go through Christ, you have the same reward. Which means this is not belittling, this is not insulting, this is not to be demeaning. This is why so many women, if you read the history books in the first century, became Christians.

One critic said that the church was full of women back then, because they understood this. Christianity offered them something no one else did. It gave them equal rights in a way that no other system could do. You can look at it this way, tying this into chapter 2, if Jesus submitted to the Father and they were equals, then a wife can submit to her husband and they can still be equals. Do you get that? If it's not wrong for the Son to submit to the Father, and there's nothing insulting or belittling about that, then there's nothing wrong for a woman to submit to her husband.

This is known as complementarianism, if you want a big \$5 word for it. It says that a man and woman complement each other in marriage. They don't step on each other, they don't put each other in their place. They complement and serve one another in love. John Piper says that,

The tendency today is to stress the equality of men and women by minimizing the unique significance of their maleness and femaleness. But this depreciation is a great loss. It's taking a tremendous toll on generations of young men and young women who don't know what it means to be a man or a woman. Confusion over sexual personhood today is epidemic, and the consequence of this confusion is not a free and happy harmony among gender-free persons relating on the basis of abstract competencies. The consequence is rather more severe, more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more

promiscuity, more social awkwardness, and more emotional distress and suicide than we've ever seen before.

You see, when the Bible teaches that men and women fulfil different roles, it doesn't teach this after the fall, it teaches it before the fall. In other words, sin has corrupted our roles, but it did not create them. Our roles as husband and wife were created by God.

Listen, there's nothing wrong with a woman submitting to her husband and the husband leading her in love. Contrary to what you might've heard on a news show or something else, that didn't come with sin. It's the way God created it to be.

I mean, you can look at this another way. John Piper again, in the same book says,

When I was a boy growing up in South Carolina, my father was away from home a lot, and I learned that my mother could do anything. She handled the finances, paid the bills, she ran a little laundry business on the side. She was active on the park board, served as a superintendent of our Southern Baptist Church, managed real estate holdings. But, it never occurred to me to think of my mother and father in the same category. Both were strong, both were both bright, both were kind, both would kiss me goodnight. Both were good with words and prayed and loved the Bible, but my father was still a man and my mother was still a woman. They knew it and I knew it. It was not about ability, it was a matter of personhood.

I think all the men in this room would say they married a woman smarter than them, amen? Oh, come on. Look, you guys ... All right, when you get home, take the coffee away from all those ones who didn't. We all married women that were better and stronger than us in certain areas, but that's not what this is about. This is not a contest. This is not a competition - survival of the fittest, strongest one wins. This is about personhood. It's about the way God created us to be. It's complimentary.

One author said, "It should be a church in miniature. All the camaraderie and unity and peace and joy you feel in the church, you should feel in your marriage." All the excitement and thrill and love you get from being with the people in this room, you should feel when you're at home, you should feel with your spouse.

But it doesn't work that way, so coming back down from our trip up into the heavenlies. It doesn't work that way, marriage is not always complimentary. Sometimes, it is dejecting. Sometimes, there is suffering involved, which brings us to another way for wives to suffer well in the marriage; is to be submissive to their own husbands.

Secondly, focus on your behaviour, not your words. That's what Peter goes on to say in this passage. Focus on your behaviour, not your words. Not that words are not important, they are important and there's a place for them. But Peter says, "When things go wrong in the marriage, when one partner doesn't do his part," Peter says, "Focus on your behaviour. Let your life do the talking, let your actions speak louder than your words." If you read in verses 1 through 2, it says, "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, so that even if any of them

are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.” You can even see the word “behaviour” repeated there twice for emphasis. “Focus on that,” Peter says.

I just told you how hard it was to be a Christian wife in the first century. It was a life or death situation. Marry the wrong man and you were in a lot of trouble. A matter of fact, you probably didn't have any say in the matter. So, whoever you married, you might not have even met him before. And Peter says, if your husband is lost and he's not obedient to the word, which may mean he's a Christian and he's living in sin - either way, on either end of the spectrum, let him be won by your chaste and respectful behavior. The word “chaste” is a reference to sexual chastity or sexual purity. Win your husband with your character or your personal holiness, which we'll talk about here in just a minute.

Then he mentions respect, which is a big issue in marriage. If your husband is not living like he should, and you're suffering over it, you should win him over with respect, not with disrespect. You should win him over with support, not with nagging. I've heard stories of wives putting Gospel tracks out on the husband's dresser, hoping he'll just pick one up and get the idea one day. Or making sure a sermon is playing in the background every time he comes home, so that maybe by osmosis, some of that will filter in. Peter says, “Don't do that.” It's not wrong giving him a track and it's not wrong playing a sermon for him, but don't do it underhandedly, he says. Don't do it on the sly. Let me tell you, as a pastor, please don't bring your husband into my office and say, “Fix him, because he gets on my nerves.” All right, look, he gets on everybody's nerves, but don't handle it like that. Okay? Just kidding. You wouldn't like it if he treated you that way, right? It's not respectful. I think the worst example of this was given by Jay Adams when he talks about a wife who came into his office with a three-ring binder that was this thick, and she said, “These are all the mistakes my husband has made in the past 10 years of marriage. I want you to confront him.” She had written them down.

Listen, friends, you're not his judge, you're his wife. You're not his enemy, you're his friend. You're his helpmate, and that's not a very helpful thing to do. I've heard women talk like this before in counselling and other things. They say, “I won't submit to my husband until he does what I say.” Well, that means he's going to submit to you. That means you're the boss, and that's not what Scripture tells us to do, either. Listen, this is not about submitting when he does what is right, this is about submitting when he does what is wrong. That's what Peter is talking about here. This is not about submitting to a perfect man. This is about submitting to an imperfect one. And to say this another way, your role doesn't change when he sins. As a woman of God, you don't step in and become the leader just because he doesn't lead or love you in the way he's supposed to.

Just to make this real personal for a minute, it's interesting, Peter writes this here, because according to First Corinthians 9:5, he had a wife. To my knowledge, I don't think too many of the apostles did. He might've been the only one. But Peter had a wife who actually, First Corinthians says, went with him on his missionary journeys. So, she traveled with him to places like Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia - places where this letter would have been written to. So, these people might have known her, they might have actually met her.

To add a little more to that, the Gospels tell us that Jesus knew her. Do you remember one of His miracles He did, was in the Simons mother-in-law's house? That's Peter's wife's house. Which means that she was with Peter when he denied Jesus three times. She was married to him when Satan sifted him like wheat. She saw what it did do him, she saw him at the bottom of the barrel spiritually. And Peter could have been saying, here that "This is what she did to win me back. She won me over with her behaviour, not with her words. This is what my wife did to help me repent. She prayed for me and listened to me and stayed by my side even when I messed up. She didn't judge me. She didn't nag me. She didn't drag me into the pastor's office, she treated me with respect." This is not easy do sometimes.

I was studying for this sermon, I came across an article from a woman who lived in a situation like this. She said her husband wasn't a believer. He didn't go to church with her. He didn't pray or read his Bible. He didn't raise the kids in a Christian way, spending Sundays watching hockey. And she said she learned several lessons through that. And one of those was, that her husband's salvation is about his benefit, not about hers. In other words, "I don't want him to change to make my life easier or to make it more convenient for me. It's not about me, it's about him going to heaven." Which means, she went on to say that, "My husband is not my pet project or my crusade to fix. He's not a burden for me, I'm not embarrassed by him. I love him for who he is." In other words, Peter's writing about a change of attitude, not for the husband, but for the wife. Now we'll get into the husband later and how the husband needs to change, but here, it's a change of attitude on the part of the wife before the husband does what is right, before he gets his act together.

Which leads to the next way a wife can suffer well in her marriage, and that is to focus on your inner beauty, not your outer beauty. Going right along with what he just said, Peter says, "You should focus on your inner beauty, not your outer beauty."

We live in a world that is obsessed with outer beauty, isn't it? There are famous people in this world who do nothing but look good, you know that? They have no talent, can't sing, can't dance, can't make balloon puppets or anything. There's nothing. You turn on the TV and you're bombarded with them, and they get interviewed and you realize, that person has no idea what they're talking about. They just have a nice smile, right?

I remember watching the news years ago about a celebrity, an R&B singer who was accused of a crime. And his fans said, "Who cares as long as he's still hot?" Really? I mean he's being accused of something heinous and you're going to say that? Peter says, "Christians, we don't think this way. We believe beauty is deeper than that."

Proverbs 31:30 says, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain or fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised." First Samuel 16:7 says, "For the Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." He looks at what's on the inside. Peter goes on to say this, in verses 3 through 4, he says, "Your adornment must not be merely external - braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry or putting on dresses, but let it 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." I like that word "precious" because you handle fine China preciously, right? Carefully. The Lord does that with women who focus on their heart.

Just a little unpacking of this passage, the word “adornment” is *kosmos* in Greek, from which we get the word cosmetics, cosmetology. It means “decoration” or “ornamentation”. Women in the ancient world, particularly the Roman world, were obsessed with their ornamentation. They took it to a whole new level, to the point they would braid their hair with gold and silver trinkets. They would put thousands of dollars’ worth of jewels in their hair. Some historians say it got so bad they wouldn’t go to sleep at night for fear of messing it up.

And you can imagine being a slave sitting in church in the first century, next to a woman with hair like that, and thinking, “That hairdo is worth more than I am.” Right? If you’re a slave, you were purchased by someone and you’re thinking, “That woman’s hair is worth more than me.” That’s why James talks about, “Don’t flaunt that kind of thing.” He mentions wearing gold jewelry here. So, if the women back then did that to their hair, you can imagine what they did with their jewelry. There were stories of ladies then, stretching their ear lobes with heavy pearl earrings. They were so heavy, they stretched their ear lobes down. Or putting lumps of dough on their cheeks to make them fluffy and white, because that was the fashion. This is my favorite - they would put foul smelling stuff on their lips to make them stick out and protrude. I don’t think I would put foul smelling stuff that close to my nose, but they did that.

But Peter’s point here, is that believers are not to get caught up in those things. They don’t get caught up in dresses and clothes. He’s not saying here you can’t get dressed up for church, of course, you can. He’s not saying you can’t wear makeup and jewelry, you can do those things. He’s saying, don’t focus on that. Don’t make a big deal of it, especially if you’re trying to win your husband for Christ. It’s been said that you can dress up a fence post, but that doesn’t make it a Christian. And you can dress up a person and it’s the same way. Clothes mean nothing to God. Jewelry means nothing to Him. He cares about the inner person of the heart.

You could say it this way, salvation occurs on the inside, and if you want to impact someone there, then you need to focus on the inside too. You need to focus, Peter says, on a gentle and quiet spirit. “Quiet” here doesn’t mean silent. It means “calm” or “peaceful”. You’re not in a tizzy all the time. You guys have that word here? Is that a new word? Tizzy? It’s a southern expression. We say, “You know, she’s not happy unless she’s in a tizzy.” No, I’m not connecting with anybody? Okay. Well take my word for it. Peter says, “Don’t be in a tizzy.” He says, “Don’t win your husband’s over ... like a tornado going around.” Okay, you guys are connecting now. Okay, good. All right. Stuff flying everywhere, body parts, you know, bombs going off. He says, “Don’t be that way. Be Gentle.” Right?

There’s an interesting movement among Christian singles today that kind of coincide with this called Evangelistic Dating. You guys ever heard of this missionary dating? And the idea is when a women tries to win a man over to Christ with her looks and her beauty. It’s the exact opposite of what Peter says to do here. But I went online to try to find some Christian websites devoted to this, and interestingly enough, I came across one from a lost person. So, this is a lost person’s perspective on being missionary dated.

This what they said. It said,

Interestingly enough, I've yet to come across a page or a website that says why this is so dangerous for non-Christians. So, I thought as a non-Christian, I would say a word about missionary dating here.

It feels terrible to find out that you're a little more than a potential notch on someone's conversion belt. It's devastating to hear that they view you as flawed and in need of repair from the moment you met. It means they're arrogant enough to believe not only are you in need of repair, but they're the ones to do it. They have all the answers for you.

In short, this person says, "It is utterly and completely dishonest to do that." Starts with a lie, continues with a lie, and carries with a lie all the way through. Now, I'm not saying that perspective is right. Maybe a little bit jaded, but here's the point, it is dishonest to try to win someone over with your clothes or your looks or your hair, because Christianity is not about those things. Does that make sense? It's not in the same category. It's about other things, deeper things.

A little girl once heard in Sunday school that Jesus lives inside of Christians, and she went home and she was really upset. So, she talked with her mother and she said, "I'm bothered, because if Jesus lives in here, why don't I see Him out here?" Right? "If Jesus lives in my heart, why don't I see Him in my life?" And this is the issue, if you want to see Jesus in your life, He needs to be in your heart first. If you want to see Him in your husband's life, He needs to be in your heart first. That's what you need to focus on.

You can look at this another way, what you win him with, is what you want him to. And If you win him to beauty and looks and those kind of things, then that's what you want him to, right? You got to keep it up, and looks don't last. They fade away.

A young lady once told an older lady in church, she was struggling with pride because she said she was the prettiest girl in church. And the old lady thought about it in a minute and she said, "That's not pride dearie, that's self-deceit." She said, "You're not the prettiest girl in church, but even if you were, it won't last." Right? "Give it time, and someone else will be prettier. Give it a couple of years, someone else will be more beautiful." Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting. You need to focus on bigger things. You need to think about deeper things if you want to win your husband for Christ.

That leads to one more way to suffer well in your marriage. Just to recap, be submissive to your own husbands. Follow him in a complimentary way. Focus on your behaviour, not your words. Focus on your inner beauty, not your outer beauty, on your character, on your heart.

Finally, here's the last one Peter gives us here: learn from the women of old. Peter closes this out by telling us to learn from the women of old or learn from the women from the past. We don't talk about this a lot today, but the Bible is full of stories of great women from the past. Like I told you a moment ago, the church was full of them. Women like Mary and Martha and Lydia, the seller of purple. Women like Ruth and Naomi and Miriam, the sister of Moses.

You can look at it this way, women were the first ones to the empty tomb, and they were the last ones to leave. The last ones to leave the cross, anyway. As a matter of fact, some scholars say one reason we know the resurrection is true is because no one trusted the testimony of a woman back then. If you were a woman and you saw a murder, you could not testify to it in court. And the fact that the Gospel authors would say that women were the first ones to see the empty tomb, means it actually happened. Nobody would have made that up. They were in the upper room when the Spirit descended at Pentecost. Women were among the 3,000 who believed and started the church.

Peter draws this to a close here by reminding us of some of the godly women of old. And he says in verse 5, he says, “For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.” What he's referring to here is Sarah, the wife of Abraham, as you can read in the passage. The Jews said they had four mothers of Israel - Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, and the first one was Sarah. They started the nation. Everything came from them. And Sarah had a difficult husband. Abraham was not an easy person to live with. He lied about her twice to save his own skin. As a matter of fact, both times, if you do a little reading between the lines, the implication is she probably would have ended up in a Harem, if God didn't step in to save her. She would have just been one wife among many, many, many, many wives. Abraham tried to kill their son, Isaac, on a mountain top because he said God told him to. You can imagine how that went over at dinner time. I would have loved to sit in on that conversation. “You took Isaac to do what?”

He had other faults and blemishes, but through it all, Sarah called him lord, which simply means “leader, the one that I follow.” It sounds strong here, but the word could mean a lot of different things. It could mean “leader.” Through it all, Peter says, she adorned herself by submitting to her husband and focusing on the heart like we talked about.

And she did it, he says at the end of verse 6, without being frightened by any fear. The word “fear” is *terosis* or “terror”. It can mean “a fluttering of the heart”, like when your heart skips a beat. “You shouldn't submit like that,” Peter says. “You shouldn't have a panic attack.” Because God is ultimately in control of your husband. God is ultimately in charge of what he does.

I'm guessing that some of our ladies here this morning, are in a tight spot. I don't know that, but I'm guessing that. Maybe some of you look at your husband and you say, “He wouldn't hurt me, but he can be pretty mean sometimes. He doesn't have life or death power over me; thank the Lord, but he can be pretty rude. He surely doesn't treat me like fine China.” Peter says, “When you're in a situation like that, do not be afraid. Don't fear.” Jesus says, in the Gospel of John, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me, you may have peace. In the world, you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.” That means the world out there and the world in here. That means the world in your marriage. Jesus has conquered that, so you can have courage. Psalm 27:1 says, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?” Hebrews 13:5-6, says, “For the Lord Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

Here's the thing, friends, God wouldn't give you this command in Scripture if He wouldn't give you the power to obey it. He wouldn't have put this in the Bible if He didn't think you could live it out. If He wasn't going to help you live it out. It takes tremendous self-denial to do what we're talking about this morning, but Jesus denied Himself on the cross so that you could follow His example. That's what chapter 2 says. It takes a lot of humility to do this. But Jesus humbled Himself first, so you can humble yourself in His stead, without fear, without terror.

A newlywed couple was fighting in their marriage and the wife went away for several hours. And when she got back, the husband said, "Where did you go?" And she said, "Well, I went to talk to my mother and tell her that I wanted to go home." The husband said, "Well, what did your mom say?" And the wife said, "My mom told me, I am home. Go home." Friends, if you're married this morning, then you are home. If you have a husband, then you don't need to go anywhere. You can stay where you are and handle it in a God-honouring way, like Peter describes here.

To give you another story, a husband and wife were fighting, and so they called in a counsellor to help them. And he told them to put all their complaints in a box. And when they opened it, the husband's list for the wife said things like, "Well, she doesn't support me enough and she doesn't respect me enough, and she doesn't do what I ask her to do." But when they read the wife's list for her husband, it said, "I love you." That's all she wrote over and over and over again. "I love you, I love you, I love you."

Friends, I think an approach like that would soften any man's heart. I think an approach like that would win any man over. And even if it doesn't, it still pleases the Lord. You do this out of love, you do it out of love for Christ, you do it out of love for your husband. And it will take a tremendous work of God. This is not easy stuff. This is miraculous stuff.

Listen, a lost lady can go home and fight with a lost husband. The world can do that. It takes a miracle of God to go home and do what we're talking about here. Praise God. He is a God of miracles, amen? He can do this in your life, and let's pray for much grace for Him to do that as well. Husbands, if you're wondering what this looks like in your lives, come back in a couple of weeks. We'll dive into that. Again, don't forget, next week, we won't be here, we'll be at Family Camp in Hope, and we would love to see you there. But for now, let's close in a word of prayer and ask for God's grace in applying this.

Father, we do pray for much grace and mercy in doing what this passage says. We read a passage like this and at least, I think, this is a tall order. This is not an easy thing to do. And yet, we look right above this and we see what Your Son did on the cross. And we look even above that, and we look at what you've done for us in heaven, and we think we can do this.

Lord, I pray for our women who are here this morning, who read this passage and it applies directly to them, that You would give them much grace and much mercy. I pray for husbands in this room, as they read this passage, they would realize the tall order their wives have been given and they would love them with the tenderness and delicacy and preciousness we just talked about.

Father, thank you that Your Word does not leave us without help in the area of marriage. Thank you that it doesn't skip over tough subjects like this one. I pray for Your help in going home and living this out this morning for Your glory. Thank you for what You've taught us. May You be pleased as we go forth and live it out. We pray this in Christ's name, amen.