

“The ideal relationship” (14)

In our sermon series so far of 1+2 Peter we've been reminded time and time again about the importance of relationships. In 1 Peter 1:14-16 he reminded us in regards to our relationship with God that we are to be holy as He is holy. In 1 Peter 2:11+12 he reminded us in regards to our relationship with the world that we are to live honourably whilst we do good works. In 1 Peter 2:13-17 he reminded us in regards to our relationship with our governments that we are to submit to them and their authority. In 1 Peter 2:18-25 he reminded us in regards to our relationship with others around us that as servants we are to do good and suffer patiently even though we get treated badly by others. And today as we enter 1 Peter 3 he is going to remind us of our responsibilities in another relationship. But before we get into the text let me share with you a story I heard a few months ago.

A young mother requested her husband to take their two-year-old baby for a walk. The husband was busy with a project, but with a deep sigh, he got the baby carriage and started walking around the block in the hot sun. "Honey," called his wife from the second-story window. "Leave me alone!" he shouted back. "We're fine." After an hour his wife once again shouted, "Honey." "Well, what is it this time?" he answered gruffly. "Is there any problem in the house?" "Nothing, honey," replied his wife. "But you've been wheeling little Jennifer's doll the whole afternoon. Don't you think it's time for the baby to have a turn?"

In a world where dysfunctional families seem to be the norm, it is important that we as the people of God demonstrate through our families what God's will is and how God expects our families to behave. 1 Peter 3:1+2 "Likewise, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the Christian message they may be won over without a message by the way their wives live when they observe your pure, reverent lives."

Peter says, wives submit yourselves to your husbands. Now because he uses the word 'likewise' he's obviously referring back to the previous chapter. And so what he's saying is; all those principles we talked about earlier apply to the wife and husband relationship.

So when he says back in 1 Peter 2:18+19 "Slaves, be subject to your masters with all reverence, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are perverse. For this finds God's favour, if because of conscience toward God someone endures hardships in suffering unjustly".

In other words if a wife suffers wrong from her husband when she was doing good, it is commendable before God if she bears that mistreatment patiently. Now the real value of the wife submitting to her husband in this case would be where a Christian wife is married to an unbeliever.

1 Peter 3:1+2 "Likewise, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the Christian message they may be won over without a message by the way their wives live when they observe your pure, reverent lives." Peter says through their conduct she may actually convert the unbelieving husband. And notice something important here; Peter says even though they may not have obeyed the gospel previously, your conduct may just do it.

And notice something else, when Peter says, 'they may be won over without a message'; he's actually saying you don't need to nag them all the time, your conduct may just be the thing which brings them to Christ. Let me ask you this loved ones, do you like it when someone is constantly nagging you do to something? I hate it and the more they nag, the more I dig my heels in and refuse to do it. And I know our kids are exactly the same, the more I ask them to do something, the longer it takes them to get it done.

Now put yourself in the feet of the non-Christian, imagine what it feels like for them when they are constantly being told they need to become a Christian? I don't believe it's biblical to tell anyone to become a Christian, I think we have a responsibility to share the gospel with them but not force them to become Christians. That's why I get frustrated sometimes when we get visitors and we hardly even know them and some well intentioned people go straight to them and ask if they have been baptised. And if they haven't, well, it's a constant nagging at them every time they see them, and we wonder why visitors come and go.

Is there anyone here who was forced to become a Christian? I hope not. Well if none of us was forced to become a Christian why should we force or nag anyone else to become a Christian? It's a fine line between encouraging someone to make a decision and constantly nagging them to make that decision. If you want your friends or family, husbands or wives to become a Christian encourage them but let them come to their own decision, they need to have their own faith.

And so if a Christian woman is married to an unbeliever and wants to encourage them to become a Christian, then stop the nagging and win them over by your conduct. And the way you do that according to Peter is by living pure in all areas of your life and live in reverence towards your husband. So loved ones the first duty of a wife is submission especially if she is married to an unbeliever.

1 Peter 3:3+4 “Do not let your ornaments be those of the body such as dressing of the hair, or putting on of jewels of gold or fair clothing; But let them be those of the unseen man of the heart, the ever-shining ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great price in the eyes of God.”

Peter says let your inner beauty shine. Now these verses are interesting because Peter is using what we call a **Hebraism**. A **Hebraism** is a form of speech which is used often in the scriptures; we would call it contrasting. In other words we would say ‘**not this but this**’ in order to make an emphasis. Let me give you an example, Jesus says in **John 6:27** “Don’t work for the food which perishes, but for the food which remains to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For God the Father has sealed him.” Now Jesus is not saying that it is wrong to work so we can eat, but what he is saying is that our priority in life should be to have everlasting life.

Peter is using a similar contrast here concerning wives. In other words he’s saying; don’t let your emphasis on beauty pertain to outward adornment. Now he is not saying that it is always wrong to arrange your hair, wear gold, or put on nice clothes. But what he is saying is that your emphasis should always be elsewhere. Your emphasis should always be in the beauty of your heart.

The Christian woman should be living in such a way that their inner beauty just shines out. The Christian woman should be living in such a way that people notice **who** you are rather than **what** you wear. Peter says it’s a gentle and quiet spirit that represents true inner beauty. And ladies you need to know that living like this is very precious in God’s eyes.

Isaiah 66:1+2 “The Lord says, heaven is the seat of my power, and earth is the resting-place for my feet: what sort of house will you make for me, and what place will be my resting-place? For all these things my hand has made, and they are mine, says the Lord; but to this man only will I give attention, to him who is poor and broken in spirit, fearing my word.”

Now one of the reasons why I was so attracted to my wife was because of this very topic. **Our wedding song was Beyonce’s Halo and some of the lyrics say this; “You’re everything I need and more, it’s written all over your face, baby I can feel your halo, pray it won’t fade away”**. My wife didn’t dress to impress, it wasn’t her outward beauty that got me hooked although she is gorgeous outwardly but it was her inner beauty, it was her heart, her gentle and quite spirit that hooked me.

And so Christian woman, let your inner beauty be your most noticeable feature about you. Because let me tell you, you can be gorgeous outwardly but inwardly be ugly. And those are not my words, I was being kind, **Proverbs 11:22** says, “**Like a ring of gold in the nose of a pig, is a beautiful woman who has no sense**”.

Now in today’s society we have women who dress in my opinion totally inappropriate. Short skirts, short cut tops, fake tan etc and yeh they may look great on the outside but **what are they like on the inside?**

When you think of women like Rihanna, or Lady Gaga, yes they may look good with their fake tan and tons of make up and yes they are good at singing but when you see them, the first thing you notice is their clothes or lack of them in some cases. But do you know why they dress like that? Well in the words of a Robbie Williams song, ‘sex sells’. I mean what kind of role model are they for our children today?

The music business is telling our children that they can’t have a successful music career unless they look absolutely ‘**sexy**’. Our TV screens are filled with these kinds of advertisements, telling our children that they can’t be beautiful until they buy this product or wear these clothes. And so we as parents have got the responsibility of showing them that real beauty is inwards not on the outside.

And so Peter says, **do you want a role model?** Think about Sarah. **1 Peter 3:5+6** “**And these were the ornaments of the holy women of the past, whose hope was in God, being ruled by their husbands: As Sarah was ruled by Abraham, naming him lord; whose children you are if you do well, and are not put in fear by any danger.**”

Peter says, remember, the holy women in the Old Testament who trusted in God? Remember how they adorned themselves with a gentle and quiet spirit? Remember how they were submissive to their husbands? He says just in case you forgot and need a role model, think about Sarah. Now remember that Sarah was so beautiful outwardly.

In **Genesis 12** we read that Pharaoh wanted her even though she was over **65 years old**. In **Genesis 20** we read that the king of the Philistines wanted her even though she was over **90 years old** and long past the age of childbearing. But yet her true beauty was demonstrated by her submissive spirit. **And how we do we know?** Well simply because she called Abraham her lord. **Genesis 18:12** “So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?”

So loved ones, Peter’s point is that Christian women can become the **daughters of Sarah**, provided they do good in being submissive to their husbands. Christian women can become the **daughters of Sarah**, provided they are not afraid of any terror, in other words you need to be composed with a gentle and quiet spirit. And so loved ones, even to be considered a **daughter of Sarah** by God would be a very special honour. It can be had by any woman who listens and obeys the words of the apostle Peter.

But a failure to listen and obey his words will result in being more like a **daughter of Jezebel**. Now remember, she delighted in her physical beauty and she manipulated her husband Ahab, many times in **1+2 Kings**. I pray that none of our Christian women behave like she did.

Now Peter is going to turn his attention to Christian husbands. And please don’t think that because he doesn’t say much here that husbands are getting off lightly, what he’s about to say is very important. **1 Peter 3:7** “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour 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”.

Now husbands **have you ever wondered what it is a woman really wants?** We’ve all heard of the **3 Rs, reading, writing and arithmetic**. But if you want to get to the heart of a woman **try the 3 Ts. Women want Time, Talk, and Touch**. In fact, most significant relationships involve these three essential ingredients. **Time** is the first priority. Without it, the other two aren’t possible. **Talk** is the greatest intercourse that makes the other kind even more glorious. And genuine, non-sexual **Touch** is a critical component that has been lost in a sea of immorality and selfish pursuits.

You see loved ones, the Creator of both sexes, also designed their desires and inspired these words of Peter. And when we husbands unselfishly become considerate and respectful of women, the **3 Ts** will become natural. And then, your **favourite girl** will fall in love with you all over again. You see there are books and web sites informing us how to be good husbands but when we listen to Peter’s advice, we know we’re getting advice from the best source.

Peter says, “**Live with your wives in an understanding way**”. The **King James Version** says “with knowledge.” In other words Peter is saying that husbands are expected to know, and understand certain things. Husbands are expected to know and understand their responsibility in their marriage relationship. **Ephesians 5:25** “Husbands, have love for your wives, even as Christ had love for the church, and gave himself for it”.

Husbands do you know and understand this? Christ loved the church so much He died for her, **are we willing to have that same sacrificial love for our wives?** And remember this is not the wishy washy butterflies in the stomach kind of love. This is **Agapao** love, the kind of love between a husband and a wife that loves unconditionally and encourages us to be totally devoted to them.

Husbands are expected to know and understand the nature of their wives as weaker vessels. Now please don’t misunderstand what Peter means here. He’s not saying that women are less intellectual than men; he’s not talking about women having less courage than men or even having less spiritual strength than men. He is referring to women being weaker in terms of physical strength. And husbands we should know and understand these things if we are to live with our wives properly. We should live with our wives with love and understanding.

1 Peter 3:7 “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour 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”. **Husbands are we showing or giving as some translations have it, our wives honour?**

The word **give** means to **assign** and the word **honour** involves the idea that our wives are **precious and of high value**.

You know I think that many husbands sometimes, myself included fail in this department. We don't always see the real value in having a wife who is godly. **Husbands how do you see your wives? Do you see her as Proverbs 27:15 describes as, "An endless dripping on a rainy day and a nagging wife are alike".**

Or do you see her as Proverbs 31:10-31 describes "Who can find a worthy woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband trusts in her. He shall have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, and works eagerly with her hands. She is like the merchant ships. She brings her bread from afar. She rises also while it is yet night, gives food to her household, and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field, and buys it. With the fruit of her hands, she plants a vineyard. She arms her waist with strength, and makes her arms strong. She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp doesn't go out by night. She lays her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. She opens her arms to the poor; yes, she extends her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She makes for herself carpets of tapestry. Her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and delivers sashes to the merchant. Strength and dignity are her clothing. She laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom. Faithful instruction is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household, and doesn't eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you excel them all." Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands! Let her works praise her in the gates!

Husbands let us love and honour our wives the way the Lord wants us to. And also let us remember what Peter also says in **1 Peter 3:7 "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honour 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".**

Peter says another good reason to consider our wives in such a way is to remember that they are truly **"heirs together of the grace of life."** Yes you may love the woman you have married, yes you may hold her up high and treat her right, but Peter says there is something else you need to remember to help you treat her right. If she is a Christian, she is your sister in Christ and she is worthy of respect just as much as any other brother or sister in Christ.

And Peter says if you don't treat her like you should, **your prayers may be hindered.** Now the word **hindered** is an interesting word, it literally means **cut off.** And what Peter is telling us husbands is that if we treat our wives in anyway which isn't Christ-like then our access to God by prayer may be cut off. In other words God won't listen to our prayers anymore, which is exactly what happened to the Old Testament priests who treated their wives badly.

Malachi 2:13+14 "And this again you do: covering the altar of the Lord with weeping and with grief, so that he gives no more thought to the offering, and does not take it with pleasure from your hand. But you say, For what reason? Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your early years, to whom you have been untrue, though she is your friend and the wife to whom you have given your word."

Loves ones, I hope and pray we understand what Peter has been telling us today. He has been reminding us that the way we behave as husbands and wives can really have a huge bearing on our relationship with God Himself. If wives are to be considered very precious in the sight of God and if husbands are to keep open the avenue of their prayers to God.

Then we really need to be setting the example not only to each other but to the world on how God wants us to live within the marriage relationship. **After all who wouldn't want to have the ideal relationship?**