

Fact Sheet for “A Third Example”

1 Peter 3:1-7

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During the past couple of weeks we have been looking at what Peter wrote concerning submission to authority. We considered submission to government. Though it may be uncomfortable at times we should obey the civil authorities over us when it doesn't conflict with the higher authority of God. Household servants were to respectfully submit to their masters, even when those masters were unjust in their treatment. Now we continue with a third example of submission... something in our own homes.

^{ESV 1} ¶ **Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, ² when they see your respectful and pure conduct.**

“be subject” –from a combination of “under” and “to appoint, to order, to arrange, to determine, to set in place, to establish”

This is the third example of proper submission that Peter writes about. In 2:18 and 3:1 “be subject” is better translated “*being* subject”. The foundation for these verses is 2:13 with the command, “*Be subject*”. This subtle shift shows that these are three examples of Godly submission.

³ **Do not let your adorning be external-- the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear-- ⁴ but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.**

The word “adorning” is where we get our English word “cosmetic” from. Now be careful to avoid a wooden interpretation of these verses. Some have taken these words to mean that a woman should not wear a gold wedding ring or braid her hair. Isn't that what it says... or is it? Wooden interpretations are made when the passage is not looked at carefully enough. People apply the words with a mallet. Here is a more literal translation of the original Greek behind the English, “Your adornment should not be external, of braiding of the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of a garment...” If you woodenly take this passage to say that you shouldn't wear a gold wedding ring, then you should also say that you shouldn't put on a garment! Peter goes on to highlight what he does mean... **“the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit”**

We all have seen it! Some wives have taken the lead in the home. We've seen husbands who have made a decision and their wives shoot them a glance that would melt a glacier, or unleash a barrage of comments that would make a good paint remover.

The apostle Paul mentions much of the same emphasis in his first letter to Timothy (2:8-10).

⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Look up from your study bibles for a moment. Where did Sarah call Abraham “Lord”? The answer is in Genesis 18:9-12. I have often quoted these verses to Helen in jest, suggesting that she refer to me as “lord Bob”. She, in jest, smiles and says “*lard* Bob”. The point Peter is making is that when a wife willingly places herself under her husband’s lead this is an adornment that is very precious in God’s sight. It is how the holy women of the OT used to adorn themselves.

Now here’s a question for today. Is this cultural? In other words since our culture is different than that in NT times can we take a different view of headship and submission to authority in our homes? Can women be the head of the homes today, with their husbands being submissive to their wives’ leadership? Well, Peter isn’t the only one who wrote about this. Paul did also (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18-19). Paul also wrote 1 Timothy 2:8-15 in which he references creation. In other words this headship question was also a hot topic in Paul’s day, but his instruction was based on God’s creation of men and women

Verses 11 and 12 about a woman remaining quiet is about a problem that also was behind a major difficulty in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 14:33-35).

Verse 15 concerning childbearing is about embracing a role that was part of God’s perfect creation for men and women.

And God created Eve to be a helper for Adam (Genesis 2:18, 21-22). Here’s the point. God’s Word is consistent from beginning to end in its teaching about headship in the family. To say that culture has changed today, so we can accept a different norm of headship, is to place what we *think* to have higher authority than God’s Word. As soon as you are willing to do this you can dismiss any passage of the Bible as being outdated and no longer true to God’s will. You can change every bit of theology you like.

Peter now turns his thoughts towards husbands.

⁷ ¶ Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Paul too write similar words (Ephesians 5:25-33).

Husbands, you should be the ones to lead and set the spiritual tone in your home. This is your God-given role. You should treat your wife with love and honor, and so make here submission to your lead a joy, and not a chore. Wives, remember Peters words. These can be hard words to follow, but they are God’s best design for us.