



## **Session 4: 1 Peter 3:1–7**

### **SESSION GOALS**

*Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, & doing.*

**Main Idea:** As the people of God, we display the good news of the gospel in marriage through lives of submission and understanding.

**Head Change:** To know that God’s instructions for marriage lead to more joyful ends than any we could create on our own.

**Heart Change:** To feel a greater desire for honoring our spouse according to God’s Word.

**Life Change:** To conform our marriages to reflect God’s design for his glory and as a testimony of the gospel to those around us.

### **OPEN**

Hollywood paints a romantic picture of relationships and marriage today. **When you think about the world’s portrayal of marriage, what are some of the consistent characteristics that come to mind?**

While the vision of marriage we get from culture is not always wrong, it’s typically incomplete. Scripture casts a broader and more faithful vision of what God wants for marriage, even for those of us who are single.

### **READ**

Read 1 Peter 3:1–7.

### **WATCH**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Kyle’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to the following questions.

**What were the two examples Kyle listed from Dr. Stark’s book for why the early Church spread so rapidly during its first three centuries?**

**Does Peter command all women to submit to all men?**

**How do Peter’s instructions apply to situations of abuse within a marriage?**

Show Session 4: 1 Peter 3:1–7.

## **DISCUSS**

Last session, we began to look at some of the specific ways Peter encourages his readers to “abstain from sinful desires” (2:11). In particular, we dove into the topic of submission and what that looks like in terms of our relationship to civil authorities and Peter’s instructions for slaves in their relationship to their masters. This week, we’re going to see two more examples of ways we are to abstain from our own sinful desires, specifically in the context of marriage.

Someone read 1 Peter 3:1–7. As Kyle explained, one of the aspects of Christianity that set apart Christians early on was the way it embraced the ostracized. Unwanted children, women, and foreigners were accepted by believers on the basis that they were valued in the sight of God.

**What are some ways the Church could embrace the ostracized today? How do you think doing so would change the public’s perception of Christians?**

While the broader culture may not have viewed women favorably during Greco-Roman times, Peter (and the New Testament as a whole) clearly calls for better treatment. Overall, Scripture commands men to respect women as being made in the image of God, but specifically, in this context, Peter commands husbands to view their wives as co-heirs of God’s grace.

**What kind of a reaction do you have to Peter’s words in verse 7? What emotions do they inspire in you?**

Clearly, his instructions are directed to husbands, but men in every life context should take them seriously, whether or not they are married. Women, like men, are co-heirs of the gracious gift of life.

**How should your behavior toward your wife change as a result of this verse? How should it change in terms of your relationship with women in general?**

**For the women in the group, how do you react to Peter’s instructions to husbands? What impact would this kind of behavior have on your marriage? Your friendships?**

**If you’re currently single, how should Peter’s instructions shape your behavior toward women? How should it change the way you pursue potential dating relationships and preparation for marriage?**

**Or, if you’re a woman, how should these instructions inform the kind of person you look to befriend and/or pursue a relationship with?**

## **PEEK AT THE GREEK**

As Peter turns his attention to husbands in verse 7, he calls them to respect their wives as the “weaker partner.” At first glance, that phrase can sound quite offensive, as it seems to suggest inferiority on the part of the woman. In Greek, the phrase *asthenestero skeuei* literally means “weaker vessel” and the New Testament describes men as “vessels” elsewhere (Acts 9:15; Rom. 9:21–23). It also uses the term to denote physical objects like a lamp or dish (Luke 8:16; John 19:29; 2 Tim. 2:20). Clearly, the comparison here suggests that women are weaker than men, but in what way? Nowhere else does Scripture describe women as weaker intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, or morally. The most obvious use of the phrase has to do with physical strength. On the whole, men are typically stronger than women. Certainly, there are exceptions, but Peter is simply commanding husbands to be mindful of how they use their strength around their wives. Rather than cultivating habits that could become abusive, he tells them to care for their wives and respect them.

As Kyle pointed out, not only does poor treatment of wives hinder husbands' prayers, but it also weakens their ability to be a light of the gospel to the world. **What does the way you treat your wife communicate about your faith to others? Or if you're single, what does the way you treat the women around you communicate about your faith?**

**If you're a woman, how have you experienced obedient men provide an opportunity for you to live as a "co-heir" of God's grace, whether it be your husband or otherwise?**

Now, let's turn our attention to the first part of this paragraph where Peter gives instructions to wives.

**How do you react to Peter's words in verses 1–6? What feelings do they prompt in you?**

As we learned last week, the idea of submission is not one of forced obedience. Rather, it is a voluntary choice made out of joy in Christ. And in this case, it's specifically meant in the context of marriage. In no way should this be understood as a general command for women to submit to men. Even more importantly, Kyle stressed the importance of remembering that this isn't something we do simply for the sake of having a good marriage, but to honor Jesus Christ.

**How might that truth change the way you think about this command?**

Beyond his instructions on submission, Peter also encourages women to place their hope in God as opposed to any material hope, like that of clothing, jewelry, or hairstyles. While there's nothing wrong with external beauty, it does not last. As Kyle pointed out, it's the inner life that endures and communicates true beauty.

**If you're a woman, what are some of the ways you've been tempted to place your hope in external beauty today? How are these temptations ultimately enslaving rather than freeing?**

**If you're a man, in what ways might you have contributed to that enslaving picture of female value?**

**Where can you improve in terms of cultivating your inner beauty, as Peter describes in verse 4–5?**

Kyle emphasized the point that obeying God's design for marriage can build your spouse's faith. Verse 1 indicates that faithful living even has the potential to win an unbelieving husband to the faith. **If you're married, how have you seen this truth demonstrated in your own marriage?**

**How have you seen it demonstrated in someone else's marriage?**

Let's briefly re-read verses 1 and 7. **What exceptions does Peter list for these commands? What are the conditions that make it okay for spouses to dismiss his instructions?**

If you're struggling to find them, that's because there aren't any given. What Peter makes clear in his teaching is that our obedience is not dependent on our spouse doing his or her part. Obviously, as Kyle clarified, if abuse is present in a relationship, you should seek help immediately as Scripture forbids that elsewhere. But the reality is that love, submission, and respect are commands we are to live out regardless of the obedience (or lack thereof) of our spouse because we obey in service to Jesus, not our spouse.

## **GO DEEPER**

Read more about God's desire for marriage in the following verses: Eph. 5:21–33

While Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, his words echo the teachings of Peter. Verse 21 may seem like a strange place to start, but it frames marriage in an important light.

**What does Paul command in verse 21?** (That Christians submit to one another in reverence for Jesus Christ)

**In other words, submission is required of every believer. Scripture simply indicates a few spheres in which it is applied in specific ways.**

**What is the purpose of submission and love within a marriage according to verse 32?** (To display the mystery of Christ and his Church)

**How should these truths shape your emotions toward the Bible's teachings on marriage?**

There's no question that Peter's instructions describe an approach to marriage that contrasts sharply with the world's approach. It is not one that is self-centered or primarily focused on one's own needs. Rather, it calls for service and humility toward our spouse, an attitude of prioritizing his or her needs over our own. When we do so, it not only draws people into the beauty of marriage, but it also gives them a picture of the beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And as Kyle said, it has the potential to change the world around us much like we see in history from the first three centuries of the Church.

**Whose marriage do you find exhibiting these qualities best (honor, submission, love, etc.)? How does their relationship affect your view of marriage? In what ways does it motivate you?**

**As a result of this session, what can you do practically to better love your spouse this week?**

**If you're single, what can you do practically to pursue honorable friendships with those around you of the opposite sex?**

## **LAST WORD**

Marriage will always have its challenges, but it is a beautiful gift from God, one that He is faithful to bless from beginning to end. One of the clearest ways He has done so is through his Word. And while these instructions from Peter do not come naturally, they lead to a place of mutual respect and love toward our spouse.

That said, marriage is not promised to all. Certainly, these verses apply specifically to marriage, but they have much to teach us about our interactions with one another outside of marriage as well. Above all, they teach us that our hope must be anchored in God or else our motivation for obedience will dry up quickly. It's easy to pursue the hollow promises of this world that focus on the external, but true beauty comes from a life committed to embracing the good news of Jesus. He is our salvation, redemption, and ever-present hope.

## **LIVE IT OUT**

**Pray:** Whether you are married or single, spend time this week asking the Lord to continue shaping you to treat members of the opposite sex in ways that are faithful to his Word.

**Evaluate:** Set aside some time over the course of the next week to consider your marriage in light of Peter's instructions. As you do, resolve to make whatever changes necessary to align your marriage with God's Word.

**Listen:** Reach out to a couple that has been married more than twenty years. Ask them about their relationship and listen to the advice they have to offer.