

**1 Peter**  
**Part Five: Bring It Home**  
**Pastor Rick Henderson                      March 4-5, 2023**

One night we were watching TV together and I asked Heather, “If our marriage was made into a love story, who would you want to play you in the movie?” Of course, she wasn’t going to answer until I went first. My answer for me was Nick Offerman. I basically imagine myself presented as Ron Swanson. If you’ve never seen Parks and Rec, I’m sad for you that you can’t enjoy how awesome this is.

Heather decided that she wanted to be played by Viola Davis. I imagine myself as Ron Swanson, she imagines herself as the Woman King. Aren’t we a lovely couple? I know what you’re wondering. The answer is yes. We do mentor young couples.

I have a serious reason for sharing this bit of silliness with you. I want you to think about how you see you. How do you see yourself? Throughout this series, we’ve highlighted this together...

**SERIES THESIS:** Let your **IDENTITY** drive your **ACTIVITY**.

Your identity is the story you’re telling yourself about yourself. That story is going to be the major factor in shaping how you act. There’s an important implication we haven’t covered yet. How you see yourself, and how I see myself is going to shape how we respond to what we read in Scripture.

What we are about to read flows out of that very same thought we covered last week. If you missed last week, to best understand this message, you have to go back and see what you missed. Let’s dive in.

**1 PETER 3:1-7** *Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

Some of you are certain right now that there is nothing that I can say today that will persuade you take this seriously. Some of you may be concerned that I’m going to try and explain away why people don’t have to take this seriously. There are some of you who are just saying, “I’m willing to do what Jesus wants me to do. I just need some help understanding all of this.” No matter how you’re approaching this, I’m so glad that you’re here. I think today has the potential to be more helpful and more encouraging than maybe you’ve considered.

I want to give you a framework that will act like a decoder ring. Any time we feel stuck, remembering this will bring clarity.

Jesus is the lens through which we see **OURSELVES**. And we are the lens through which others see **JESUS**.

If you don't wrestle this down and take whatever time is necessary to come to terms with this, you are never going to come to terms with what we just read. This is the puzzle piece that will bring into focus all that we cover today and last week too.

Back in week 3, we did a little Hermeneutics 101. Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation. We introduced some basic rules for interpretation.

### HERMENEUTICS 101

- The author *determines* the meaning, the reader *discovers* it.
- Bombard the text with *questions*.
- Context is *supreme*.
- Use *clear* passages to interpret *unclear* ones.

I want to draw your attention to this one, "Context is supreme." The biggest mistake, maybe the most common mistake that people make when reading the Bible, is ignoring context. If we want to understand, we have to inform ourselves about historical and cultural contexts. What was going on when this was written? Here's a context question for us.

**QUESTION:** What was a typical home like in Roman culture?

### THE ROMAN HOUSEHOLD

- Husbands/fathers were the authorities over the household, and everyone was subordinate to them.
- Husbands/fathers had the legal authority to kill infant children without the consent of the wife.
- Husbands/fathers arranged marriages for their children.
- Husbands/fathers had the ability to force their adult children to divorce.
- Both men and women could opt for divorce, but the laws favored men financially.
- Because marriages were arranged, it was common and permissible for a man to have an affair. It was not acceptable for married women to have an affair.
- Domestic abuse was technically illegal. To be fair, abuse in the Roman world falls short of a modern understanding.

Men had social advantages and privileges that women didn't have. Men had legal advantages and privileges that women didn't have. So, why did women put up with it? In a hyper-individualized culture like ours, it will be hard for us to truly understand the power of the household structure they lived under. The home was the foundation for a stable society and a strong state. I don't think it's possible for us to appreciate the legal pressures and the societal pressures at play to protect the idealized home in the Greco-Roman world.

There were times when women revolted. There were instances of public protests and barricaded streets. And yet, for a variety of historical reasons, the rebellion was largely restricted to wealthy women, and it was short-lived.

Ladies, imagine trying to be a follower of Jesus in this culture, while married to a man who rejects the gospel. I want to crank up the heat a little bit, and show us what a difficult situation Christian women were in. This comes from Plutarch, a philosopher and historian of this period.

*A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour. —Plutarch*

While there were some exceptions to this, the power of Rome cracked down hard on religions that gave power to women. In all things, a woman was to defer to her husband. She was even encouraged not to have friends of her own. I could cite source after source from this time that kept reinforcing the message. Women are inferior to men. Women are a deformed version of men. Everything was designed for women to be under the rule of men, without exception.

So, this is the question that we must ask ourselves when we read Peter's instructions about wives and husbands.

**QUESTION:** Is Peter *responding* to what is or *revealing* what should be?

These are the only two options. For the folks who think Peter is revealing God's ideal for how homes should operate. There are a couple of questions that have to be taken seriously.

- If New Testament household codes reveal what should be, why do they perfectly parallel Greco-Roman ideals?
- If New Testament household codes reveal what should be, why do we reject slavery?

These are not gotcha questions. They are simply questions that deserve an answer. I'm approaching this from the viewpoint that Peter is giving instructions to men and women on how to represent Jesus and apply the gospel in their culture. His letter is a response to what is, not a revelation of what should be.

**1 PETER 3:1-2** *Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.*

In the same way as what? You have to go back to what we covered last week. In the same way that we all are to submit to every governing authority—and we do that for the sake of Jesus. In the same way that slaves submit to masters—and that was done out of reverence for Jesus. He's just keeping it going; wives submit to your husbands.

Every Christian is called to submission. The expression of submission is not going to be identical with every believer, but the call to submission is universal for every believer. Every follower of Jesus, men and women, are to adopt a posture of submission.

Last week we discovered that we are supposed to live our lives in such a way that people are inspired to worship Jesus. That's the exact same reason that Peter says this to wives. If your husband is not a follower of Jesus, live your life in such a way SO THAT you win him over to faith in Jesus.

You don't have to **SPEAK** to make a **STATEMENT**.

Your life is a sermon. Preach! Do you remember the quote from Plutarch about women having the same religion as their husbands? Women were discouraged from having their own thoughts. Instead of thinking, the Roman world wanted them to parrot whatever their husbands thought. When a woman was married, she publicly renounced her dad's religion and gave her allegiance to her husband's gods. At no point in a woman's life did Roman men consider that she might have thoughts of her own.

Now, combine that with the fact that one of the worst things a woman could do was disrespect or publicly embarrass her husband. If she didn't get with the program, his reputation was at risk. This is a complex, dynamic reality, and Peter was writing to women who needed clarity.

Imagine with me. You just gave your allegiance to Jesus. You're learning that you are chosen, you're a royal priest, a member of a holy nation, and God's special possession. Is it any surprise that women found the gospel irresistible? Is it any surprise that slaves found the gospel irresistible? This was dignity like no one had ever seen or imagined.

You're now following Jesus, but your husband is shutting you down. He won't listen to it. And he may even be keeping you from attending worship with your church. What do you do? Do you fight him? Do you disrespect him in front of his peers? Do you cut him off? Do you wear him down until he relents?

Peter says that this is how you stand firm in the true grace of God. Your life is a sermon. Preach! Can I remind you of this?

Jesus is the lens through which we see **OURSELVES**. And we are the lens through which others see **JESUS**.

Ladies, if I'm talking about what you're living—look to Jesus. Follow his example. Preach the true grace of God with your actions. I don't want to be the guy up here trying to mansplain how to be a wife. I do want to be the guy who encourages you, who takes a minute to acknowledge what a challenging situation you are in. I want to be the guy who honors you and prays for you. I want to be the guy who uses every resource at my disposal to lead this congregation to rally around you and support you.

**1 PETER 3:3-4** *Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.*

This may feel like a curve ball. And it may seem like a strange thing to discourage women from wearing jewelry and going to the salon. I can't help but notice that you all did your hair and are wearing jewelry. This is going to be awkward. Let's remember that context is important.

Earlier I said that women did sometimes rebel. That movement was largely restricted to wealthy women. One of the ways that women in the Roman world rebelled against this system was by wearing expensive jewelry and elaborate hairstyles. They flaunted their wealth and tried to use that wealth to achieve greater freedom for themselves. Everyone is on a search for significance, security, and satisfaction. When it feels like people with power you don't have, or that a system is constantly taking dignity and significance away from you—eventually people are going to say enough is enough.

It makes sense. And yet, there is more to it. Mixed in with this movement was an emphasis on physical beauty, sexual freedom and promiscuity, and a refusal to have children. Wearing jewelry and elaborate hairstyles became associated with social disruption, sexual promiscuity, and being anti-family. Now, let's bring back the point we made earlier.

You don't have to **SPEAK** to make a **STATEMENT**.

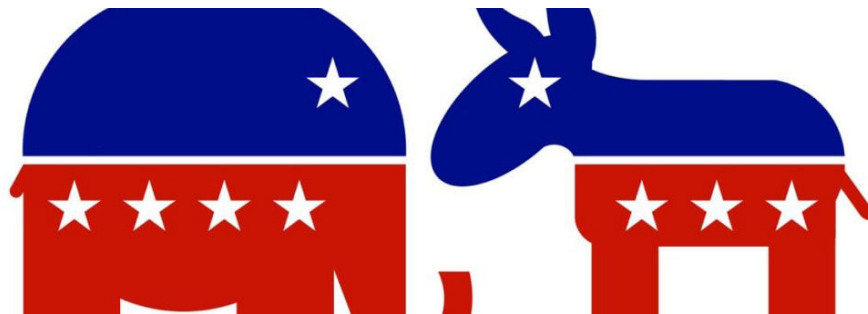
This works both ways. Wearing jewelry and elaborate hairstyles made a statement to that was interpreted as, "We're here to start a revolution. We are sexually available, and we're anti-family." Peter is saying, "Let's don't be associated with that." Let's use our freedom to represent the King.

This is what wise people do. They say no to what they are free to do so that they can say yes to something better. Remember our framework.

Jesus is the lens through which we see **OURSELVES**. And we are the lens through which others see **JESUS**.

There's nothing wrong with jewelry, nice clothes, or good hair. If something that you are free to do, gets in the way of you representing Jesus—use your freedom to say no to that thing.

There is a little penguin on this shirt that I'm wearing. Nobody associates anything provocative with a penguin. But imagine that I was wearing a shirt today that had this on it? Or this?



Is there anything inherently sinful or wrong about a donkey or an elephant? No! But if I wore one of these symbols, everyone one of you would interpret that as a political statement, even if I never said a word about politics. And that statement would overshadow all the words I speak about Jesus. Wisdom requires that we evaluate the statements we make, and that is much bigger than the words we speak.

I want to quickly look at one more thing from these verses.

**1 PETER 3:4** *Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a **gentle and quiet spirit**, which is of great worth in God's sight.*

This is not a prescription for biblical women. There is no such thing as female, Christian virtues. Yes, there are real differences between men and women. But the Bible never, and I do mean never, gives a list of gospel virtues for men and a list of gospel virtues for women. This description for women is the

exact way that Jesus was described. Please hear me on this. Peter is not making a case for biblical womanhood. He is pointing women, along with every one of us, to be like Jesus.

**1 PETER 3:5-6** *For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and **do not give way to fear.***

All throughout this series, I've said that you can't understand what Peter means if you don't read and understand the Old Testament. I wish I had time to explore these Old Testament stories of husbands and wives with you. Twice, Abraham pretended that his wife, Sarah, was his sister and let another man sleep with her. Both times God supernaturally intervened and came to her rescue.

For anyone who reads this as a case for keeping women down, and men are always supposed to be in charge, there are some observations we need to make.

- Peter was addressing women who were in an unjust, difficult situation.
- That came right after talking to everyone about submitting to governing authorities who were unjust.
- Out of that he told slaves to submit to unjust masters.
- Now, he is applying submission to women who were in difficult marriages that were structured around inequality.
- He then refers to the Old Testament and specifically references a woman whose husband put her in a horrific situation. Twice!

Peter is not presenting an ideal model for marriage or home life. He is presenting how to stand firm in the true grace of God when you are in a situation that you cannot stand. And here is another rule for hermeneutics: when something is specifically quoted—go back and read that passage so that you can understand the context from which that quote was given.

There is only one instance in all the Old Testament where Sarah refers to Abraham as lord. By the way, that was a common term for respect. The context is Genesis 18. God promised they would have a son. Both Abraham and Sarah were old. And the context of her calling him lord was her giving consent to a little marriage enrichment, and baby-making.

Why is that context important? Peter was directly addressing women who were married to men who rejected the gospel. In Roman culture, everyone in the household had to participate in the religion of the husband/father. I think Peter is being pastoral. I think Peter is saying to these women, I know some of you are afraid to have children because you think your husband won't let them worship Jesus. You don't have to be afraid of that. God is with you. The gospel is being preached through your life. Don't let fear hold you down or hold you back. God—is—with—you.

Now, after all that, Peter turns his attention to the men.

**1 PETER 3:7** *Husbands, **in the same** way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, **so that** nothing will hinder your prayers.*

It makes sense to me that we might be offended. Peter wrote a big chunk to slaves. He wrote a little bit smaller chunk to wives. Then, just one sentence to men. What else should we expect from a man who's probably a little misogynistic, right? Not so fast.

Did you know that public writings in this day never spoke directly to slaves or to women? Only men were directly addressed. Slaves and women were talked about but never talked to. People who understand ancient literature tell us that it was radically dignifying to slaves and women to be addressed directly. There's more. You always addressed the most important people first. Peter flips all that upside down.

Slaves, the ones at the bottom of society, were addressed first, personally, and received the most attention. Women, above slaves yet below men, were addressed personally and before men. Men were addressed last, with the least attention. It's not just Peter's statements that speak to us. The structure of this letter is a beautifully, subversive, declaration of dignity.

What did it mean for Roman men to, "in the same way..." as everyone is supposed to submit to governing authorities, in the same way that slaves were submit to masters, in the same way that wives were to submit to husbands—how are husbands supposed to, in the same way submit to their wives.

**1 PETER 3:7** *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

Believe it or not, the original Greek does not say, "be considerate." A direct translation from Greek reads, "Husbands, in the same way according to knowledge live with your wives, treat with respect and honor as the weaker person and as heir with you to the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Here is a basic rule of Greek grammar. When a verb is missing, you carry down the verb from the previous section and automatically insert it as being assumed. "In the same way..." means that just as all people are to be submissive to governing authorities, in the same way that slaves are to submit, in the same way that wives are to submit—in the same way husband are to submit. There is no way around it. This is grammar.

Being considerate and submitting do fit together. But, if we are reading it as something different for men than it was for women and slaves, we're ignoring what Peter actually wrote. In the same way that everyone else is supposed to follow the example of Jesus, and like Jesus, practice submission—men are supposed to do that too.

How were men supposed to apply this universal call to submission? Respect and honor your wives. What does it mean to relate to her as a weaker partner? This is not a dig on women. Here it is. Refuse to use your physical advantages, your social advantages, or your legal advantages against her. Treat her like an equal recipient of grace and life. In Roman society, you are like this (hand gesture: uneven). In Jesus' Kingdom, you are like this (hand gesture: even).

Only people who are free and equal can make the choice to place themselves underneath (hand gesture: underneath) the other, for the good of the other. No one is exempt from the command to submit. Let's make sure we let the full weight of this verse hit us. What comes after, "so that?"

Men who can't be bothered to **SUBMIT** to their wives shouldn't bother **SUBMITTING** their prayers.

Men, how many of us are bristling at this? If we feel uncomfortable? Remember the framework that we've repeated.

Jesus is the lens through which we see **OURSELVES**. And we are the lens through which others see **JESUS**.

Jesus, submitted. He submitted to the will of God the Father. He submitted himself to what we needed. He submitted himself to injustice so that we could be justified. That's who Jesus is. That's our King.

If it's not beneath the **KING** to submit, it certainly isn't beneath his **SERVANTS**.

Do you know why we take communion? This is our way of telling the big story to ourselves again, and again, and again. Jesus submitted himself to death so that we could have life. Jesus submitted himself to wrath so that we can have rewards. Jesus submitted himself to hurts so that we could be healed.