

Marriage in Perspective

1 Peter 3.1-7

In the second main part of the Household Code (the first being the section on slaves and masters), Peter turns to the Christian duties of wives. Their problems receive much fuller attention than those of husbands, probably because Christian women were more likely to have non-Christian partners than Christian men and so were more liable to hostility. In fact Peter appears to assume that the men will have believing wives, and what he says here is intended to apply to all Christian wives and not just to those with unbelieving husbands.

The specific purpose of Peter's instructions to Christian wives with unbelieving husbands is to help them to bring them to faith. He assumes that the husband will not listen to, or has rejected, the preaching of the gospel.

Three characteristics of the wife are commended:

1. Submission to Her Husband (3.1)

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your 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.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
Galatians 3.28

2. Beauty of Character (3.2-6)

*² When they see the **purity** and **reverence** of your lives. ³ Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴ Instead, 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. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.*

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

*'God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble.'* 1 Peter 5.5

3. Freedom from Fear (3.6)

*They were submissive to their own husbands, ⁶ like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and **do not give way to fear.***

What About Husbands? (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.* 1 Peter 3.7

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I. Howard Marshall. *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: 1 Peter*. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1991.