

Study 18

UNSAVED HUSBANDS

First Peter 3:1-6

Peter is about to continue his theme of *actions speak louder than words* by turning his attention to marriages. He has already applied this theme to Christian citizens and their relationship to the Empire, Christian slaves and their relationship with their non-Christian masters, and now he addresses the wives of unsaved husbands. Curiously, Christianity has always attracted more women than men. What we observe today in most churches generally was also true in the first century church: *many women have become believers while their husbands have not*. Perhaps one of the reasons why women more readily accept the Gospel is that the Christian message is transmitted by two very appealing means to a woman. Firstly, *words*. Women are generally wordier than men. Secondly, *relationships*. By far the majority of people who come to faith and obedience in Christ do so because of a relationship with a believer. Women are more likely to have more relationships which are more meaningful than what most men have. Added to this, women are far more likely to share their faith in Christ with others because women are far more likely to share with another generally. And women are also generally more expressive and transparent with their feelings than men which means that they are more likely to confess their sin and acknowledge their need for a Saviour. But once a woman commits her life to Christ, when her husband has not, she is faced with a dilemma: *to whom does her first loyalty lay (Christ or her husband)?*

1. How do the following Scriptures instruct wives about relating to their husbands?
 - a) Ephesians 5:22 _____
 - b) Colossians 3:18 _____
 - c) First Peter 3:1 _____

To *submit* means *to render obedience to*. Husbands are instructed to lead their wives as Christ leads the Church. The basis of this is *love*. Husbands are to love their wives and this involves the husband bearing the responsibility to *lead* his wife.

God's plan for marriage and the relationship between a husband and a wife was first seen in Eden when He charged Adam with the responsibility of leading, protecting, caring for, and providing for his wife Eve. Eve was to be a support to her husband and *together* they were equipped to withstand the Enemy. This is still the pattern for marriage today, that the husband bears responsibility for leading, protecting, and providing which is why the New Testament still calls wives to *submit* to their husbands. But what if a believing wife's husband is not a believer?

2. Consider again First Peter 3:1. Does *submission* or being *subject to* imply that there is *agreement* or *disagreement* between a believing wife and her non-believing husband. Explain.

The wife of an unsaved husband was to render loyalty to her husband without forsaking her loyalty Christ. Her submission to her husband should not be undermined. Doing so would place her outside of God's order and subsequently blessing for her life. Naturally though, the wife of an unsaved husband seeks two basic things: *her own spiritual growth and the salvation of her husband (his spiritual growth)*. To achieve the first objective the wife must be careful not to move outside of her husband's authority, because (despite him not being a Christian) he is still the *spiritual* head of his household. God's order is still to be honoured even if a husband has not surrendered to Christ.

3. According to First Peter 3:1-2, how can the wife of an unsaved husband have the best chance of seeing her husband come to Christ?

Many wives of unsaved husbands do themselves a dis-service in their evangelising of their husbands when they continually preach *at* them. Peter says that unsaved husbands should *see* Christ in their wives. Many years ago, David Pawson visited Australia on a preaching tour. He had many wives of unsaved husbands request prayer for their husbands' salvation. Instead of praying for them, he counselled them to stay at home with their husbands on a Sunday rather than going to Church (much to the dismay of the local pastors). He based his counsel to these women on

First Peter 3. When David Pawson returned to Australia twelve months later he revisited these churches. At every church he returned to, women came to him to thank him for his advice and to introduce him to their husbands (who were now saved)! Previously these husbands had felt that Church and Christianity was a wedge between their relationship with their Christian wife. When these wives had had opted to spend time with their unsaved husbands rather than at Church, it de-threatened their husbands and open them up to the Gospel, and eventually coming to church themselves.

INNER BEAUTY

Peter advises women to make the pursuit of *inner* beauty a higher priority than beautifying their outside appearance. That is, their real beauty should not merely be superficial. Does this mean that women should *only* look plain?

4. Does First Peter 3:3 instruct women not to wear beautiful clothes or adornments? Discuss and explain.

5. What are the things that Peter tells women to adorn themselves with? (1Peter 3:4)

6. According to verse 5, how did women of old make themselves beautiful?

"The outstanding wives of the Old Testament times, particularly Abraham's wife Sarah, are introduced as an example or parallel to inspire Christian wives. These women enjoyed a privileged status as members of God's chosen people; they were *holy*. They learnt for themselves to make the God of Israel their confidence and

hope ... Their lives were adorned by those desirable characteristics of personal conduct, particularly in relation to their husbands, namely, submission, active well-doing and freedom from panic and alarm."

Alan M. Stibbs' Commentary on First Peter

To make the point about submitting to *unworthy* husbands, Peter reminds wives about how Sarah submitted to her husband, Abraham. On numerous occasions Abraham made some terrible mistakes in his judgments and choices. But Sarah still submitted to Abraham despite this. Does this mean that Sarah withheld her differences of opinion from her husband? Hardly! We remember the incident involving Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21). Sarah told Abraham that she wanted him to cast our Ishmael and his mother Hagar (Gen. 21:10). Abraham strongly disagreed (Gen. 21:11).

7. Who did God tell Abraham to listen to in the midst of this circumstance?
(Genesis 21:12)

Despite her willing submission, Sarah was always free to discuss her differences with her husband. As Peter points out, because Sarah submitted to her husband, she enjoyed God's blessing on her life. At times this required her to have faith. Her submission to Abraham did not give him licence to abuse her (as perhaps many women fear if they were to submit to their husband). Submission is only needed when there is *disagreement*. It does not mean that a woman should *submit* to her husband's mistreatment - especially if it's physical. This would be a clear violation of a husband's marriage vows to his wife.

as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

First Peter 3:6

Amen.