

Series: First Peter, Clarity in Chaos
The Freedom of Submission—Relationships

Sermon by Teaching Pastor Paul Joslin

First Peter 3:1-7

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, October 20, 2024

Good morning, Waterstone. A reading from First 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,” the word of the Lord.

Paul: So good, but genuinely, things like Fall Festival, that is due to your generosity, and it is such a blessing to our church. I just want to encourage you as we close out the year, you can give to our church, and if you are a newer visitor, there is no expectation here, but if you have been a longtime member of Waterstone, we just always encourage people to look at what is going on in their financial world and see if they can support the mission of our church more, so you can go online. It is a very easy way to give, or you can place cash or a check in the offering boxes on your way out today, but it just allows us to continue to stay on mission. Here is the Fall Festival pie fight. It is all that. It was great. There were so many people who are in our community who have not been to Waterstone before, and I talked to a number of them, and they just said, “What a great way to like get to know your church,” so we are on mission for our community around us, giving people a positive experience with the church, and we are able to do that because of your generosity, so thank you, thank you, thank you.

All right, this passage, what are we going to do with it today? Last night as I was talking to someone after the message, she said, “As that reading was happening, I just felt the walls go up inside me, because I have heard this passage preached before, and I have heard ways that people have used this passage before, and I just immediately wanted to tune out.” I know there are some of you in the room today who are probably feeling that way. There are probably particularly some women in the room today, for whom you have experienced the shadowy side of this passage, ways that it has been used by the church to belittle or demean your place in God’s story, and my hope for you today is that as we walk through this passage, what often happens is this passage is talked about without a lot of nuance, or without a lot of context. My prayer is that as we talk about this passage today, providing some of that nuance and context, that it might actually be a space where you experience some healing today, rather than further wounding. I know that is part of my heart, going into this, and another caveat really quickly is I know there are probably some in this room, that you maybe are not married, and so a sermon on

marriage is like, “Okay, what is this for me?” and the way the church has talked about marriage in the past has hurt you, or maybe you have gone through a painful divorce, and so you hear these words about marriage, and you begin to feel shame or guilt or that woundedness comes back now. Maybe it is even because you are married, and you are just going through a difficult season in your marriage, and so hearing that scripture read and hearing that a pastor is going to preach on this idea, it just brings up a lot inside of you of the challenges of your current reality. Again, my hope today as we study this passage and we provide some context and nuance, is that as we begin to look at these principles that Peter has, we will understand that while he is talking about marriage, these principles actually apply beyond marriage, to all of our interpersonal relationships. One of my hopes is that as we walk through this passage, we can actually do some work to push against some of the cultural assumptions we often make about this passage, in order to embrace more Biblical ones.

So that is part of our goal today, and to be honest with you, it is going to take some work for us to get there. We are going to have to work through this passage together, because Peter is talking about the different levels of submission, and over the last few weeks, what we have been looking at is that Peter starts by saying, “Christians, all Christians, you are called to submit to the government authorities above you,” and so we said he is working through these different circles, from the government level to this mid-tier society employment and social structures, and then he gets it all the way down to household and family, and he says that submission and applying the gospel to every single one of these areas of our lives looks like the word submission in our relationship to government, in our relationship to the workplace and even our relationship to family, and so today we are going to talk about marriage.

Here’s the other thing that I will say. It is that some of you are sitting here in this room, and you are thinking, “This guy is going to teach me about marriage? I have been married longer than he has been alive,” and that is fair, and that is probably true. I have only been married for thirteen years, and so what I will say is, yeah, you are probably right. You probably have a lot more experience than I do, but what I will also say and what I will add to that is that I pray, and I hope that my preaching and teaching never comes from my personal experience. That is not where my authority lies. My authority lies in the word of God and the power of the Spirit, and I submit to that, and I study that, and I look at that, and so anything I say today is not just based on my personal experience or my ability to be a good husband, which I am not always, or to have a perfect marriage, which I do not. My authority lies in the word of God, and so what we are going to do today is to dive into this passage, so with that, let me pray for us, and then we will get going.

Heavenly Father, God, I know that this passage has been used in so many different ways, misused, and abused in ways that have caused so much harm and hardship, and Lord, I just pray that as we submit ourselves to your authority and to the authority of scripture, that God, you would just speak so clearly this morning. Father, for places where there is wounding, I pray that you will bring healing. For places where there is conviction or maybe guilt, I pray that you would bring conviction that leads to forgiveness. God, where there may be even shame or any people who just feel the weight of the burden of this text, I just pray that through the power of your Spirit today, we could find freedom in what you have to say to us. God, I pray that you would soften our hearts for this text, and it is in Christ’s name that we pray, amen.

All right, so I think right up front, submission is a hard topic, and we have been going through it, and I realized this week we have not necessarily provided a clear definition of what Biblical submission is, so I want to just start there today to set us level. Christian submission, this is the best definition I have come across. Christian submission is humble, loyal, and loving deference, and so it is this principle, this idea that as you are in relationship with other people, whether it is government authorities or social structures or interpersonal relationships, that we have this loving deference to the people around us, that we set aside our preferences, our needs, our desires for the sake of others. It is a very Biblical principle, and it is very difficult to live out, because this sounds like me losing my preferences. This sounds like me having to subject myself to someone else's preferences. This sounds like me losing my autonomy and losing my independence. It sounds like me having to give up the things that I want to do and the way I want to do them for the sake of someone else, and that never comes up in marriage at all, does it?

In fact, one of the places that this idea comes up in marriage for Steffi and me is social media, and I will just call it a wasteland called Facebook Marketplace, all right? Steffie is a bargain shopper. She loves Facebook marketplace, because she can always find good deals on things that we do not need at all. It is awesome for her, and then I feel like Facebook marketplace is the place we go where someone else figured out how to get all of their junk out of their house and into my house, and suddenly I am stuck dealing with it for a great deal, right, and I am like, "How did this bargain happen?" But a few years ago, we went to see Nate Bargatze live. Does anybody know Nate Bargatze, comedian? Yeah, he is awesome. He explained our argument better than I ever could, so take a look at this video.

"She started selling stuff online, on Facebook Marketplace, and I found this out from a guy at my front door. I do not even really know what it is. I think it is just putting your home address on the open Internet. She does not sell used cars. There is not like big money coming in. She sells stuff that should be thrown away. She sold an old kid's folding chair for five dollars. Best case scenario, we receive five dollars. Worst case, our whole family is murdered."

Oh, so good. That delivery is just top notch, right? All right, and that is the crux of it. In marriage, it is like, who gets to decide what we do? Do we use Facebook Marketplace, or do we not use Facebook Marketplace? Who gets to win? Who has to submit? That is the question before us, and the issue with submission in marriage is that culturally we have these two different narratives. We have the conservative narrative and maybe the more liberal narrative, and I do not mean that in a political sense at all, but the more conservative narrative around submission in marriage is this. It sounds something like, "Men are the leaders of the home, and they are supposed to be the leaders in society, and so women's job is to submit to their authority, submit to their leadership, probably do something in the home, and maybe they are not in the workplace," and it is the extreme right? But it is this idea that men are supposed to be in authority, and women are supposed to be subservient to them, right? That is one narrative.

The other narrative we have is like, "You know what, guys? You had a good run, but you screwed things up a lot, and so now it is our turn," right? And so it is the women's turn to be in charge, "and you need to learn to submit, and we need to have a little bit more authority, and you need to submit to our authority," and so we have these two competing narratives going on in our culture, and we can see this in so many different spheres, and the question is, which one is right? Which approach is the right

approach? and those may be stereotypes, but I think we see these types of arguments floating around in our culture, and so what does Peter say about submission?

Well, starting in verse one, “Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands.” Boom, there it is, right? “Okay, honey, no more Facebook marketplace. I win. You have to submit to me. You do not get any say. I win,” right? “That is what he is saying.” Now hold on. It goes a little bit deeper than that, okay? While it may look like that on the face of it, Peter is actually saying something much deeper, so let me finish reading the passage: “So that if any of them,” talking about husbands, “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.”

So, we have to do is we have to remember the context of who Peter is writing to. He is writing to a church that is being slandered and experiencing persecution and hostility, that the culture around them and society around them sees them as Christians and sees them as a problem and does not want them to be a part of their culture, and what he is doing here specifically is addressing women in that scenario who are married to men who do not follow or believe in Jesus. What we have to understand is that that is a very, very big deal, because in ancient culture, the expectation was that wives would worship the same gods and have the same religion as the patriarch of the family, so if let’s say there was a patriarch in the family, and he worshiped this god in Greek mythology, then everyone else in the household, wives, children, slaves, everyone would worship the exact same god. The cultural expectation at the time was everyone adopted the faith that was of their patriarch, but these women were living in rebellion in that society, because they were choosing to follow Jesus, and they were choosing his ways over their husbands’ ways, so really out from the go, they were not submitting the way the culture has told them that they were supposed to, and they would have been in an incredibly vulnerable position, because women at that time had no ability to divorce or change their circumstances or get out of a situation, and so what Peter is doing is he is saying you are probably experiencing these very hostile relationships. Your husbands are angry at you for following Jesus, and the question is, what do you do?

They did not have any options to change their circumstances. They could not find a new husband or move outside of the marriage or do anything, and if the husbands did not want anything to do with them, then they could divorce them and leave them destitute, and so what are these women supposed to do? So, Peter encourages these wives not to make waves, but to continue to abide by cultural standards, including submission to their husbands, but it is this very particular context, and look at what he says here. He says some of them do not believe the word. That is the word, “logos,” so they do not believe in the Messiah. They do not believe in Jesus, but maybe they could be won over without words by your behavior. See, it is a missional context. What Peter is saying in this passage is through your behavior, and it is the same thing he says to slaves, and it is the same thing he says to all Christians when he calls them to submit. It is missional. The hope is that through their behavior, these husbands might be won over to Christ, and this term, “win,” is a missionary term. He is putting these women, these wives, on mission for the salvation of their husbands

I want you to imagine for a moment that you are a first century woman, and some apostle or disciple has come through your town, and he has preached the good news of Jesus, and he says the message of Jesus, who frees the captives and liberates the oppressed, and He offers salvation and the

forgiveness of sins, and as this disciple is preaching, something within you is stirred. You feel the Holy Spirit moving, and something within you says, “I want to give my allegiance to this person, Jesus. I will put my faith in Him.” It is this transformative experience, and then you go home, and you tell your husband everything that has happened to you and the amazing words of this disciple and what he shared and about this person, Jesus, and then the husband looks at you, and he rejects the word, and he rejects Jesus. Suddenly you are in a very precarious position, and what Peter is saying is that the hope for these women, there was really no way for them in that day to change their circumstances, and so the hope he gives them is that if you continue to live and follow Jesus, then the hope is that your husbands will see that, and they will encounter Christ. They will be transformed, and suddenly this precarious, vulnerable position that you find yourself in will be changed and transformed by the power of the gospel. That is his hope, and so what we have to be so careful with is that as Peter is putting these women on mission, what he is saying is they are in a context where they are being slandered and persecuted, and they are fearful, and Peter is saying that your hope and that the encouragement I give you is the same thing that we have been looking at throughout the rest of the letter of First Peter. Live such good lives among the unbelievers that even though they accuse you of being wrong, they will come to glorify Jesus. That is Peter’s motivation in this passage.

So, in a modern context; does the application of this text mean that women today are called to stay in the exact same situation as Peter is calling these women to in this context? I do not think so. I do not think that God is calling women to stay in an abusive relationship, and at Waterstone, we believe that when husbands are unfaithful or abandon the relationship emotionally, or when they treat women less than God has called them to, that women are not required to stay in those circumstances. Peter is writing to a very specific context where these women had no other options, and there are other options available today, and so the question and what we have to wrestle with, and I just think it is not even a question, what I want to be so crystal clear with is that God does not expect any of us to stay in an abusive situation. That is not what submission means, and if you are in an abusive situation, come and talk to us. We have helped many women through that situation, and sometimes that looks like reconciliation, and sometimes that looks like conviction and trying to get people out of situations that are unsafe for them.

So, if that is not what Peter is saying, and that is not what he is calling people to, then what is submission supposed to look like? I want you to think for a moment of the stereotypical approach, or what we might imagine in our culture submission looks like. If you think of a stereotypical submissive woman, you might think of someone who is passive, who is dependent, someone who lacks opinions for herself, someone who is soft-spoken, just agreeable, avoids confrontation, avoids decision-making, maybe lacks any sort of identity, right? That is the sort of picture we have in our culture. Is that the picture that Peter is thinking of? Is that what he is writing about and trying to call Christian women to?

He goes on in verses three and four, and it says this, “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 great worth in the sight of God.” So, Peter says that submission should look like women never wearing makeup. Do not comb your hair, and if you ever accessorize your outfit, you are living in sin, right? So how many people do we need to talk to and confess that after service today, right? No, that is not what Peter’s saying. In

fact, if you look at it, people have said that that is what Peter's saying, but if you look at the text, and if you just read it plainly, he is not saying that women cannot do those things. What does he say? He says that that is not where your value lies, that physical beauty does not define these women.

I want you to think for a moment about the cultural standards that we place on people to show up looking and appearing in a certain type of way, particularly women, the expectations we put on them to appear almost airbrushed and plastic, and that is our definition of what beauty is. My guess is that in Peter's day, there was a similar context, a similar sort of expectation, and that these women might have even been tempted to fall into those patterns, so that through their appearance, rather than their actions, that might win their husbands to Christ, but Peter is pushing against that notion, and he is encouraging these women to not find their worth or their value in physical appearance, but instead in the inner beauty of their souls, and what does Peter say? What does he use to describe this idea of the inner self? He says it is unfading beauty, so what I think Peter is doing here is he is drawing a contrast between the temporary physical beauty some of us have and the unfading beauty of a spiritual heart turned towards God, and he is saying that you might have a preference for this beauty, but the call of you to live for Jesus in this circumstance is to not find your worth and your dignity and your value in your appearance, but in your spirituality and in your faithfulness to Jesus.

If I can, I want to push this gently. I think this point could be applied to just about everyone in the room, but Peter is talking specifically to women, and so I am going to try to apply it specifically to women as well, and I am not trying to shame anyone, but I think when we think of our cultural standards and the expectations that we place on women, I can't imagine the pressure, the weight, and the wounds that come with that, but something for you to maybe consider is I want you to think about your weekly schedule, and how many hours are potentially spent preserving or enhancing physical beauty? Then I would ask you to compare that with how many hours a week are spent on what Peter calls spiritual beauty. I do not think that what Peter is saying is that you can't put yourself together and look some sort of way. He is not saying that beauty is wrong. He is not saying that jewelry or fashion or any of that is wrong, but what he is saying is that in this context of submission, that your value, your worth does not come from your hair or your makeup or your smile or your body type. The value for women that he is trying to place on these women in this very vulnerable situation is not on what society says you look like. Your immeasurable value and worth does not come from the eyes of men, but from the blood of Jesus, and he says, live not for the approval of men or for the standards of culture, but live in accordance with who God has created you to be, focused on what matters. That is what Peter is saying, and he is placing that idea in this context of submission. So, it is inner spiritual beauty, not outward adornment, but what else does he say?

He goes on, and then in verse five, he says this: "For this is the way the holy women of the past, who put their hope in God, used to adorn themselves," with this inner beauty. He says, "They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her Lord." There are some of you that want to say, "amen," after that. Do not do it. It will make for a bad ride home, okay?" "You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear." In these verses Peter ties together this call to submission, and then he gives an example of Sarah the matriarch, the wife of Abraham, and he says you should follow her example. She is a great example of what submission looks

like, and if you follow her example, you will do what is right, and you will not give way to fear. Those are the two things that he says Sarah did, and if you are like her, then you will have that same characteristic about you. You will do what is right, and you will not give way to fear.

The question is then, what we have to ask is if Sarah is the model for what it looks like to submit, then we have to look at her story and her life, so that we can understand what it means to submit to husbands. So, think about Sarah's story. Sarah courageously left her home to follow Abraham as he left their entire family for the place God had called him to in a foreign land, and at two different points in the story, we are told that Abraham gets to this point, they go down to Egypt, and Abraham is scared because the kings of Egypt look at his wife and think that she is beautiful. She must have been stunning in some sort of way, and so they say, "Oh, I want this woman," and Abraham, he is a little bit of a coward in these moments. He says, "Oh yeah, you want my wife? Well, I wonder, but you know what? Let's just say she is my sister, and then you can have her," and he just gives his wife to other kings to protect himself, and Sarah goes along with the plan so that she can protect her husband, and what we are told in those stories is that God actually protects her in those scenarios, but she also did not always go along with what her husband wanted. There are different points where they come to a disagreement, and at one point, God even tells Abraham, "Listen to what your wife says, and do what she says." That does not quite fit with our definitions of submission.

Sarah is shown to have spiritual discernment multiple times in the stories, although this is so important: she is not perfect either. She makes her own blunders. There is the whole business with Hagar, where Sarah cannot have children, so she gives her servant to her husband and says, "If I cannot have kids, maybe you can have kids with her," and it causes a huge disruption in the family in the story that God is playing, so she is not perfect either, but throughout the story, Sarah displays faithfulness to God and courage even in difficult circumstances, and that is what Peter says these women are supposed to do. Do good, and do not be afraid, and it seems that Sarah was courageous and willing to mislead kings, putting her well-being in jeopardy for the sake of her husband, loving deference. This is likely why Peter says, "Don't be afraid, but do good." Sarah was not afraid. She had this courageous spirit, and she had a voice. She did not lack identity. She was not just agreeable, but she also was not perfect. I am not saying any of this to say somehow that women or wives are left off the hook, that the call is to still to submission, but the point I am trying to make is that you can have a submissive attitude, and like Sarah, still use your intelligence, your influence, your initiative, and your individual abilities. It's not somehow this call to just passively sit by. It is not about matching some cultural stereotype. It is about living into God's standards. Does that make sense, the difference?

But Peter does not stop there, so while he says women are supposed to submit to men, and do whatever, not whatever they say, but sorry. I just tried to undo that point. He says that while women are supposed to submit to men, then he goes on, and he starts talking about husbands, and he says this in verse three: "Husbands in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner." Don't worry, we are going to get to that, all right?" and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." Now, this is so important, because in English we do not quite understand what Peter is doing here, because it looks like there are two verbs in this sentence, "Be considerate," and "treat them with respect," and what you have to understand is

that there is actually no verb in this sentence. It is only two participles, and you are thinking, “Paul, I do not care. That does not mean anything to me. That is Greek. Like, why are you doing that?”

But it is so important, because what Peter is doing is when he says, “Husbands, in the same way,” he does not follow that with a verb, which means in Greek it ties back to the previous verb that was listed in the same place. So, this phrase, “In the same way,” comes up multiple times in First Peter, and he says, “Wives, in the same way,” as the slaves, which ties it back to everyone who is supposed to submit to government authorities and everyone, and then later, in First Peter 5, he says everyone is to submit in the same way. Throughout this passage, Peter is saying and calling people to submission in the same way. It is this idea of mutual submission to one another as Christ submitted to the will of the Father. That is what he is grounding all of this in, and so when Peter says, “in the same way,” what he is telling husbands is you also submit to your wives, and what we have to understand is this idea would have been an astounding request, unheard of in the ancient world.

What Peter is saying is that when we believe the gospel, our previous conceived notion about cultural hierarchy begins to break down in the name of Jesus. We can actually go back, and we can look at what Greek philosophers and Roman philosophers thought about the marital relationship in this day, and we can see their standards and the things that they say and the way that Peter is pushing against those things. So for instance, there is this Greek philosopher, and he says, “Husbands marry your wives, and the primary thing you do with your wife is make sure that she gives you legitimate children and she takes care of your household. That is her primary responsibility, but she is your property, and as your property, you should feel the freedom then to go outside of the marriage, and you can have whatever kind of relationships you want with concubines, and they can be there on a daily basis for you, to take care of your needs, and if that is not enough for you, then you should also have one or two prostitutes that are in your sphere of influence, and you do not even have to live with your spouse. Just make sure she is taking care of the things that she is supposed to take care of, and then you have the freedom to do what else you want to do.”

What does Peter say here? He says, “Be considerate as you live with your wives.” He is pushing against that notion by a simple statement of just be with your family, “Be considerate to them. Do not go outside of the bounds of your marriage. Submit to them by caring for them and living with them and treating them with respect.” We know from other philosophers that the thought of the day was that women were not worthy of dignity or respect, that you could treat them however you wanted to, and that you could discard them however you wanted to, and Peter is saying, “Respect your wives.” Peter is pushing against these views of this ancient world. He is being so countercultural here, saying, “Live with your wives. Be considerate of them. Respect them.” He is pushing against all of the natural boundaries of how people treated women in that day, and he says that they are heirs with you. They are equal partners with you in the gift of grace. In Christ, they are equal partners with you,” and then you’re thinking, “Yeah, but Paul, he literally calls them weaker vessels. Like what is that?” What is he saying there? In that day, as we have covered, women experienced extreme disadvantage in the Greco-Roman culture, and what Peter is saying as the weaker vessel is he is saying they are the more vulnerable in the situation, so take care, and do not exploit them. Do not intentionally or inadvertently take advantage of them. Peter wants husbands to treat their wives with respect.

Okay, so who wins? Who submits? Does Steffi have to stop using Facebook Marketplace, or do I have to allow her to use Facebook Marketplace? Peter is not concerned with any of that. See this passage, although it has been misused and abused in multiple different settings by multiple different people, it emphasizes the countercultural Christian ethic of mutual respect and equality, reflecting the transformative power of the gospel in all relationships. It goes outside of the bounds of marriage, because the call of Christians is to submit to one another, and this is such a countercultural message in Peter's time. I want you to think about the message in our own day and how countercultural this idea is in a culture where it is always about who wins and who gets what they want and about trying to create hierarchies that, men, you screwed it all up, and so now women are in charge, or vice versa, and we always try to figure out who is in charge, who wins, who gets their preferences, who gets to do things the way they want, and that our marriages are conditional on our happiness and how much someone else satisfies us. In our culture, so many things are contractual about the marriage covenant. What would it look like if the church, rather than being concerned with what is going on in marriage out there, was the place where we committed ourselves to this idea Peter has of mutual submission, of looking lovingly and humbly and loyally to our spouses with loving deference, caring for the other person beyond yourself. I mean, what would it look like if we leaned into that?

Here is the truth, though. I will be honest with you. Some weeks a pastor preaches from a place of conviction, and other weeks a pastor preaches from a place of confession, and what I have to name with you is I did not live out these principles this week in my marriage. We are in the middle of a chaotic and busy season. I already mentioned the trouble with the Cowboys' season, so that has been hard, and then, no. Truly, though, Steffi, this week she was in the middle of comps for her PhD program, and I don't really know what comps is other than I think it is like how do we torture students as much as possible while they are trying to get their PhD, and in the middle of that, things here have been, there has been a lot of change in circumstances. We just felt like we had zero margin, and our ten-month-old is starting to walk for some reason, which is like it is cool, I guess, but now I have to baby-proof the whole house. Otherwise he is going to start eating like dishwasher pods, and I do not know what to do, and so we got to the end of our week and it was Thursday night, and they were going to Texas this weekend, and it was one of those flights where you have to get up at four o'clock in the morning to make it there, and we are packing. We are trying to clean the house. We are trying to get everything ready, and it is like two o'clock in the morning, and Steffi and I just get in a huge fight, and to be honest with you, it was mostly my fault. To be honest with you, it was not great, and I felt like such a fraud from that day until this weekend, trying to prepare and put the finishing touches on a sermon about how you are supposed to mutually submit and love and respect your wife and, I was just thinking like, "Yeah, I did not get that this week."

The challenge is that submission is really difficult, and this idea of mutual submission, of laying aside your preferences for the sake of honoring and respecting your spouse or anyone you are in interpersonal relationships with goes against everything we want, but what I have to tell you is that there is a power in this principle, and that what we see from Peter writing this is that wherever Christianity went and wherever Christianity goes, this submission that to us feels like losing becomes the very place that the gospel advances. So, you see that all throughout the ancient world where Christianity spread,

suddenly women begin to have more rights as they are being submissive, and slaves suddenly are given more freedom as they have devoted themselves to this principle of submission, and as Christians interact with a government that is persecuting them and submit to that authority, by the end of the story, the Roman empire crumbles under the principle of submission.

We think that it looks like a losing, but for some reason, because of the power of the gospel and who our God is, it is the very means through which Christianity has spread out and conquered the world. The call for us is not to be perfect in these spaces, and I certainly have not been. The call is to be faithful as we submit to Christ. That is the power behind all of this. That is what Peter roots this idea in. It is not just that you have to go and figure out how to be submissive to the people around you in your life. It is that you submit to Christ. You surrender your life to Christ, and you follow Him wherever He tells you that you are supposed to go, so what would that look like if we applied that principle to our marriages or to our workplace, or to our relationship with government? How might God begin to change our marriages and our workplace and our government if we begin to live this out?

As we close today, I want to take a moment to just pray over us, because I think one thing that can happen and that I think I even lived this week, is that as we talk about some of these things, there can be again that wounding, that guilt, that shame that I am not doing this, or I am not enough here. I have failed at this so many times, and so I just want to pray over you and myself today, to invite the Holy Spirit for the space where we need conviction, but also where we need to be empowered to live this out for the sake of others, so that people may come to glorify God and know Him. So, would you please pray with me?

Heavenly Father, God, as we talk about this idea of submission, God I think our natural reaction is to feel this pushback. That does not sound right. That does not feel good. That is not how I want things to be. God, for some of us in this room, there may be guilt, the feeling that we have not lived up to this sort of standard, that we have not loved our spouses with respect or treated them with honor, that maybe we have not submitted to our spouses the way that scripture calls us to. God, there may be some of us in this room who are carrying wounds around this idea of submission. We feel like we lived it out. We feel like we did our best, and things still fell apart, and now we are carrying the wounds of a broken marriage or even a divorce. God, there may just even be interpersonal relationships, places in our life where we are struggling to live this out. We look at the person we are in a relationship with, and it is hard to think that they are worthy of respect, because of the way they treat others or how they go about their business. I pray in the name of Jesus in all of these circumstances, wherever people may find themselves today, that in Jesus' name you would provide forgiveness where forgiveness is needed. God, I pray for healing in the spaces of wounding, that your Spirit would speak to our hearts and to our souls in this moment and free us from the burden of shame. God, it is not about our power to live this out. The truth is that submission does not come from simply submitting to other people. It comes from submitting to you, that we give ourselves to you. The more fully we give ourselves to you, the more you call us to this radical, counter-cultural lifestyle that looks unlike anything this world has seen, and though sometimes it feels like losing our independence or our autonomy or our preference, but God it is through the power of submission that you overturn the world. May you empower us by your Spirit to live that out this week. God, we ask that expectantly. We want to see how you could change our

marriages or our workplace, and God, as impossible as it seems, even our government. The truth is, the call for us is not to figure any of those places out, but simply to surrender to you and see what you might do, so give us the strength for that, and it is in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

43:20 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

Message #799