

The Quality of a Godly Woman

1 Peter 3:1a, An Uncommon Love, Part 1

A Sermon by Chris Mueller

I knew a gal who signed all her notes, SINBAD. Sinbad, why Sinbad? She said it meant Single Income No Boyfriend And Desperate. She grew a lot in the Lord, but still signed her notes SINBAD—why? She said it now meant, Single Income No Boyfriend And Dangerous.

What kind of single student unattached person are you? Too many singles are more concerned about the outside than the inside. Like a first car, they spend a lot of time on decals, paint, Armor All, wax, wheels, slick leather, shiny décor—but sadly, the engine is out of tune, burning oil, and held together with wire and tape.

I know I sound like an old parent, but with many single Christians, there seems to be more concern about whether to get a tat or a piercing, than develop inner quality and genuine Christlikeness. With Facebook, texting and twittering there is more priority to stay in the know on random, useless opinions and thoughts than with truly pursuing Christ. Oh sure, you may occasionally share a verse or spiritual thought—but have you ever considered that maybe it'd be better to invest your time working hard on a quality, memorizing a verse, studying the Scripture, praying and fasting, being silent and meditating on that truth, rather than pop it on Facebook for everyone to comment on or form opinions over?

When is the last time you genuinely sought to grow in your character . . . to be more at peace in a crisis, to be more loving to the unlovely, to be someone who invites others instead of continually waiting to be invited or expecting to be asked? To grow more in humility, to kill more of your pride, to stop being defensive when things are unfair, to refuse to complain about anything, to stop giving your opinion or making an unnecessary negative comment, to honor those in authority over you, even to submit from the heart to those who are unfair?

This is what Peter now calls for from his readers 2,000 years ago and us today. Turn to 1 Peter 3. Instead of focusing on externals, Peter wants Spirit-empowered obedience to an internal focus. Instead of constantly trying to conform from the outside, Peter wants us to be transformed from the inside. In other words, Peter is not commanding an easy fix—you will have to be humble, broken and willing.

Do you remember that time you got pulled over and you knew you deserved whatever that officer said or did? Remember when you told him just how badly you drove, and that in your heart you knew you didn't deserve a ticket, but you did deserve a firing squad? You both agreed, you got your driver's license at K-mart, a blue light special. And to your shock, the officer let you go with only a warning? That's the heart you need today—humble, broken and willing. The Lord today does not want to merely change your behavior, but change your heart, which will transform your behavior. The Lord doesn't merely want to change your conduct, but Jesus Christ wants to change your character. But this won't be easy.

After 35 years of ministry, among many desires, I wish I could change our value system. I wish I could change what we make as our priorities. After countless days of marriage counseling, after seeing couples pursuing the wrong priorities, I wish I could say to them as singles prior to marriage: "Instead of valuing gorgeous eyes, an hourglass figure, an attractive walk, a cute laugh, pouty lips, silky hair, a great smile, likes video games, sports and is fun to talk to . . . I wish you would value 'a woman of character.'" [Proverbs 31:30](#) says, "*Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.*"

It seems that only the mature understand this. It seems that only the biblically-saturated, spirit-filled own this. You don't marry a body, you marry a person—if that person doesn't not have biblical character, they'll make a terrible spouse. But if they have genuine, deep, tested biblical character, they will make a tremendous wife—a wife worthy of boasting about.

And this is what Peter calls women to become in [1 Peter 3:1-6](#). *“In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.”*

I am very eager that all of you men and women, single and married, seniors and children, hear this call to character that is strong, noble, beautiful and worthy of a woman's highest spiritual efforts. This is a powerful portrait of womanhood—it is about submission, but I hope you see the deep roots of Godly womanhood underneath the fruit of submission in these verses. Let me point out one key quality.

Notice verse 5—Godly women “hope in God.” A Christian woman does not put her hope in her husband nor in “getting” a husband. She does not put her hopes in her looks, but she puts her hope in the promises of God and His character. Like [Proverbs 31:25](#) says, *“Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future.”* She does not live by fear, she lives by faith. She is not afraid of the future, but she laughs at everything the future will bring because she hopes in God.

She looks away from the troubles, miseries and obstacles of life that seem to make the future bleak, and she focuses her attention on the Sovereign power, wisdom and love of God who does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases. She is deep into the Scripture, sound theology, personal intimacy with Christ, and dependency upon His Spirit, and this hope (verse 5) is the root of her submission, her obedience (verse 6), her living without any fear (verse 6), and her focus on internal character and not merely external adornment (verse 3-4).

These verses are talking about “the quality of a Godly woman.” Regardless of her circumstances, her husband, or her difficulty, Peter says these are the qualities women are to value, and what all of us, single men included, are to honor in women. Who do you esteem/talk about more—a high-powered tiger woman of business; a female Olympic athlete; or a woman of Godly character? Do you? What do you really esteem in a woman—one who looks like Keira Knightley or Jessica Alba, sings like Carrie Underwood, and cooks like Rachael Ray??? or a Godly woman of quality described in these verses? Let's find out. Look at [1 Peter 3:1](#)—note, we will look at the three major statements in the verse separately, the first phrase today.

1“*In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands,*

so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word,

they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives.”

Read the first phrase again in both NAS and ESV:

NAS 1 “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands”

ESV 1 “Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands”

What is God saying here through Peter? What does it mean to submit—some have taken this role to the extreme, promoting obsequious behavior by women in the face of the worst kind of physical abuse, and giving husbands a license to domineer/control. Others have taken the other extreme and labeled all passages addressing submission as culturally obsolete, with application only to the era in which they were originally written. But the Biblical position is far different than both those extremes and extremely beautiful. What is it? Verse 1 begins with “in the same way” or “likewise”, which teaches us . . .

#1 The heart of submission 1a “in the same way”

The Greek word for “in the same way” is used to describe something of equal degree, in perfect agreement with, similar or like. And to understand what God is saying here through Peter, it demands we look back to what Peter has just taught—what was that? When wives are commanded to be submissive to their husbands in the same way, in the same way as what? Similar to whom?

We'll look back at Chapter 2:13 as Peter introduced submission as a path to standing firm in a hostile world—the theme. He commanded all Christians to submit to government—period. Then in verse 18, slaves are commanded to submit to their masters—even when masters are cruel and unfair. Finally in verses 21 to 25, Peter used our Lord as the example of submission to follow. Sinless, innocent, perfect Christ submitted to sinful, guilty, imperfect men. And He submitted without grumbling, without retaliating, without threatening and without doubting.

In the same way, likewise, you wives be subject to your own husbands. Wow—submit similar to Christ. Submit like Christ submitted. That is the heart of submission—a passion to be like Christ in every way. A desire to follow Christ's example, even when your circumstances are unfair, or your husband is harsh. The heart of submission is a Godly woman imitating her Savior, following the example of the innocent one who suffered for our guilt, mimicking the perfect one who bore God's hateful wrath for our sin, doing in a small way what Jesus Christ did for us in a big way. That is the heart of a Godly woman.

A Godly woman knows what Jesus did as a child of twelve towards His earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, in [Luke 2:51 \(ESV\)](#), “*And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was submissive to them.*”

A Godly woman knows she is seeking to display Christ through her submission since Christ is one with the Spirit and the Father in the eternal trinity, yet Christ also submits to the Father as His authority. In [1 Corinthians 15:28 \(ESV\)](#), “*When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.*”

And a Godly woman knows her role of submission to her husband is pointing to the role of Christ in Christ's equality to the Father and Christ's submission to the Father's authority. Paul

tells us in [1 Corinthians 11:3](#) that the role of submission to her husband as head is the only way people will correctly see Christ's role as an equal, yet of submission to His Father as head. [First Corinthians 11:3 \(ESV\)](#), *"But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."*

And a Godly wife knows that submission is an imitation of the ultimate act of love Peter just described in chapter 2:21-25. Submission is what Christ did when going to the cross. Submission is what Christ did when He died for your sin. Read verses 21-25 but listen to the Word hearing the context. The context is submit to government, slaves submit to masters, and now wives submit to husbands. See these words through the lens of submission in order to honor the context and embrace the heart of submission.

[First Peter 2:21–25 \(ESV\)](#), *"For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."*

The heart of submission is a wife, who seeks to be like Christ—not demanding her will or fighting for her rights, but living and speaking like Christ.

Peter begins verse 1 with "in the same way"—the narrow context would say, wives submit the same way Christ submits. Do you have a heart to truly be like Christ? Then submit. But is everyone in view here, or just Christian wives?

#2 The person of submission 1a "you wives, be submissive"

The reason the NAS says "you wives" is because the original text says "the women, the ones"—or literally, bad English but good Greek, "these ones, the wives"—using a word that means young woman or wife, but in this context speaking of female adult women who are married. Christian wives are to submit.

This was not as radical in history as it is today. When you lived under a monarchy, submission was an expression of genuine loyalty and character. We all submit to our King, honor Him, pray for Him, follow Him and are loyal to Him. But when you live in a crumbling democracy, consumed with its own rights, submission is a sign of weakness.

If you women lived in Biblical times, even in pagan cultures, a daughter would be in submission to her father, then given away in marriage, then as a wife live in submission to her husband. There was no gap in the role of submission—you went from being submissive to your father, to submission to your husband—you were always under submission. It was a role culture imposed.

Even young women under 60 who lost their husbands to death were encouraged by Paul to remarry in [1 Timothy 5:14](#) (NAS), *"I want younger widows to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach."* It was the expectation in the Bible's culture for women to be submissive to their father, then to their husband. But today there is

often a gap between singleness and marriage, where young women will go away to college or be out on their own long before they marry.

Many Christian women find themselves no longer under their father's authority and submissive to no one—no head. Then when she marries the shock of submission hits, and she has to relearn and re-engage a submissive role as a Christian. Then add the tension of the gap between singleness and marriage to a culture consumed with itself, “your freedoms, your rights, your entitlements,” and you have a recipe for disaster for any believing marriage, because both the role of the wife and the role of the husband in Christian marriage require the denial of self.

Every single one of us, man or woman, battle with the feeling of disdain for submission in our day. In the thinking of most people, submission is actually an assault on my freedom, an attack on my rights, and an embarrassment for Christians since submission is mocked on every TV show, movie and song written. This is why many young couples soon learn that their marriage license was actually only just a learner's permit. And what started out feeling like a romantic, horse-drawn sleigh ride on a wintry day under a blanket when they got married, ends up feeling more like a toboggan ride down a triple-diamond mogul hill that was roped off cause it was too dangerous.

But in the midst of the difficulty, no matter what your circumstances, the person with the role of submission is the Christian wife. So then what is submission?

#3 The nature of submission 1a “be submissive to your own husbands”

The Greek word means subordinate, place in order, under in an orderly fashion, to arrange and to rank under. In this text, the word is a participle, telling us submission is who you are, it is not something you merely do. No, God wants the quality of submission to be a part of you. It is to be your attribute, like it is Christ's attribute. It is to be descriptive of you—it is who you really are—submissive. If translated literally, it would read (NAS, verse 1) “In the same way, you wives, be the kind of person who is submitting to your own husbands,” or (ESV, verse 1) “Likewise, wives, be the kind of wife who in heart is subjecting yourselves to your own husbands.” This word is also in present tense, which calls for wives to submit to their own husbands all the time, ongoing, 24/7 as a way of life.

The case of the Greek word for “submit” makes it very specific, as if Peter is standing here and pointing at each of you, literally naming names—“Rita,” God says, “have a heart to submit and submit all the time. Help me Rhonda, Mindy, Agnes, Madison, Abigail, etc.” And this word is in the middle voice—if it were active, it would be you wives submitting. If it were passive, it would be you wives have your husbands subject you. But since it is the middle, it means you wives submit yourselves to your own husbands. You take the action upon yourself to submit yourself—voluntarily. God says wives willingly submit yourself, as a way of life, and a heart quality to your husband's authority over you and to his leadership in your marriage and home.

Citizens are to be subject to government in Romans 13, demons were subject to the disciples in Luke 10, the universe is subject to Christ in 1 Corinthians 15, unseen powers are subject to Christ in 1 Peter 3, church members are subject to church leaders in 1 Corinthians 16, Christians are subject to God in James 4, and wives are subject to their own husbands in Colossians 3, Titus 2, Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3. None of these relationships are ever reversed in the Scripture. Governments is never told to submit to citizens, nor are masters to

slaves, nor are husbands ever told to be subject to wives—submission is always directed at God's design for order . . . that comes from His own person reflected in the Trinity.

Look at [1 Peter 3:5-6](#), where Peter makes its clear submission is not merely the idea of being thoughtful or considerate to your husband as some liberals want to say. Why not? Because Sarah's submission involved obedience to Abraham, and her obedience became the means by which Sarah submitted. No, submission is ranking yourself under your husband like a soldier does his Captain. It's honoring his authority and following his lead.

Submission is a divine calling directed at a wife to affirm her husband's headship and help carry it through according to her gifts. Submission is the character of heart to follow a husband's authority and an inclination to yield to his leadership. Submission is an attitude that says, I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for us and lead with love. I don't flourish in the relationship when you are passive, and I have to make certain that the family works.

But listen up, Dora Doormat, Stacy Stepped On, and Frieda Footstool—let me tell you what submission is not . . .

First Submission does not mean agreeing with everything your husband says. You can see that in verse 1, she's a Christian and he's not. He's blinded to reality, and her eyes have opened to truth. Peter is calling you wives to be submissive, while assuming you will not submit to his lost view. So submission does not mean agreeing with your husband's views that contradict clear Scripture.

Second Submission does not mean leaving your brain on "off" and your will at the wedding altar. Submission is not the inability or the unwillingness to think for yourself. Verse 1 clearly tells us the wife has submitted to Christ, but the husband has not. She saw the beauty of Christ and was overwhelmed by the Gospel, but as yet he has not. Submission does not mean a wife retreats from her commitment to Christ, and doesn't think for herself.

Third Submission does not mean avoiding every effort to change a husband. Verse one also tells us a wife should try to win her husband to Christ—how she does that is unique, and this passage is passionate about a wife evangelizing her husband through a heart quality and lifestyle of submission.

Fourth Submission does not mean putting the will of the husband before the will of Christ. The text clearly tells us the wife is a follower of Jesus before being a follower of her husband. Submission to Christ is actually the source and joy of submission to her husband. When Sarah calls Abraham lord in verse 6, it is lord with a little "L", it's like "sir", or "m'lord", and the obedience she renders to her husband is a qualified obedience, since her supreme allegiance is to the Lord with a capital L! Submission to her husband is in everything but sin.

Fifth Submission does not mean a wife gets her spiritual strength primarily through her husband. A Godly husband is a source of strength for a wife and family, but this text proves when a husband's strength is lacking, a Christian wife can develop character, strength, faith and virtue from the Lord for her husband—verse 5 says her hope is in God.

Sixth Submission does not mean a wife must act out of fear. Verse 6 tells us if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. In other words, submission is free, not coerced by

fear. The Christian wife is a free woman—when she submits to her husband, whether he is a believer or non-believer, she does it in freedom, by choice, out of love for Christ and not out of fear.

So the nature of submission is a dependant action, developed into a continual character trait, of voluntarily placing yourself under the authority of another and following their lead, because this is the example Jesus gave us in his earthly life, and modeled for us through His death on the cross in verses 21-25.

Submission is the denial of self and following the will of another.

Submission is a wife honoring her husband's authority and following his lead.

So who does a wife actually submit to?

#4 The object of submission 1a “be submissive to your own husbands”

Literally the text says, “To own man”— to your own man. “He’s my man, and he’s the one I am submitted to.” I am not to be in submission to every man, but to my own man. We don’t get it in our culture, but back then, without a man over you as a woman, either a father or husband, you were subject to starvation and all kinds of danger—you needed protection. So God says, to your own man—that’s the object of submission.

TO—means be submissive TO each individual husband.

OWN—is pertaining to a private person, a particular individual, belonging to another, not public land but private land, meaning he’s your man, exclusive to you and no one else.

And he is a MAN, not a female, not feminine, not Peter Pan looking for Never Neverland to fight pirates and play video games—not a guy waiting for the random offer of a bank president job, but a man, a man with a Bible and a shovel. He knows the Word of God, and knows how to work hard

The phrase “in the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands” also contains the idea of intimacy, relationship and oneness. You are one with your husband, and he is one with you. Which reminds us that marriage is designed to model the Trinity, and modeling the Trinity involves two major commitments:

1 to live out authority and submission, like Christ to the Father

2 to live out oneness, like Christ is one with the Father

Oneness has to do with equality, intimacy, and being one heart and one mind. Get this—some marriages have authority and submission down, but without oneness the marriage becomes harsh and domineering and husband-controlled. Other marriages have oneness down, but without authority and submission the marriage becomes disorderly, emotive, whiney, frustrating and wife-controlled. But marriages with both authority and submission and oneness lead to uncommon love, peace, purpose, order and Christ-control.

How does submission actually work out in marital decision-making? Submission to a husband's authority within a healthy marriage may occasionally involve obeying commands given graciously by a husband, but most often a husband will make requests, seek advice and offer discussion about the correct course of action to be followed.

The wife's attitude of submission to a husband's authority will make this process an easy and enjoyable one. A wife's commitment to submit will be reflected in numerous words and actions each day, showing deference to her husband's leadership, always acknowledging his final authority, and respecting his responsible position as head, before and after decisions are made affecting the entire family.

Do you truly value the quality of submission? You ask, "what if the husband is an unbeliever, an uncertain believer or an odd believer?" For the answer to that, you will have to come back next week.

1 What are you looking for in a man? The gals in my college ministry were looking for guys 6 foot 2, blue eyes, blond hair and driving a Corvette. They ended up marrying guys who were 5 foot 4, four eyes, no hair and driving a Hyundai.

What must be on your list of what you are looking for is proven-ness—that is a man who has followed Christ faithfully for at least a year (do not rush into marriage) manifesting total commitment. He loves Christ more than you. He serves faithfully in the church so you can be confident he'll know how to deny himself, be a steward of his gifts and function in the body. He will be making disciples, showing he'll be able to parent in the future. He shares the Gospel with the lost, showing he understands his purpose. He functions as a spiritual initiator, and accepts responsibility for his actions and failures so you know he will lead biblically. He works hard and saves money, showing he'll be a responsible provider. In other words, he is proven now—what you see is what you get. Honey, don't sell out for a lesser model—wait for the Corvette.

2 What are you striving to become, single woman? Be honest, is your focus more on externals or internals, on cosmetics or character, on guys or God, on self or submission? Are you working at character development by reading, applying, meditating, talking about the Word with older, Godly women, or are you too busy texting everyone about who you saw at the mall?

Growth in character is not easy, nor is it quick, but it is a great source of great blessing and genuine happiness. The question I always ask myself about attractive women is this—are they as beautiful inside as they are outside—so few are.

3 Who are your models/heroes in this life? In the 50's and 60's it was scientists, in the 70's and 80's it was business people, in the 90's it was the athletes, in the last decade it has been whoever can capture the media. But for the Christian who is not of this world, your models/heroes should be those who live for Christ in a way you can follow. They are here, find some, not just one, and start asking questions.

4 What steps will you take this week to demonstrate uncommon love? All of us, men and women alike, in certain contexts need to demonstrate submission—so here is this week's challenge. This week, 1-5 times a day, ask "what would you like me to do for you" and do everything you are expected to do without being asked, then do one additional task you are not expected to do.

5 How will you deal with your rebellious heart? None of us take to submission naturally, because we have rebellious, sinful hearts, and only one person can cure you—that is Christ. Turn to Him in repentance and faith today – let's pray.