

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

November 15, 2020

Marriage, God's Gospel Venue

*I Peter 3:1-7*

Ben Cunningham

[song: "Let Your Kingdom Come"]

*Erik Buchterkirchen:*

Hey, good morning, everyone. I want to start off this morning by reading Psalm 16; this is verse 5.

*"Lord, You are my portion and my cup of blessing; You hold my future. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I will praise the Lord who counsels me; even at night, my conscience instructs me. I keep the Lord in mind always; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."*

Glenwood, we have this morning our confidence in the Lord and in the Lord alone. My name is Erik, and I'm the director of young adult ministries here. It's a pleasure to be with you here this morning. If you're online, hello, great to see you. If you're still in bed, why are you still in bed? But, good morning. I would like to share just a couple of ministry opportunities and ways that you can get involved here at Glenwood, and some things that we're going to be doing that advance our mission forward in loving God, loving others, and influencing others to love God.

The first thing that I'd like to bring to your attention is the Hats and Gloves ministry. It is starting to get really, really cold outside, and if you have poor

circulation like me, you've started to notions that, "Oh my gosh, my feet feel like ice boxes," and I need to put on like three socks everyday in order to, like, function. I can't imagine how some people out on the street are feeling right now. And Hats and Gloves ministry is our ministry to the homeless where we're going to show them the love of Christ by providing them some warm gloves and some warm hats to survive this winter. We're going to be gathering together next Saturday at 10:00 to go distribute those items, and we would love for you to join us. You can find more information at [Glenwoodcc.org/hatsandgloves](http://Glenwoodcc.org/hatsandgloves), and we would love to have you there.

The next thing I'd like to bring to your attention is something that's happening this evening - really exciting - but it's our THINK! Seminar. And THINK! Seminar is happening tonight. We're going to have an awesome panel of some people who are going to be up here. We're asking, how do we love God with our minds in this season? and how do we think biblically and theologically about the COVID-19 pandemic? And we really want to engage Scripture; we want to engage how we love other people; we want to engage how we love God in this whole thing that's going on around us right now with wearing masks, and thinking about what the pandemic is and thinking about what's said on the news. We want to engage in that faithfully as disciples of Jesus. So join with us this evening at 6:00; we'd love to have you. You can sign up online--you'll need you to sign up online if you want to come in person--or if you want to just simply view it over Zoom.

Last, but not least, Operation Christmas Child. It's so encouraging seeing all of you participate by bringing the boxes to the foyer. Thank you for all who have brought them. It's a wonderful thing to see those boxes go out and be distributed and seeing the kid's joy in their faces when they receive them. Today is the last day that you can turn in the boxes, so if you've got a box that you're like "Shoot, I forgot it at home," or you're going to, like, throw one together in five minutes--do it; bring it; this is the last day that we have it. But thank you for all you have participated.

I'm going to pray for us to open up our services today, so if you would bow with me as we go before our God in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we are second, and You are first. We are second, and You are first. You go before us, and You're sovereign over this whole creation, Lord. You are telling Your story, and we are participants within this story, Lord, ultimately looking to Your Son Jesus who defines life and who takes away our sin and who gives us the ability to give life to other people. Father, we ask that we would be the people who bring Your light into the world. Make us disciples of You. Make us the true embodiment of Your grace to others. Help us to be vessels of Your love. And, Father, as we listen to Ben Cunningham this morning, may You speak through him. May the words that come off the text just echo throughout him, and may they penetrate us our minds and our hearts so that we may be saturated with Your transforming Word. And Lord, as we do this, as we go forth from this place, let us shine the light to other people, and let us tell others of the work of Your Son Jesus. Bless our time here this morning, and we ask that You would keep us safe during these trying times. In Your name I pray. Amen.

*Ben Rico:*

Amen. Would you please stand with me as we sing together as we praise our most high God in Christ, who Himself has set an example for us of perfect submission, even in leading His people to the kingdom of heaven.

Even as we start, I just want to mention this is somewhat of a new song. We have sung before, but as you catch on please sing with us. You might recognize it, hopefully, but let's sing together.

[music: "Only Jesus"]

[music: "His Mercy is More"]

Amen. Please be seated.

*Ben Cunningham:*

Good morning. As we prepare to turn to the Word of God, let's go to Him in prayer.

Heavenly Father, Your Word says that, *"This is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at My Word."* God, that is our desire, even if that's not our disposition this morning. We pray that You would bend us so that we would be in a position to hear. We thank You that, though we constantly roamed, Your mercy has proven to be more because of Jesus. Help us to hear from Your Word in light of who You are and what You have done in our lives. God, there are times that, as creatures, we must trust You and Your designs, and, God, I pray You would grant us that trust this morning. In Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen.

You can open your Bible to I Peter 3:1-7. As you're doing that, I thought I would remind us that every human heart can be tempted to be impressed by the wrong thing. We can find ourselves craving stage lights or Facebook likes or pats on the back. And many of us know the subtle pressures of what it's like to want to leave an impression that's just the right shape. And the church at large faces similar pressures, and not always for the wrong reasons. We desire to be influential, right? We want the world to know about this good news message that Jesus has brought and illustrate the truthfulness of it by our actions and our conduct. But we can easily be confused about what's actually impressive. We can prefer Saul's height and pass up David's heart.

From the beginning of this letter, Peter has described how God's people have been comprehensively saved in a way that shapes them into a holy and loving temple in which He resides, and as recipients of mercy, we become a channel for God to show more of His mercy. It says in 2:12, *"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your*

*good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*" In other words, leave an impression of Jesus that impacts other people.

We know from I Peter that it's not only the world who is watching, but God is watching as well. Do you remember when servants were called to endure unjust suffering because it was gracious in the sight of God? If you look forward, after our text in I Peter 3:12, it quotes Psalm 34 as saying "*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears open to their prayer.*" See our lives are a venue; they are lived in front of a watching world and in front of God who sees all.

So, if we could redirect the world's attention towards something that would leave an impression of Jesus, what would we direct them to? What would command the world's respect in the kind of way that 2:12 talks about, where they would give up their opposition to Christ and embrace and worship Him? What would be that persuasive? Well, Peter's answer has been not what we expect, right? He says "submission" and "suffering" - submitting to governing authorities, submitting to your boss. And even when those earthly forms of authority are not just, we resist retaliation, because Jesus resisted retaliation for our sake. And this week Peter's going to give us one more environment in which the submission occurs. He's going to turn the watching world's gaze into the most intimate of human relationships - into a marriage. Marriage is God's Gospel venue. It's His chosen place where He reveals who He is and what He is doing.

Now, at this point many of you may be swallowing hard. I know something about being a husband, and I don't know a lot about being a wife. And so, I actually asked some different ladies in the Glenwood body for input about how this issue of submission that we will be talking about plays itself out in real life, and I'll be including some of their wisdom. I also talked to guys after First Things First. And it was interesting, because, without exception, every woman and every man that I asked about this were quick to acknowledge how far they fall short. Now, this isn't because Glenwood has a disproportionate number of bad marriages or something, right? I would say the opposite; I've found incredible marriages here, people who

have been happily married for forty and fifty years. But this is just because marriage is one of those high risk venues that can be brilliant or brutal. It can demonstrate Christ's love for the church, or it can be a constant hurt and a context for brokenness. And marriage is such a daily thing, it's easy to lose sight of the significance of it. But Peter brings us back.

Now, if you're not married here this morning, don't look for an exit; you are safe, okay. If the institution of marriage is a venue for the Gospel, then that means that every demographic here - single, married, widowed, divorced, young person - that we all have a vested interest in making sure that the mirrors of our marriage reflect Christ, so it informs how we pray; it informs how we counsel. We all need to know what God's inerrant Word says everywhere.

Before we read our text this morning, I wanted to point out something about the world that this passage was written in. Marriages in Peter's day followed very different cultural customs. And when Peter wrote this, husbands functioned as the authority of the households that solely, really, directed the religious preferences of the home. Women did not share the same social standing as men and were often subsumed under the protection and status of their husbands and fathers, and tragically women were not highly valued, and were treated as such. And so, as we read this text, I want you to notice how unwelcome, perhaps, some of these words would be in a setting like that.

Let's read, I Peter 3:1-7. Here's what it says. *"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 adornments must not be merely external--braiding the hair and wearing gold jewelry and 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. You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."*

Before we jump into the text itself, I want you to notice two patterns that are going to be important for how we talk about this text. First, you'll notice that verse 1-6, and in verse 7, they start in the same way by saying "*in the same way*" or "*likewise*." Peter is basically continuing his training of thought; he's using the same command that he's used earlier with governing authorities and servants to submit for the Lord's sake. He's pointing to the same motive, to please God, to honor God. And he's using these same example of the person of Jesus, who we talked about last week in His suffering. So that's the first pattern to notice. This is a part of what Peter's already been talking about.

The second thing is that there is a consistent progression here from outward behavior, to internal attitude, to God as the basis for it all. Outward behavior, internal attitude, to God as the basis for it all. That's the pattern: outward, inward, God. And that's the pattern that we'll use and we talk about this text.

So let's talk about that pattern when it comes to wives. What outward behavior does Peter command for wives? "*Be submissive to your own husbands*," it says. Now, those words might be nails on a chalkboard to you. They certainly are to our culture. Our culture is not wild about submission in general, but then you talk about the idea of a wife submitting to her husband, and it smacks of inequality and kind of a bygone era to many. So, what does it mean here? Well, we need a little background; we got to go back to Genesis. This really means that, from the beginning, God has had authority inside of the institution of marriage. We see this in the original design for humanity when Adam is created and Eve is created from Adam as a helper suitable to him, it says. This doesn't mean that Eve exists solely for Adam's sake; she exists for God's sake as an equally valuable image bearer. But it does mean that men and women live together in distinct roles, that the beauty of

God expresses himself through both genders and requires both to do that, and that manifests itself in this gladsome mission and this considerate authority that we find in I Peter 3.

But if you know the story of Genesis, we don't go very long before things get very off track, and this whole design gets stress tested, you could say, when Adam and Eve help each other to sin and they are both cursed according to their primary job descriptions. Women and men have corrupted God's design, so marital life gets, let's say, very, very complicated very, very fast. And women are tempted to side step and undercut their husbands, and men are tempted to be heavy handed and lack consideration of their wives, and a thousand other temptations.

So, what is this redemptive submission that Peter is calling them to include and not include? What do we learn from this text? Three things about the submission that he's talking about.

One: submission has conditions. Notice what those conditions are in verse 1, "*Be submissive to--*" Who? "*To your own husbands.*" That's who wives are to submit to; women are not subject to men in general. God designed for this to function within the secure covenant of a marriage. Also, it can be assumed from previous context that this submission is happening for the Lord's sake. We've seen that with the other examples. And so, if a husband asks a wife to sin, her gracious answer is "no." Refusal would be the right thing to do. So that's the first thing; submission has conditions.

Number two: submission is powerfully influential. This would have, kind of, grated on the culture of Peter's day, I think. Notice what it says. "*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.*" Notice the wordplay. "*Won without even a word.*" The blameless behavior of the wife is so powerful that it has the potential to win or convert this husband to the Gospel. Now Peter's point is not to lay out a guarantee here, that it's the same in every situation, but it is to say,



“Don’t underestimate the persuasiveness of day-in, day-out following Jesus while someone’s watching.” One woman from Glenwood says that “submit” stands for Submission Ultimately Brings Many Incredible Triumphs.

And I can speak to this as a husband about my own wife. Just the other day, we were in our home, and I did or said something - that’s how great my memory is - that my wife did not agree with. And I could tell; there was a little flinch or something that tipped me off, “Something is up here.” But she didn’t say anything. A few hours later, we got in the car, just us, and as we were driving I said, “Thank you for not saying anything in that moment, but I want to know what you’re thinking. What do you got?” And her quiet willingness and prayerful attitude have wielded a profound influence on me, and she was able to share something that I needed to see, a tendency that I didn’t know about, that I wouldn’t have heard were it not for my helpmate helping me. And she did that respectfully, and I was doubly burdened to do the right thing. Because one, it resonated, and I knew she was right. But two, she had already entrusted me with that. Submission is powerfully influential.

Number three: marital submission does not require agreement with or silence on the part of the woman. Submission is not contingent on agreement or it wouldn’t be submission. This husband appears to be unapologetic in his disregard for God’s Word. That word “disobedient” is a more flagrant term. So the wife obviously isn’t going to agree with him on many things, and in order to worship Christ, she’s going to need to think on her own and for herself in many ways. One woman said, “I admit that sometimes my decision to follow my husband’s lead can be begrudging, but I’m thankful we have the openness to express our feelings and viewpoints.” And it’s obvious from this setting that this wife is trying to change her husband, and that that’s a good thing. Right? She’s trying to redirect him to Christ. Marriage should change husbands. This idea that we should just remain untouched by the institution of marriage is dumb and not true. It is a sanctifying influence. Though this woman is discreet and she’s selective with her words, she still clearly uses them. So, if you’re married to a person who is not yet a Christian, rest assured your

influence is inevitable. This is the outward behavior that Peter's talking about that captures the respect of God and respect of the world.

But then you think, "Well, how is this behavior, this outward behavior possible?" And that's where Peter turns to an internal, or an inward, attitude in verses 3 and 4. Notice what it says. "*Your adornment must not be merely external.*" Now what is adornment? We don't use that word a lot. It basically means "the source of your beauty" or "that which serves to beautify something." And so, Peter insists that the source of beauty for a woman ought not be merely her looks. And he points to things that would have been a little bit excessive in his day to look pretty: the braiding of hair, the putting on of gold. Some use this to say that women shouldn't dress up at all, and I would be curious how you avoid putting on clothing in that verse, if that were the case; that's important. So, Peter isn't saying to women, "Well, just stop caring about the external look at all; only care about what's on the inside." He's comparing the value of each. Okay? There's nothing wrong with a woman looking good, only if it prevents her from being good. That's what Peter is saying.

He's saying that because every beauty tip is eventually going to be outsmarted by the passage of time, and wrinkles are going to come, and external beauty is a losing battle. But, by contrast to that, you look in verse 4, he says, "*But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable qualities of a gentle and quiet spirit.*" The soul of women can be dressed in imperishable beauty. You recognize that term? It described the inheritance that we received; it described other things in I Peter. And it's this kind of beauty that gets more stunning with time. It doesn't fade like external beauty. And this is a war that I know exists; I'm a little less familiar with it, but it's waged outfit by outfit, season by season for women. And this is a definition of beauty that's won by degrees. And I imagine there are women in our church who are hindered by how they view themselves, and I would encourage you to make your private battle for God's definition of beauty a corporate discussion. Comparative living is distracting and unprofitable. And so,

young women, fight to embrace God's definition of imperishable beauty. And, older women, help those who are younger embrace beauty that lasts.

So what is this outfit this imperishable adornment that he's talking about? He calls it a "*gentle and quiet spirit.*" Gentleness is this softness and meekness that comes from mighty trust in God. It's harnessed strength for the benefit of another is what gentleness is.

When I think of gentleness I think of my grandmother who was a little lady and she was just a whirlwind. I mean, she was spunky, and she loved life, and she was--"active" is kind of the understatement for her. And one of the things that my Grandma would do - and she was sweet and kind - but she would sing like-- sometimes I was a little embarrassed if I was like three or four chairs next to her. She just bellowed; I mean, it was, like, odd. It was out of proportion with who she seemed to be. She had this low, kind of penetrating harmony whenever she sang anywhere. And I remember there was one time we were in a church, and she was doing that, and there were boys like me sitting in the row in front who were kind of snickering and pointing back to her. And in her kind gentle way, she learned forward and said, "I'm not singing for you, honey," and stood back up, and just kept bellowing it out. But she had this way about her, this gentleness, this persuasiveness, this meekness, but it didn't mean she didn't get it and that there wasn't a little sauce behind what she was saying at times. She was a gentle woman.

It describes it as a quiet spirit, and it's not what it sounds like. It's a tranquil spirit; it's a heart that refuses to be disturbed. There's an "at ease" sense about the soul of this woman. She's not pushy or panicked because she's aware that God is steering things, and so she lets that inform her demeanor and her disposition. Now, notice this: that outward behavior flows from inward transformation, that what delights God is not simply running through the motions of submission in a marriage, but that that is attached to an inward disposition that reflects the glory of Christ; it reflects the fruit of the Spirit and the character of God. God is calling wives to more

than just behavior; He's giving her power to obey by showing us that it's this internal attitude.

So marital submission is, in the words of one woman from Glenwood, "a voluntary attitude that's not forced." True submission is willingly offered; it's not forcefully taken. It's not insisting on one's own way; it's having a spirit of deference; it's speaking up with a respectfully willingness to yield; it's looking for opportunities to assist, not subversive ways to control. One woman said, "This does not mean I do not share my concerns if I see things differently, but I strive to share my opposing opinions in private and without an angry tone of voice. I also try to back up my opinions with Scripture and look through the lens of the Word." So, Peter is calling women to submit to their husbands as an overflow of an internal attitude or disposition that is ultimately based - we're going to find - in God.

You think, "How is that kind of attitude possible?" I know, as a husband, that I can be a block of cement at times. And I know that what God has called my wife to is not proportional to me deserving for her to be doing that; I know that. And so what is the basis for that kind of internal attitude? We find that it's God. And this is an astonishing phrase. After he says, in verse 4, "*with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.*" It's invaluable to Him. He's thrilled when He finds this. Submission is not only powerfully influential and evangelistic and quietly corrective to a husband; it is pleasing to the Lord.

And how comforting this would have been to this woman who felt like an exile inside of her own marriage? Imagine; the God of the universe takes notice, sees her submission. He values it. And her husband doesn't take notice. He doesn't know the things that she leaves unsaid, and the way that she wars against the passions of her flesh and those things don't see the light of day. He doesn't know that, but God does. You see how important that is? How precious that is? How that's the rock of everything that's asked of this woman? Her God is amazing, that He takes notice of the slave who is serving a master in a certain way, that He takes notice of the attitude of the person who submits to governing authorities because they're free

already in Christ. He takes notice when a wife trusts God most. This is the basis, the foundation, of why women can have that internal attitude, because they know their Lord loves it.

And he goes on in verse 5; he explains it more. He says, "*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.*" So, the reason why these women were able to submit to their husbands is because they trusted their husband's authority, which was God. See, a woman's calm disposition is not due to the calm seas around her, but it's due to the knowledge of who is in the boat with her. And notice the inverse order of outward, inward, God, when it says her hope in God, due to an adornment, which prompts submission. This is stunning, and this is the bedrock. And that's why calls to submit that are just merely focused on external behavior don't last, because this is where it's grounded.

Now Peter's example of Sarah is an interesting choice, right? If you know Sarah at all, she was not a doormat kind of lady. And she had her days, and she was a bit of a spitfire, and she made demands on her husband, and she tried to control him at points, and Hagar and all of this stuff. But imagine being the wife of the man who was called to a country that he didn't know where. Or imagine being the wife of Abraham, and he sits down with her and says, "Here's the plan; we're going to go in, and I'm going to pretend that you're my sister because of how beautiful you are, and we'll just kind of take it from there." No. Imagine learning about the near sacrifice of Isaac. I mean, you can see that this woman is brave. She's fearless; she's dignified in this, and she's an example of what Peter is talking about. He recognizes her for doing good, it says, and not being frightened by anything, not being frightened by any fear. She does the culturally appropriate thing at the time, which was calling him "lord"-- which would sound odd in our day; we should find public ways to affirm our spouses, but, no, that is not something that is required.

See "submission" means persisting in doing good even when you don't feel completely heard or when you're not completely sold on the direction your husband

wants to go. And if you're married to a man who is disobedient to the Word, like it says in this, the temptation to fear would be great, wouldn't it? Wouldn't we be thinking, "Where is this guy taking this? Is this the Lord's will or is this just his will? What is he thinking? What's next?" Peter says to become her children is a valuable thing. It puts a woman in proximity to the primmse. And, for all of her flaws, Sarah was this tenaciously good and fearlessly brave woman who was a model.

As we think about how this plays out, the power in the setting of a Christian being married to a non-Christian, I want to read just the story of a couple in our body. It says this. "Fifteen years ago, I was the disobedient husband in this text. I was addicted to heroin, and I put my wife through hell. I was the one who needed to be won to Christ. To this day, I still remember her unconditional love and her reliance on her Heavenly Father as she patiently waited and trusted for me to come to the place of repentance. Today, I asked her how it was possible to live out these verses in light of my behavior as her husband. She said the following: 'Submission was not based on your behavior as much as it was based on my love for God and His love for you. I had to see you, even in your condition, through the eyes of God, and I chose to want for you what God wanted for you, which was to return to a loving Father and receive grace and mercy through true repentance.' I asked her what was her greatest fear during this time. She said, 'I feared that you would never quit. I feared that you would lose your job, that you would die, or get arrested. I knew Satan wanted to destroy our marriage.' She concluded by saying, 'It really ends up being a matter of endless prayer, giving it over to the Father who specializes in restoration, knowing that I wasn't going anywhere. I was waiting for the real you to return to me.' I hold my wife," he says, "in a palace of great honor. She was a vessel, used by God to bring me to my senses. She has taught me that strength is perfected in weakness; she has taught me how to die to self." Don't mistake the words of I Peter 3:1-6 as weakness.

Let's turn to husbands. In verse 7, it says, "*You husbands in the same way--*" What does that mean? In the way that you were to imitate Jesus, the way you were to practice self-sacrifice, so that those outside of the faith will take notice. It's that

same pattern of outward, inward, God. So, what outward behavior does he call the husband to? "*Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.*" Or live with them "*according to knowledge*" is what the original says. Lead her with careful and thorough consideration; research her; know her fears and aspirations; take an interest in the condition of her relationships; and study the nuances of her reactions and her emotions. Now men, you can breathe easy, Peter does not say to understand all women everywhere. But he does say--interestingly enough, he commands to understand our wives, which means it's possible, right? Knowing your wife is a generic thing and a specific thing. Right? We know that there's things that all women need because of the Word of God. But there are things that you will need to find out about your wife, as a husband, that you can only learn through discovery and pursuit. And those are the things that Peter is calling us to.

Now, as he does that, there's a curious phrase that follows. It says live with your wives in a certain way, "*as with someone weaker, since she is a woman.*" And that's the NASB. Hmm. So what is meant by "*someone weaker,*" or "*a weaker vessel*" as some other translations say it? Well, the reason why the NASB translated it "someone" is, in the original language it's "weaker vessel." And "vessel" is kind of a word for God's chosen instrument, like Paul was God's chosen instrument to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. But what about this word "weaker"? Well, a lot of theories have been put forward, but the most compelling is that it's referring to a lower social status, simply put, to the one who wasn't given authority. Remember the cultural setting that we're in. Wives were often viewed as property; they were often viewed as being at the mercy of their husbands. And so, what was the temptation for those with authority, especially when the culture minimized the value of women? It was exploitation, wasn't it? It's to disregard or ignore or be condescending to the wife. It would be similar to a parent thinking they can bully their kid, or a boss who looks down on entry employees, or something. Peter is saying, since the woman is in the more vulnerable social position, don't run her over with your authority, but use it to show her careful consideration.

See, whenever God gives authority to people, whether it's the church or the government or even a home, He gives authority, not as a means of license, but as a reason to serve. And a husband is to lead like Christ, but he is not Christ, and therefore, he must humbly seek agreement with his wife as well. Good leadership is humble and persuasive and easy to follow. And so, if a man views leadership as the right to make all decisions, he might look back and find that no one is following him gladly. Because that's not what authority is for. So any husband who wants to use this passage to silence or abuse his wife has to abuse the Scriptures as well. He must be careful about that.

And notice Peter doesn't even stop there. He's saying, go out of your way for the person who is less socially valued, or who doesn't carry that authority. He goes on and says, "*And show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.*" This would have angered people who heard this in Peter's day, because Peter is flipping the cultural category on its head by saying, to the person who's in a vulnerable position, that you are to go out of your way to honor them to publicly recognize the worth and appreciate and respect and esteem them. It's the exact opposite the way Peter's culture were treating women in that time.

Now, all these external behaviors are rooted in this reasoning when he says, "*As a fellow heir of the grace of life.*" Why should a husband behave this way? It's not just for social reasons that we acknowledge now in our day, but he grounds it in an argument. Why? Because God has not distributed His grace on the basis of gender. The woman is an equal partner in this life; she bears God's image as much as he does; she's an integral part of the command to be fruitful and multiply and make disciples; she is a coheir with him. So, how could a man be inconsiderate and disregard a human being whom God has shown so much regard for?--is the line of thinking. See, the man is not creating the dignity of his wife; he is recognizing an already existing dignity that she has been given by God.

And that's an important difference. That means that submission and this role of authority is not about value or dignity or competence. Submission never means



lesser than or not equal to. Men are not better than women; women are not better than men. If it did, we have to say that masters are more human than slaves, or that parents are more human than children, or that Jesus, in His submission to the Father, was somehow lesser than. And we can't say that. So marital roles are not a judgement about competence. My wife can run circles around me in a lot of areas in our life. She is better at directions; she is tougher in a lot of ways--I mean, she gave birth multiple times; it's hard to compete with that, right? She's more emotionally attuned to others; she's better at anticipating feelings; she's more compassionate. She's the daughter of a contractor, and so she'll just look at things and just kind of understand how they're built and put together, and I'm still kind of scratching my head. And imagine the insecurity I would feel if I thought that my leadership was directly tied to being better at everything. That would be disastrous for my soul, because it's not about that. It's not about competency. So, this is the inward esteem that the man is to have for the woman who's been created by God, in His image, as a coheir of the grace of life.

And notice that, eventually, we go from outward to inward to God. And the husband's relationship with God is the final reasoning for why his leadership ought to be considerate. It says, "*So that your prayers will not be hindered.*" And here the husband is warned that there are spiritual repercussions to misusing his authority. Now, that seems odd. But it does tell us that marriage is an illustration of something very, very significant to God. Marriages are always speaking; they're always saying something. And God's intent for marriage is to publicize the relationship of Christ and the church, and so it carries great weight to Him. And He cares so deeply about the glory of His Son that He intentionally disciplines husbands through verses like this. Men, Christ will not be compartmentalized. He will not be mocked. This is a big deal to Him, which is good news for us because it means, if we're humble, He's willing to help us. Because He's not standing over us like a frustrated principal, wagging his finger--sorry, if you're a principal, you know what I mean. He is an investor; He's very interested in how this plays out, and He wants to help.

God is central to the transformation needed in human hearts to bring about the conduct that makes Him look great, and He's designed it to work that way. And so, women, God is your hope. Men, God is your Gather and the Creator of your wife. There are times that I've made calls to my wife Sunday morning, because this is true. And this is just a reality, men, that we have to face, and that God desires integrity when it comes to the delegation of authority. Well, guys, you thought you were going to be free and clear here. You just had one verse, but it kind of packs a punch.

So anyway, let's apply what we've got here. We've got three ways to apply this. What are the implications for this? Okay, so marriage is a venue, so what? What does that mean?

First, God is near and attentive to marital issues. God is near and attentive to marital issues. See, this passage has kind of raised the stakes in regards to what marriage is and how important it is. I mean, God's interest in this speaks to its importance. The fact that he notices motivation, and He affects lines of communication, and all these things tell us that this is a venue that matters to Him and therefore matters to us. And so, if you're married, your private life is not hidden away from God. And that shouldn't cause you to panic, because remember, He is near in order to assist and enable and empower and help. He has attached His glory to your marriage. He is illustrating the Gospel, and so He is present to help. If you're married to a not-yet Christian, God knows your struggle, and He is ready to help. Persist in doing good for your spouse. Play your role, and trust Him to work. God notices, and God knows. God can be pleased with the one-sided marriage, and your daily life is making an impact on your spouse, rest assured of that. And those of us who are not in that position need to be praying for the evangelistic fact of those kinds of situations right here in our body. We need to be including people who are in that situation, that it's easy to feel isolated if those are your circumstances. And hospitality is a sweet reminder of Christ's nearness and concern to those in that situation. So, God is near and attentive to marital issues. That should cause us to care about them.

Number two: don't settle for appearances. Don't settle for appearances. You notice the Holy Spirit's order in here is very intentional, going from outward to inward to God. This saying, these are all connected to our submission to God. These aren't just things that are behaviors, merely. And so maybe some time or reflecting in solitude would be helpful, asking yourself, "Where's my relationship with the Lord needing attention so that my heart is right towards my spouse and my actions are serving them well?"

Or, wives and husbands, these would be questions, just throwing a few out. For wives, "Where have I become insistent on my own way, or manipulative in my approach? How can I be clearer with my respect and appreciation for my husband? Am I more preoccupied with God's definition of beauty or the world's? How persuasively am I living before my husband?" Reflecting on the good aspects of your marriage, your husband, for which you are thankful, one woman said that the helpful way that God softens her heart towards her husband. Or husbands, you can ask yourself, "How well do I really know my wife? How am I using my authority? How can I show high regard for my wife in a way that she appreciates and others see? How's my prayer life? Is it being hindered by my relationship?"

Don't forget that, in those times, both of you have the same reference point. Right? Wives and husbands. The wife's submission is to follow Jesus' example of trust in the face of vulnerability, and Jesus fully trusts Himself at a heart level to His Father's watchful eye. And the husband is to follow Jesus' example as a shepherd; He's laid His life down for the husband and sympathized with him as a great High Priest; He's gentle and lowly and lives with us in an understanding way. So don't settle for appearances; think deeply about these things; revisit them.

And third, and last: work together. Work together. This stuff is tailor made; it's person-specific. You should not adopt the template of another person's marriage and inject it into yours, because you are called to submit to and considerately lead *your* spouse. Your marriage is for display purposes, so work together on leaving an

impression of Christ on others. And talk about that, sit down and maybe talk through some questions. How influential are you in each other's life? Are you maturing or regressing in regard to these roles? How might you serve together more effectively? Or, "Is our marriage beautiful in God's eyes and in the eyes of the world?" One woman decided to take this opportunity to talk about this with her family over dinner. And it was interesting, as she talked with her kids, they shared ways that it seemed like they really had a united front, where her and her husband knew there were a lot of times that they didn't agree on things, but agreed to agree first before communicating. So work together.

Wives, what forms of submission does your husband appreciate and feel respected by? You could be killing yourself for things that don't matter to him. Maybe re-approach recurring issues from a different perspective or tone. Husbands, how are you failing to understand your wife? Where are you blind? What does she want you to consistently know about her? How operational is your emotional detection system, guys? And men, I would call on you to initiate this conversation.

Guys, there is hope. One of the things in talking with the men and women, like I said, at Glenwood, is that just even thinking about this can be discouraging. But take notice that God notices these things, and He is invested and interested in helping and giving His grace to grow, and in showing us the glory of Christ through one another, even though it's through that mirror that's smudged. There is hope because Christ is involved; the Holy Spirit is powerful.

In closing, John Piper once said that you commend the truthfulness of something in two different ways. One, you could show it on paper through logic and reasoning and intellectual persuasion and make an argument for it. But the second way to show the truth of something is to show the beauty of it. And I think with something like willing submission and considerate leadership, the beauty is what's compelling, perhaps the most persuasive when demonstrated, when the old couple who have learned and applied what God intended in that first garden sit and do this well. There is something incontrovertible about it. The husband has authority and

carefully studied the ways of his wife and gladly lays himself aside to accommodate and encourage and love and serve her. The woman delights in her husband's gifts and protective authority and disposition to trust him, even when she's unsure. Let's not underestimate the power of this venue that God has given for His Gospel. Marriage is worth the work. May we at Glenwood be a part of revitalizing the prominence and beauty of marriage so that the day of visitation goes very differently for many. Let's pray.

Lord God, we thank You that the banner over our imperfect marriages and relationships is that You have paid it all. God, we are keenly aware of how our lives fall short of Your design. And yet, God, we thank You for it. We thank You for this design that displays the beauty of Christ, that testifies to Your relationship to the church. God, marriage is a temporary thing; it won't last into heaven. And I pray that You would grant us a sober-mindedness and an expectant hope about what You can do if we commit ourselves to Your Word. God, I pray that we would let go of what we thought these things were, and we would embrace what is going to help and serve and love the other person in the marriage. God, I pray You'd empower new types of joy and new ways of connecting and loving and demonstrating the beauty of Your design in our church. COVID-19 has put stresses on everything, and that includes marriages, and figuring out how to work from home, and how to navigate the daily chores, and schooling. And everything else that's happened has put stress on this institution that You've designed. So God, I pray that You would help us to collaborate, to be transparent with one another about our needs for prayer in this. And God, we just thank You that You are the perfect groom, and that one day You will come for Your bride in all of our failings. God, You will wash us with Your Word and we will be pure, because we will see You as You are. Oh, how we wait for that day. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

*Ben Rico:*

Amen. Would you please stand as we sing our final song this morning, as we notice in how Christ directs our eyes to Him as our strong leader, and then in this chorus notice how strength of His leadership is displayed in submitting to God and His will in bringing us into the Kingdom of Heaven.

[music: "Jesus Paid it All"]

Amen. May our lives be purified in finding Christ, so that our lives would look like His in submission, in service, in leadership. Go in peace.