

Likewise, Wives...

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.”

1 Peter 3:1-6

Who are we to be like? Is it not Christ? Subjection is a choice Jesus made to save us, but it is not to being in subjection to the Father that Peter speaks of here. It is Christ allowing himself to be subject to reprehensible men bent on pinning some accusation to hold on him to assuage their conscience for murdering an innocent. What was the bottom line for Jesus? *“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”* (1 Peter 2:24-25). The choice comes down to what it is we live for. For Jesus, being subject to death was to live for righteousness. His aim is to save others even if it is at his own expense. His example demands going the second mile, turning the other cheek and giving our cloaks to those who have already taken from us. He changed the world by loving those who nailed him to a cross—this is our calling and this is our example.

In this journey we call faith, it seems that God often asks what is most difficult of us. Why should a wife be subject to her husband? Can any rationale be given other than God says so? Throughout history, women have been sheltered because they are the child-bearers and have been taken advantage of for the same reason. Men have flexed their muscles rather than exercising their hearts when it has come to their mates—understanding has not been their forte. So God calls on wives to respect men even when they “do not obey the word.” To say the least, this is a tall order. It is hard to be respectful to a husband who is Bozo the clown. The level of commitment runs deeper than merely being subject to those in authority for the husband-wife relationship is much intimate making the wife more vulnerable emotionally than a slave obeying his master. Sometimes it appears that God asks too much of us, and it appears that it is certainly the case here.

If God is love, then he must be a God of the heart—a God who demands our hearts. This cuts to the core of what faith is. To narrow faith to steps of obedience (though there certainly are such) or to mere mental assent (and this also is true) takes faith out of its context. God demands faithfulness on our part because he has been faithful on his part even when we were not. To be adopted into his family we must take on his character—loving him as he has loved us, loving others as he has loved us and loving ourselves as he has loved us. To quote John, *“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit”* (1 John 4:1-13). With so much failed-love and mixing-up infatuation for real love in modern society, we need Christian homes that reflect the spirit of Christ. We need Christian women who spend their time sprucing up their characters and hearts over against their physical appearance. More importantly, we need women who submit to God and share their godliness with their husbands for I have learned much more of God from my wife than she has from me.

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