

THE WIFE'S SUBMISSION

1 Peter 3:1

By Andy Manning

MARRIAGE IS UNDER ATTACK

The institution of marriage is under attack in America.

Somehow an urban myth emerged that marriage is a bad thing.

Maybe it's because around 50% of marriages end in divorce.

But for some reason many people in America are convinced that marriage is something to be put off for as long as possible, or something to be avoided altogether.

One person said that the four Ds of marriage are "depression, despair, drink, and divorce."

Many people in our country really believe that marriage is a ball and chain.

For example,

in 1970, 80% of all adults in America were married. Today, that number is around 52%. That's a huge drop. Less and less people are choosing to get married.

As well, in 1960 the median age for a first marriage was 20 for women and 23 for men. Today, it's 27 for women and 29 for men. People are waiting longer and longer to get married – as if they are trying to avoid something bad for as long as they can.

But what is the truth? Is marriage really a bad thing? Is it really a ball and chain?

MARRIAGE IS A GOOD THING

As I said, the idea that marriage is bad is an urban myth; it's not true.

For example,

Studies show that married people are **happier** than single people.

A 2010 Pew Research study found that 43% of married people described themselves as very happy while only 24% of singles said they were very happy.

Studies show that marriage makes people **wealthier**.

Ron Haskins, who is the author of many scholarly papers on marriage and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington said, "It's a plain fact that people who are married have more income, wealth and savings that last into their retirement."

Studies also show that marriage makes people **healthier**.

Married men live 10 years longer than unmarried men; and married women live 4 years longer than unmarried women.

So here's the truth about marriage, from a purely empirical, scientific standpoint.

Married people are happier, healthier, and wealthier than unmarried people.

Does marriage still seem like a bad idea?

Let's take a look at the **divorce rate**.

The reason that many people are not eager to get married is that they assume that they only have a 50/50 chance of success. Those aren't good odds.

But that number doesn't tell the whole story.

When you factor in religion and church attendance, that number changes drastically.

Sociologist Rodney Stark of Baylor University found that for Christians who attend church weekly, the divorce rate drops down to 14%.

So a lot of marriages end in divorce; but for Christians who attend church every week, divorce is rare.

Write this down: **Marriage is a good thing because it is a God thing.**

God invented marriage, and He invented it for our happiness.

The Bible says in **Proverbs 18:22 (CSB)** says, "A man who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord."

Marriage according to God's instructions is one of the best things that you can experience in life.

I know that some people are not married because God has called them to be single; and some are not married because they just haven't found the right person; so I'm not talking to those two groups.

But as a general principle, marriage is one of the best things you can experience in life, along with children.

When you avoid marriage so that you can have more freedom, and so you can travel, and so you can succeed at your job, and so you won't be stuck with one person, you are actually hurting yourself. You are missing out on one of the absolute best experiences that you can have this side of heaven.

I want you to write this down: **Happy marriages are not an accident.**

It's easy to look at a happy marriage and say, "They're so lucky."

Luck has nothing to do with a happy marriage.

Marriage is like eating with chopsticks. It looks easy until you try it.

Nobody succeeds at work on accident. Nobody succeeds financially on accident. And nobody builds a happy marriage on accident.

Happy marriages happen on purpose.

Happy couples know certain things that unhappy couples don't know.

And happy couples do certain things that unhappy couples don't do.

That's good news because if you want a happy marriage, all you have to do is learn what happy couples know, and then do what happy couples do.

Here's another thought: **The best place to go for marriage advice is to the Maker of marriage.**

About one year ago we bought a new QSC mixer for the church. It's not a mixer for cooking, but for the sound system. And it's a digital mixer; it is computerized; it has a touch screen; it has an internal recorder; it can save your settings; it has all kinds of bells and whistles; it can do all kinds of tricks. But when I first got it, I had no idea how to use it. It had great potential, but I didn't know how to make it work. So do you know what I did? I called the manufacturer – QSC. I called the maker of the mixer. If

they made it, then they would know how to make it work. And they did. After just a few short conversations, I was trained; I knew how to use the mixer. The same is true for marriage.

If you want to know how to make marriage work, then call the Manufacturer.

God invented marriage, and He has given us all the instructions that we need for a happy marriage through His word, the Bible. If you want to know how to have a happy marriage, then study the marriage instructions that God has given us in the Bible.

SCRIPTURE

That's what we're going to do for the next four weeks.

We're going to camp out in one specific passage on marriage. 1 Peter 1:1-7 (CSB).

The first two weeks we're going to talk about wives, and then the last two weeks we're going to talk about husbands. Let's get started by reading the entire passage, and then we'll break it down piece by piece.

1 In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live 2 when they observe your pure, reverent lives. 3 Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry, 4 but rather what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands, 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation.

7 Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner, showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Today we're going to focus on **verse 1**:

“In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live.”

Who is this verse addressed to? Christian wives. Raise your hand if you are a Christian wife? This is for you.

What does this verse say to Christian wives?

First, this is a command. Peter is commanding Christian wives to do something.

What is it? Submit to your own husbands.

Submit? That's an outdated, old-fashioned idea. Some might even claim that it is an oppressive idea.

But submission is not a unique command only given to wives.

James 4:7 commands all Christians to submit to God.

Luke 2:51 says that Jesus submitted to His earthly parents when He was a child – and all Christian children are called to submit to their parents.

Romans 13:1 says that all Christians are to submit to the government – to obey the law.

Titus 2:9 says that all Christian employees are to submit or be obedient to their bosses at work.

1 Peter 5:5 says that all church members must submit to their pastor when it comes to church matters.

Ephesians 5:21 says that all Christians are to submit to one another in the fear of Christ.

So let's get something straight. When the Bible commands wives to submit to be submissive, the Bible is not picking on women.

All Christians are called to live in submission in some form or another.

Christian wives are called to submit to their husbands.

Now let's make sure that we're not taking this verse out of context. Are we sure that the Bible wants wives to submit to their husbands? Let's look at some other verses.

Ephesians 5:22-24 (CSB) says, "22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything."

Colossians 3:18 (CSB) says, "Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."

Titus 2:5 (CSB) says that older women in the church teach and encourage the younger women "to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God's word will not be slandered."

Now what I want you to notice here is not only that these are four different verses saying the same thing, but we have two different authors – Peter and Paul – saying the same thing. Clearly God's will is for wives to submit to their husbands.

Now we're going to talk about what it means to submit to your husband. But before we do, let's talk about what it does not mean.

WHAT SUBMISSION DOES NOT MEAN

1. The call to submission does not mean women are inferior to men.

The Bible does not teach that women are less valuable, or less intelligent, or less loved by God. And submission does not imply that.

For example, as a Christian employee you are called to submit to your boss; does that mean you are inferior to your boss?

The Bible says that Christ submits to God the Father (1 Cor 15:28); does that mean Christ is inferior in any way? No.

The Bible says that men and women are both created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27); they have equal access to salvation (Gl 3:28); and they share an equal destiny in heaven (1 Pet 3:7).

Submission is more about order than value and ability.

The NIV Study Bible puts it this way. "Inferiority is not implied by this passage. The submission is one of role or function necessary for the orderly operation of the home."

Consider a basketball team.

The players are required to submit to the coach. But that doesn't mean that the coach is the most valuable member of the team; that doesn't mean that the coach is the smartest person on the team.

But for the sake of harmony, health, and order, for the sake effectiveness, the players must submit to the coach.

Men and women are equal in value, but different in the roles that God has called them to.

God has called the husband to love and lead, and the wife to submit and support.

2. The call to submission does not mean that the husband has to make all the decisions alone.

Some mistake submission in marriage to mean that the wife is not to have any say.

She is not to give her opinion. She is not to try to sway her husband one way or another. He is not even supposed to ask for her opinion.

He is the decision maker, and she is just supposed to live with whatever he decides.

That's not submission.

The wife is free to give her opinion; and to offer insight; and the husband and wife can and should put their heads together when they make decisions.

Two heads are better than one. As a married couple you will make much better decisions when you make them together than if the husband makes them alone.

The leader is not always the smartest person in the room. The leader is rarely the smartest person in the room.

A good leader is one who surrounds himself with smart people.

A good leader admits it when he doesn't know, and he surrounds himself with people who do know.

Wives, you may be smarter than your husband, but that doesn't mean you should be the leader. That means you need to help the leader make wise decisions.

As well, husbands, just because God made you the leader, that doesn't mean you are smarter than your wife.

In my marriage, one of us is very intelligent, and one of us is very tall. Guess which one is which? My wife is much smarter than me, so I rely heavily on her decision making.

3. The call to submission does not mean that wives can't make any decisions alone.

Some mistake submission to mean that the husband must make every decision. That's not the case.

Just because you are in charge doesn't mean you need to micromanage every little detail in your family.

In my family, Lydia makes a lot of decisions without me.

She chooses the kids' school curriculum, and organizes their day. She chooses how to decorate and arrange the house. On most days she even chooses my outfit.

I read this story in one of Dave Ramsey's books. He heard it somewhere, and he wasn't sure if it was true, so I'm definitely not sure. But it's a good story. George and Barbara Bush were in the presidential limo driving back from an event. They were driving on some back roads, and the driver had to pull over for gas. The old service station owner popped out of the door with his mouth gaping open at the sign of the president's limo sitting in front of his gas pump. When Mrs. Bush saw him through the window, she jumped out of the car, ran up to him, and gave him a great big hug. They talked for a few minutes, and then she got back in the limo. She turned to President Bush and said, "That's Harry, my old high school

boyfriend!" George got a big grin on his face, leaned back, and said, "So let me get this straight. If you had married him, you'd be the wife of a gas-station attendant. But instead, you married me, the most powerful man in the world, and you got to be the First Lady of the U.S." Barbara looked back at him with a sparkle in her eye and said, "Oh George, don't be silly! If I had married him, he would be president!"

If a husband is smart, he will recognize the universal truth in this story.

We are far more successful with our wives than we would be without them.

Submission does not mean that the wife is inferior; it doesn't mean that she can't be involved in the decision-making process; and it doesn't mean that the husband can't delegate some decisions to her.

On the contrary, a wise husband will get his wife very involved in the decision-making process.

So now let's look at what submission does mean.

Now I want you to know, wives, that I got these points from a woman. These points come from a wonderful little book called, *A Woman After God's Own Heart*, by Elizabeth George. And she got these points right from Scripture.

A DESCRIPTION OF SUBMISSION

- 1. The WHAT of submission: Voluntarily allow your husband to be your leader, giving him the final say.**

This is what it means to submit. **Voluntarily allow your husband to be your leader, giving him the final say.**

Author **Elizabeth George** writes, "Submission is primarily a military term meaning to rank oneself under someone else. This heart attitude is lived out by subjection and obedience, by leaving things to the judgment of another person and yielding

or deferring to the opinion or authority of someone else (*A Woman After God's Won Heart*, p. 65)."

Again, it doesn't mean the wife can't be involved in the decision-making process, or offer insight. But in the end, the wife let's her husband have the final say.

Notice that I used the word "voluntarily." Submission is the wife's decision. It's really between her and the Lord. The Bible does not command husbands to bring their wives under submission, or to discipline their wives when they disobey. Submission is the wife's decision.

2. The HOW of submission: Submit to your husband as to the Lord – unconditionally.

Ephesians 5:22-24 (CSB) says, "22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything."

Your submission to your husband has a bigger purpose than you. You are supposed to paint a picture with your submission. Your submission is to be a picture, or a living illustration of the church's submission to Christ.

That brings two applications to mind.

First, that means your submission needs to be **respectful**.

Just as the church should obey Christ with a good attitude, respectfully, you are called to submit respectfully.

Let your husband have the final say, and do it respectfully. That means don't criticize him; don't complain; and don't rub it in his face if the decision turns out bad.

Second, your submission needs to be unconditional. Here's what I mean. (I'm going to challenge you a bit.)

The Bible doesn't say submit to your husband when you feel like it; or if he's being good to you; or if he is meeting your needs; or if this or that.

The Bible says to submit unconditionally.

Now on the surface that sounds very challenging, but isn't that similar to what God calls husbands to do?

God calls husbands to love their wives unconditionally – not just when she smells good and looks pretty; not just when she's meeting your emotional needs; not just when she's fun to live with; not just when she's healthy; not just when she's young; but you are to love your wife unconditionally. In the same way, wives are to submit to their husbands unconditionally.

I found this quote by author Emerson Eggerichs to be very challenging. He wrote the book, *Love and Respect*. "The problem many women have today – including Christian wives – is that they want to be treated like a princess, but deep down they resist treating their husbands like the king."

3. The SCOPE of submission: Submit to your husband in everything.

Ephesians 5:24 (CSB) says, "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything." You are to let your husband have the final say in every area of your life. Do you know what everything means? Everything.

Now there is one exception to this.

You must not submit to your husband if he is leading you to disobey God.

In that case you must say what the Pater and the apostles said in Acts 5:29 (NLT), "We must obey God rather than any human authority."

So if your husband is leading you to sin, or to do something illegal, then you not only have the freedom to not submit, you must not submit.

God comes before your husband.

4. The STRENGTH of submission: Trust in the Lord to take care of you through your husband's leadership.

This is all very challenging.

Where do you find the strength to submit like this?

It comes from faith. You have to have faith that God will take care of you through your husband's leadership.

You have to believe that if God commands you to submit to your husband, then God is big enough to take care of you through your husband's leadership, even when your husband makes bad decisions.

Remember **Matthew 6:31-33 (CSB)**. 31 So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you."

5. The MOTIVE of submission: Submit in order to win your husband over to a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

Why does God want you to submit to your husband?

We already mentioned order and harmony.

And we already mentioned that your submission is to be an illustration of the church's submission to Christ.

But there's another motivation.

It's found in **1 Peter 3:1**. "In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live."

This verse was written to Christian wives who had unbelieving husbands. And Peter said that your best tool to evangelize your husband, to win him to Christ, is not to preach to him, not to argue with him, but to submit to him. And there's something magnetic, and attractive, and winsome about godly submission.

And I believe this also applies to women who have Christian husbands who are backslidden. How do you influence him to turn back to the Lord? Your best tool is submission. There's something about submission that God can use to grab your husband's heart and pull Him to the Lord.

CONCLUSION

I read an interesting story about Mark Twain.

Once when he was lecturing in Utah, a Mormon acquaintance argued with him on the subject of polygamy. After a long and rather heated debate, the Mormon finally said, "Can you find for me a single passage of Scripture which forbids polygamy?" "Certainly," replied Twain. "No man can serve two masters." (Louis Utermeyer, A Treasury of Laughter, Simon & Schuster).

That story is funny, but sadly it's all too true.

Many Christian wives don't let their husbands lead. Instead, they boss their husbands around and shower them with threats if they don't comply. But that's not God's will. And that's not God's best.

Happy marriages are not accident.

Happy couples know and do things that unhappy couples don't.

And this is one of those things. The wife's submission.

I know that the world doesn't like this idea, but remember, the best place to go for marriage advice is to the Maker of marriage.

God made marriage for our enjoyment. And He says, "If you want your marriage to work, then wives, submit to your husbands."