

1Peter 3:1-7

Submission and Authority in the Home

The Bible tells us that in the last days perilous times will come (2Tim. 3:1), and that wickedness will increase on the earth, and with that increase of wickedness would be a lack of respect for all God-established boundaries, laws and authorities.

As we will see today, even when the rest of the world rejects the authority structures that God has put into place, we Christians are to continue to respect their rightful God-given authority.

As believers we need to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of this whole concept of submission to authority.

For our whole lives the roles of authority in our land remained relatively constant and predictable.

But the year 2020 has turned so many things upside down, especially with regard to how we can expect governing authorities to act toward their citizens.

Christians are in mass confusion as to how we should relate to a government that is functioning in a totalitarian way.

Some churches fully comply and have been shut down for months.

Other churches stand firmly on their charter rights and have resisted government abuse of those rights.

Yet others, like ourselves, are in various stages of compliance, wrestling with how to function in a world that no longer plays by the long-established rules.

1Peter 2:11, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims [temporary residents and foreigners], abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul...”

We are not to live like the locals who are controlled by the lusts of their flesh. We are to live under the control of God’s Holy Spirit.

This verse sets much of the context and focus for the following teaching about submission and authority.

We are to live here in this lifetime with a conscious awareness that we are foreigners here, only temporary residents—this earth is not our home, our home is heaven. And this country is not our country, we are citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, all of our relationships with the things of this world are temporary.

1Peter 2:13-14, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man [every authority structure] for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme,¹⁴ or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.”

We have one Master, His name is Jesus. We have one King—His name is Jesus.

But Jesus has sent us into this foreign, and hostile kingdom of darkness, on a mission.

And part of the instructions for carrying out our mission is that we are to live in submission to the authorities that are in place here in this foreign world.

These authorities include government officials and their realm of responsibility is over public areas of life, to protect the public from evildoers.

1Peter 2:18, “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.”

Servants included slaves and employees. Masters included slave owners and employers.

In our work places, we are to submit to bosses and supervisors or managers who have been placed in authority over the work place.

They don’t have authority over the public, but they have authority over the operation of their own workplace.

1Peter 3:1-2, “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.”

As we are all called to submit to government authorities in the public sphere, and as employees are to submit to their employer or supervisor in the workplace, so also, the Lord God, has assigned wives to be submissive to their own husbands.

When the Bible says, “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands...” it is not comparing the role of a wife to the role of a servant, but it is comparing the authority structure. As there is an authority structure in public life, and as there is an authority structure in the workplace, so there is an authority structure in the home.

And as subjects of Jesus Christ, living as foreigners here on earth, in obedience to our Lord’s commands—for the Lord’s sake, we submit to the authority structures in the government, in the workplace and in the home—even when the natural citizens of this land do not submit to the authority structures.

In government, some Christians are called to fill roles of authority (elected officials, judges and law enforcement officers) and the rest of us are called to submit to those in authority.

In the workplace, some Christians are called to be business owners, supervisors and managers, and some Christians are called, as employees, to submit to their authority.

But the role and function of those in the workplace is very different from the role and function of those in government.

Likewise, in the home, some Christians are called to be husbands, and some Christians are called as wives, to submit to their husband's authority.

Again, the role and function of husbands and wives in the home is very different from the role and function of government over civilians, or masters over servants, or employers over employees.

But the common denominator in each of these spheres is that they all have an authority structure, with some members in authority and other members submitting to authority.

But submission to authority does not imply that the authority is more important, or more honorable, or of greater worth than the one in submission.

Jesus submitted to His parents, NOT because they were greater than Him. Jesus was infinitely greater than His parents, yet He, living as a foreigner here, submitted to their authority, while He was living in their realm of authority.

Jesus submitted to God the Father, though they are 100% equal as God.

Christians (who are a chosen race of people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own special people) are commanded to submit to secular authorities (who are wicked children of Satan and enemies of God).

Therefore, the command to wives to be submissive to their husbands does not in any way imply inferiority.

Jesus, in His submission to His Father, with whom He was 100% equal, is the role model for wives in submission to their husbands.

1Peter 3:1-2, "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear."

There were believers in the churches who had unbelieving spouses.

It is likely that some husbands even opposed their wife's faith and refused to let her talk about Jesus.

But that is not a problem. She still possesses a mighty weapon for winning her husband to faith in Christ; it is the testimony of her life.

If her husband refuses to hear the gospel, then let him be won without words. The powerful testimony of a life that is being transformed to the likeness of Jesus can preach daily to his heart. And the Bible says such a testimony has the power to save his soul. (*Edmund Clowney, p. 130*)

We've all heard testimonies of spouses who came to faith in Christ because they saw before their eyes the transformation of their husband or wife by the gospel.

1Peter 3:3-4, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—⁴ rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”

Again, recognizing that we are not of this world, our value and our identity as God’s own special people does not come from the physical things of this world.

These bodies are just earth suits that we live in while we fulfill our task here on earth. The Bible teaches that when our assignment here is done, Christ will call us home and we will receive new, glorified, perfect bodies. (1Cor. 15:35-53)

Therefore, like everything else of this earth, we should not be preoccupied with these bodies. These bodies are kind of like a pair of rented bowling shoes, they may not look great, but don’t worry, you don’t have to wear them home, they are only temporary for you to use till the task is done.

The word “adornment,” in verse 3 refers to the focus of attention for attractiveness, the thing you focus on to make yourself look beautiful to others.

Don’t let your focus and attention for becoming attractive to others be on the outward things that are temporary, but rather focus your attention on developing that part of you that is going to be with you forever—the inner person of the heart.

1Peter 3:5-7, “For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.”

⁷ “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”

Husbands, dwell with your wives with understanding, literally – according to knowledge. Meaning live life together with her. Don’t be like two ships passing in the night.

Get to really know her, her desires, aspirations, what does she like? What does she fear? What makes her tick? What are her strengths and weaknesses? What are her needs? And what fulfills her?

Such understanding of your wife can only come through spending regular time in fellowship together with her, talking, praying, working and playing.

Giving honor to your wife means, treating her with respect, speaking to her kind and affirming words, both in private and publicly.

Giving honor to your wife means putting her needs and comfort first before your own; it means encouraging her to exercise and develop her God-given gifts; it means giving her high priority in decisions that need to be made, and in how your money is spent.

But your honor shown to your wife must never put her desires ahead of God's desires. As husband you have the primary responsibility of leading your marriage and family in a God glorifying direction.

The wife is referred to as the weaker vessel, in part this may be a reference to the greater physical strength of the man over the woman, but in this context of authority and submission, the weaker vessel also applies to her lacking the man's authority in the relationship. (*Grudem, p. 144*)

Therefore, because she is given, by God, a position that lacks authority, the husband is never to use his authority for his own advantage, but is to use his authority to honor his wife.

Remembering that both of you are heirs together of the grace of life—meaning that before God you are both equal. Spiritually, both the man and the woman are equal recipients of God's grace.

Verse seven ends with a warning to husbands. If we fail to treat our wives in this way our prayers will be hindered—meaning there will be a blockage in our relationship with God.

When we are not in right relationship with our wives it becomes impossible to be in right relationship with God, your ability to communicate with and relate to God will be blocked.

Apart from prayer we can accomplish nothing of any spiritual or eternal value. Therefore, if our prayers are hindered our whole life is basically hindered.

I have definitely experienced this in my own relationship with Tami. It is impossible to have a good relationship with God when I am not in right relationship with my wife.

Now let's review this section, from 1Peter 2:13 through 3:7 to see what it teaches us about authority and submission.

In this section of First Peter, we have discussed three different realms of authority.

First of all, in 1Peter 2:13, we have the government, and government officials have authority in the public domain to protect the public from evildoers.

Secondly, in 1Peter 2:18, we have masters/employers who have authority over the servants/employees in their workplace.

Thirdly, in 1Peter 3:1, we have husbands who have authority over their own wife in their own home.

Lastly, not covered in this section, but mentioned in chapter five, we have elders who have authority over the ministry and life of the church.

Each authority figure has a limited area over which they have legitimate authority.

For example, notice **1Peter 3:1, "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands..."**

Only her own husband has authority over her. There is no other husband who has authority over that wife—as a wife, she is to submit to one man.

Men do not have authority over women. One husband has authority over only one wife.

The same is true for employers. The employer has authority only over his or her own employees when they are in their work place. (And women can have authority over men in the workplace.)

And likewise, the rightful, God-given authority of government officials is limited to the public sphere.

Let's look at some examples, of rightful spheres of authority.

A husband, though he has authority over his wife, can't override the employer and tell his wife how to do her job at work. "Honey, you need to double the money you are spending on advertising."

The workplace is outside of the husband's authority, the employer is the authority in the workplace.

The husband, though he has authority over his wife, can't override the government and tell his wife to ignore the speed limit and drive faster or they are going to be late for the appointment.

When the police officer pulls the wife over for speeding, she can't be excused by saying, "My husband told me to speed." Setting the speed limit on the freeway is outside of the husband's jurisdiction of authority.

It doesn't matter how much the husband argues with the officer saying, I authorized her to drive 120, the officer's authority supersedes the husband's authority on the highway.

However, the police officer, after handing her the ticket, can't say, I will be coming over to your house for supper tonight at six, I would like you to make me a steak dinner.

If he showed up at the door at 6 pm, the husband could turn him away at the door, in his home the husband's authority supersedes the government's authority.

Likewise, the employer, who sets the budget for his business, and tells Mrs. Jones how much she is able to spend in her department at work, cannot tell Mrs. Jones how much she is able to spend on groceries for her family. That comes under her husband's authority.

And the Church elder can't override the Government's authority by telling one of the church members that he authorizes them to go ahead with their home renovation without a building permit.

And the government does not have the authority to tell you that in your home you must wear masks, social distance, no hugs allowed and be sure you never have more than 2 members in the same room at a time.

They could recommend it, but they could not legitimately enforce it.

And biblically, the government official is not authorized by God to tell the church congregation that they can't sing without masks on their face, social distancing is required when you worship, hugs are not allowed.

Biblically that is the Elder's place of authority, and is no more the jurisdiction of the government than is the activity of the family home.

They don't have that authority in your family's home, so why do we give it to them in the household of God?

Do we not recognize the household of God? This is more than merely a public community center or social club, it is the gathering of the people of God for the worship of God.

Do we not realize that we are a family? Do you as a family in your homes social distance, wear masks, avoid hugs and interact nervously with each other?

Do we not recognize the authority of the Elders? Is the ministry of the elders under the direction and control of government officials?

What has caused the church to have such an identity crisis?

Is it the seeker sensitive emphasis which has caused us to see ourselves as merely a public meeting that provides wholesome, entertainment with a message?

Is it because churches have followed the business model for organization and growth, that we are merely an organization offering the public a commodity?

Is it because through decades of cooperation with government regulations for tax deductible purposes, and receiving government funding we have compromised our autonomy, lost our identity as a holy people, and come to see ourselves as little more than a government subsidized institution?

Are we now reaping the rotten fruit of what we have sown?

This crisis may force the church to rethink, and Lord willing, recover, our true identity as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own special people who are not part of this world that we live in.

Wives be submissive to your own husbands, servants, be submissive to your own boss, Christians, be submissive to your governing authorities, but recognize where the boundaries of their sphere of influence lay.

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