



# The Way of Blessing

1 Peter 3:1-12

## Live Honorably

- ❑ In his letter to Christians in Asia Minor, Peter exhorts his readers to “Live... good lives” (*1 Peter 2:12, NIV*). In other words, “Conduct yourselves honorably” (*HCSB*). Peter applies this exhortation to particular relationships within society, including the marriage relationship.

## Wives to Husbands

- ❑ Read 1 Peter 3:1-6. Peter writes, “Wives... submit yourselves to your own husbands” (*3:1*). This was expected in Greco-Roman society. Nonetheless, Peter’s instruction is based on God’s design for the marriage relationship.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ “In Greco-Roman society it was expected that the wife would have no friends of her own and would worship the gods of her husband. ... [Also] in that culture it [was] shameful for wives to presume to instruct her husband.”<sup>2</sup>
  1. Based on verses 1-3, how can Christian wives positively influence their husbands with regard to the Christian faith?<sup>3</sup>

- ❑ The wife’s behavior should reveal “purity and reverence”<sup>4</sup> (*3:2*) and also “beauty” (*3:3-4*).
  2. What is Peter’s point in verses 3-4? How does it apply to us today?

📖 “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised” (*Proverbs 31:30, NIV*).

- ❑ Like the “holy women of the past,” including Sarah, wives should “do what is right and not give way to fear” (*3:5-6*). If they fear and trust God, they need not fear anything else.

<sup>1</sup> Since Peter’s instruction to slaves (*2:18*) is conditioned by the prevailing culture, many commentators argue that Peter’s instruction that wives submit to their husbands is only cultural. However, the apostle Paul also instructs wives to submit to their husbands, and his instructions, which speak of the ‘headship’ of the husband, are grounded in theology (*Ephesians 5:22-33; Genesis 2:7, 18, 22-24; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9, 11-12*). Thus, as traditionally understood, the headship (leadership) of the husband applies to all times and all cultures. See ‘Love & Marriage’ on the ICF website under Ephesians. The instruction that wives should submit to their husbands is difficult for many to accept. Why? It may be difficult to accept because of misunderstanding the instruction’s intent and implications, or because of abuses or misapplications. Certainly, many husbands are bad leaders, or even bad men, and the wife should never follow the husband into disobedience. However, the main reason this instruction is not accepted is the propensity (inclination) of human beings, both male and female, to resist authority, including the authority of God. We generally do not like to submit to others! In addition, people tend to equate difference in role with difference in value or importance. But that is not true! In Christ, the old divisions and inequalities have come to an end. ‘There is neither... male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (*Galatians 3:28*). Christian husbands and wives are ‘coheirs of the grace of life’ (*1 Peter 3:7, HCSB*)! However, God has ordained authority structures for good purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 203, 204.

<sup>3</sup> Peter instructs Christian wives to submit to their husbands, whether or not they are Christians. Peter is aware that many wives have become Christians but still have unbelieving husbands, which puts wives in a difficult position. Husbands may not listen and respond to ‘the word’ (the Christian message) voiced by their wives, but ‘they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives’ (*3:1*). This can also apply to other types of relationships.

<sup>4</sup> ‘reverence’ (*phobō* – fear) – Likely refers to reverence toward God, but it could refer to ‘respect’ toward husbands. (*Ephesians 5:33*). The two are related. The wife’s reverence for God should motivate her to respect her husband.

## Husbands to Wives

❑ Read 1 Peter 3:7. Peter writes, “Husbands... be considerate as you live with your wives” (3:7a, *NIV*). More literally, “live with your wives ‘according to knowledge’.” Or as other translations say, “live with your wives in an understanding way” (*ESV*).

3. How can husbands live with their wives “according to knowledge” or “in an understanding way”? What do husbands need to do?<sup>5</sup>



❑ Peter writes, “treat [your wives] with respect” (3:7b, *NIV*). In other words, “give honor to your wives” (*NLT*). Wives may be weaker,<sup>6</sup> but husbands should show them honor, recognizing that Christian husbands and wives are heirs together of “the gracious gift of life” (3:7c, *NIV*).

📖 “Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered” (3:7d, *NLT*).

## Blessing Instead

❑ Read 1 Peter 3:8-12. In verse 8, Peter lists five characteristics that Christians should have.

4. What are the five characteristics, and what do they mean?<sup>7</sup> Where do they come from?

❑ The fifth characteristic is “being humble” (humility) which is needed to be “like-minded” (*Philippians 2:2-4*). In Greco-Roman society, humility was considered “a sign of weakness and shame, an inability to defend one’s honor.”<sup>8</sup> However, in God’s sight, the path to honor is the path of Christ who humbled himself and died for us (*Phil. 2:5-11; John 12:23-26*).

5. In what ways can we “repay evil with blessing”? How can we do such a hard thing?<sup>9</sup>

📖 *Jesus said*, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (*Luke 6:27-28, NIV*).



## Reflection & Application

- If you are a wife, review verses 1-6. If you are a husband, review verse 7. Beginning this week, seek to apply something from these instructions to *your* marriage.
- Does *your* life reflect the characteristics listed in verse 8? Are you able to “repay evil with blessing?” Moral improvement is *not* the point. We cannot live the way God demands apart from Christ. Is Christ at the center of your life? Do you need to receive him as your Lord?

<sup>5</sup> Husbands need understanding from God about themselves, their wives, and how to relate to God and one another. Besides the Bible, husbands can learn directly from their wives, from others, and various resources on marriage.

<sup>6</sup> In general, women are physically weaker. In the context of 1 Peter, they are also weaker in the sense of entitlement and empowerment (Jobes, 209). However, God’s basis for honor is different from the world’s basis for honor.

<sup>7</sup> ‘like-minded’ (*homophrones* – unity of mind) (*Philippians 2:1-5*); ‘sympathetic’ (*sympathies*); ‘love one another’ (*philadelphoi* – loving one’s brother or sister) (*Romans 12:10*); ‘compassionate’ (*eusplanchnoi*) – tender hearted (*Ephesians 4:32*); ‘humble’ (*tapeinophrones* – humble minded). Such characteristics are Christ-like, and are the ‘fruit’ of our union with Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (*John 15:1-5; Galatians 5:22-23*).

<sup>8</sup> J.H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 605.

<sup>9</sup> We need God’s truth in our hearts. As heirs of God’s blessing, God has called us to bless others, even our enemies (3:9). We need to be motivated by God’s gracious gift of eternal life (*Romans 5:6-10*). We need to entrust ourselves to God who judges justly (*1 Peter 2:23; see Romans 12:17-19*). We need God’s empowerment. As Alfred Plummer said, ‘To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; to return good for evil is divine.’ God is the Source of love. We need to be filled with His love and empowered by His Spirit to love others as God demands.