

Timeless truths 1 Peter 3:1-7

One of the obvious features of our lives is that humans function better in teams. More is achieved as we work together, as we serve and strive with our different gifts and talents.

Teams are everywhere.

In sport, in business, in education, in hospitals, in church...the list goes on.

Teams are an essential part of human life.

But what about team leaders?

I know most of us prefer being the **master of our own destiny** and the **captain of our own ship**. However, we do realise that good team leaders are critical for good team work.

Sports teams have captains. Schools have subject leaders, key stage leaders and head teachers. Hospitals have ward managers, consultants and even clinical leads with responsibility for medicine across the site.

Life is full of teams and full of team leaders.

But what about in **marriage**?

Do the same principles apply within this kind of relationship? Or is it different for husband and wife?

Is there a **blueprint** for marriage? Or is it up to each couple to work it out for themselves?

This morning I want to show some **challenging** and **inspiring** truths from the Bible.

I know that at first sight what is written in the opening verses of **1 Peter chapter 3** may seem **old fashioned**, **out-dated** and even **outrageous**.

However, they are part of **God's word**.

Indeed, they are part of **God's good word**.

The reason is because **God is good**. Which means that his words are good. We get to read his words in the Bible.

All of Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for our daily lives.

Let me encourage us not to read the Bible in same way as we visit McDonalds. Our task is not to choose what we like from the menu but to understand what is written **and then** humbly accept whatever our kind Saviour communicates.

What does God have to say about marriage?

First, he has a message for wives (Vs 1-6)

Have a look at verse 1. **Read verse 1.**

Many of us don't have a positive experience of the word submission.

I remember in my younger days watching **American wrestling**. It was all fake and purely for entertainment but one of the words each wrestler was trying to get his opponent to say was the word submit. They were trying to use all their power to get the other person to surrender.

This is not the image the Bible wants us to conjure up when we hear the word submit.

Please get rid of the picture. **Abandon the image of a defeated, sweaty wrestler who has been overpowered by a victorious foe.** This is not what the Bible means by submission.

No, the Bible means **a willing and voluntary submission to another person's leadership.**

Or if I can put it like this, it is **an attitude** before it is **an action.**

I know it's very common for married couples today to say that we are a team and we don't need a team leader. But God says differently.

Husband and wife are fully equal. However, according to God's word, they have **different roles** and **responsibilities.**

God says to wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands.

Please notice this is not an instruction for all women to submit to all men. No, **this is for marriage.**

But in marriage God has a **blueprint.**

The husband has a responsibility to lead and the wife is to cultivate a willing and voluntary submission to his leadership.

This doesn't mean simply doing what you are told or even being told what to do.

Leadership isn't fundamentally about issuing commands. No, it's about proactively serving the interests of others.

Let me point out two things about this instruction for wives.

First, it's for **all** Christian wives.

There is a particular emphasis in these verses on Christian wives who are married to non-Christian husbands. However, **verse 1** says to do this so that if any of them do not believe rather than because all of them don't believe.

This is for all Christian wives regardless of whether your husband is a believer or not.

The **second** thing I want to point out is that Jesus can help you do it.

In **verse 1**, Peter says **in the same way** do this.

In the same way as whom?

We discover the answer in **1 Peter 2:21**, "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps."

There are many aspects of what Jesus did for us that can be applied to our daily choices. But the one highlighted here is submission.

Jesus voluntarily submitted to the leadership of others in order to secure our salvation.

Wives, **submission is not a put down.** Submission was modelled by Jesus.

Across this country there are many Christian women married to non-Christian men.

God **doesn't commend this**. The Bible directs Christian women towards Christian men. It's obvious why. Christian marriage is a partnership of gospel service. Christianity is not a hobby. It is a way of life and so both husband and wife are to be invested together as followers of Jesus.

However, the Bible is **a realistic book**. It knows that for a whole variety of reasons a Christian woman may find herself married to a non-Christian husband. The good news is that the Bible is not silent in these situations. It has something encouraging to say.

Listen again to verse 1. **Read verses 1 to 4.**

Christian wives should want to see their husbands become followers of Jesus. This is a healthy spiritual desire.

Their temptation is to badger their husbands with the word of God whenever they can.

I heard of one wife who used to keep on leaving Bible passages in her husband's lunch box.

Peter says, don't post it notes on the bathroom mirror. Instead, trust God and focus on having a godly character.

This doesn't mean never talk to him about Jesus, give him books or even invite him to church or other events. But don't become obsessional about it. Ultimately his salvation is not in your hands.

As a consequence, seek to win him over without words as he watches the transforming power of the word of God in your life.

Let's not misunderstand what Peter says about **beauty** and **fashion**.

This is not the justification to abandon any concern for outward beauty. No, this is a reminder not to base our hopes on it and invest our time in it.

Apparently the UK beauty industry was worth £27 billion in 2020.

This is nothing in comparison to the price God puts on a gentle and quiet spirit. A wife who is willingly and voluntarily submitting to her husband's leadership.

At this point I want to make **three** things clear.

- This is not about saying yes to everything. It's about cultivating an attitude.
- This is not about doing the minimum at church. Talk openly about expectations.
- This is not about accepting abusive behaviour. Don't stand for this. Get help.

Wives of Trinity, hear God's word to you this morning – in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands.

If you're not a wife, let's be praying for God's help for those who are.

Second, God has a message for husbands (Vs 7)

What about husbands? What is God's message to them?

Look at verse 7. **Read verse 7.**

In the same way. As whom? As Jesus.

This time it's not his submission that is highlighted but his sacrificial love for others.

Husbands – be like Jesus in this way. **Don't live a life of selfish, passive indifference.** Make an active difference by following the sacrificial footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Peter signals **two ways** for this to happen.

- **Be considerate**

Consider what is best for them. This is simple but radical.

- **Treat them with respect**

I don't think the word respect is strong enough. A better translation is to use the word **precious**.

It's the same word used in **1 Peter 2:7**, where we are told that this stone is precious.

Treat your wife as precious.

Why do these two things? For **two** reasons.

- **First**, because the wife is the **weaker partner**

This is referring to the self-evident fact that men are stronger than women.

This is self-evident as **sporting competitions** are all divided according to biological sex. Whether it's tennis or athletics or football. Why? Men have a biological strength advantage. Peter says, husbands **be considerate of this**.

So don't use your physical strength to get your own way. Don't throw your weight around to get your way. In fact, do the opposite. Use your strength to serve our wife.

- **Second**, because Christian wives are **heirs** with their husbands of the gracious gift of life

This is why they are precious. Christ has shed his precious blood to secure their eternal home with him.

Christian husband, make sure you are prioritising their spiritual well-being.

Don't be passive in this area. Let's be active spiritual encouragers!

- Encourage her to be reading her Bible
- Encourage her to be attending a small group over other things
- You be the one who is making sure Sunday services remain at the top of the list

Husbands of Trinity, hear God's word to you this morning, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them as precious. **Let's get out of our man caves and switch off our x-boxes.** Let's follow in Jesus' footsteps as we sacrificially serve the interests of others.

If you're not a husband, let's be praying for God's help for those who are.

As I say all this I'm conscious that we so often fail in these areas. However, let's be **comforted and freshly motivated by God's grace**. We are forgiven sinners and beloved children of God. So in the security of God's grace let's strive to live as God intends. **Let's pray.**