

“The Submissiveness of Godly Wives” - Part 2

Holiness

1 Peter 3:1-7

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Bruce: Let’s go quietly before the Lord and know that He is God. (*Music.*)

Gracious Lord, we celebrate Your victory at the cross. We thank You that we’re not left to our own demise, but now we’re bathed in Your grace. Father, we stand in Your grace, and therefore we have hope. May You be pleased to open our eyes once again, that we might behold You for Christ’s sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Let’s turn in your Bibles, please, gentlemen, to 1 Peter, continuing our examination of his theme of godly submission.

Now in order to keep things in right context, I want to read you the whole passage beginning at chapter 2, beginning at verse 18. So would you follow along, beginning at 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 18, reading all the way through chapter 3 verse 7? This is the context of the theme of submission. This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Beginning at verse 18 of chapter 2 of the book of 1 Peter. “Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing when, mindful of God, one endures sorrow while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it, if when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. 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.

“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. 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.

“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the women as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” This is the word of the Lord.

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Men: Thanks be to God. Amen.

Bruce: Amen. We’ve been talking about the whole concept of submission, and the reason that I wanted to read that whole passage is so that we protect ourselves from taking things out of context. Today we’re going to finish up on this theme about wives being submissive to their husbands.

Now when we talk about that idea, we’re not talking about blind obedience. That is not what we’re talking about. We’re talking about willful submission. There is a radical difference between being blindly obedient and willfully submitting. There may be a situation.

The idea of submission basically means this: to come under the protection of by lining up in a right order. And we see that in the example of Jesus in chapter 2, which I just read.

Now there may be a time when a wife may not be coming under the protection of her husband because of abuse. At that point she needs to take care of herself and protect herself. So we’re not talking about some situation that is legalistic or blind obedience. We’re talking about the concept of taking Christ as a model who submitted Himself to the Holy Spirit and to the graciousness and sovereignty of God, and gave us an example by which we’re to live.

And you notice the word *likewise*. “Likewise, wives.” Likewise refers back to the model of Christ.

Now let me give you that model. Go to chapter 2, which I just read.

Participant: What chapter are we in, sir?

Bruce: 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 21. “For to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example.” Now here’s the example to which the word *likewise* goes back and refers to. “So that you might follow in His steps.” That’s the idea of *likewise*. Likewise, women. Likewise, men. Both of us have the same instruction, a heavenly ordinance to be likewise, and that is to be obedient and submissive to our authorities and to come under the protection of godly, divine, orchestrated, sovereign grace.

“He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly.”

Now there’s a difference. Jesus’ example is this. And this is where the word *likewise* makes this so powerful for us. He never entrusted Himself to man. He entrusted Himself to God. But He submitted Himself to man. There was this willful submission. And He took that act of willfully submitting and entrusted that to a sovereign God. Now there is the concept of the model we have.

Women are willfully to submit to their husbands and take that action in itself, and entrust that to a God who judges justly. That’s where they come under the protection of a rightly defined order. Now there may be situations where a woman is not being protected by her husband in that rightly defined order. At that point she needs to protect herself and separate for her own protection. And hopefully she will take that act of separation. She will take that act and entrust it to whom? Entrust it to God. She’ll take that act and

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entrust it to God, that He might be pleased to work in that situation while that separation occurs and she gets protection, she gets counsel, she gets advice, and hopefully the Holy Spirit might work in the husband.

So we’re not talking about some sort of blind obedience here, where you salute and say, “Aye aye, sir.” That’s not what we’re talking about. We’re talking about the concept of willful submission. It’s an attitude of the heart.

Now there are three reasons that Peter gives us why this attitude of willful submission is something that is honoring to the Lord, because that is His example to us. He gave us an example that we might follow in His steps. “Likewise, wives.” There is an example that Christ has given us to follow in His steps. “Likewise, men.” You see, the word *likewise* covers the women as well as the men.

So the three reasons that Peter gives us for willful submission on the part of women and men are, first of all, that it’s a heavenly ordinance. You’ll see that in verse 1.

Secondly, it’s an earthly opportunity for ministry. You’ll see that in verses 1 and 2. It may be that a woman who is willfully submitting to her husband, under the protection of her husband, and she is married to a man who is not a believer. You’ll notice the words “who does not obey.”

The gospel is something that is obeyed. It is not something that is chosen. You’ll notice what it says. And her possible ministry opportunity is to a husband who is not obeying the gospel. Now certainly you obey the gospel by believing. The act of disbelief or unbelief is an act of disobedience. The NIV says, “does not believe.” That’s a weak translation. That’s why the correct rendering of this, the better translation, is what the New American Standard has, or what the English Standard Version has in verse 2.

Notice this. “Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands so that even if some do not obey the word.” That’s the correct translation. The NIV has “believe.” Now the unbelief is an act of disobedience. When you do not believe, it’s an act of disobedience. That’s why this is a stronger word.

And the option here for the wife is this. “Because of your respectful and willfully submissive conduct,” following the example of Christ, the Holy Spirit might use that as a means to win over your husband without your words.

Now that does not mean she doesn’t speak. It means this: that she’s not a nag. She’s not nagging her husband about the gospel. “So you’ve got to believe!”, and hitting him over the head with a Bible. The Scripture is talking here about a willful opportunity for her to be submissive to her husband, coming under the protection of that, even though her husband doesn’t believe, that he might be won by her respectful conduct.

So the whole issue applies here as a heavenly ordinance. It’s an earthly opportunity. And today I want to talk about the last element for wives, and that is this. It’s a spiritual ornament.

Notice what he says in the Scripture, how women are to be dressed. He emphasizes their modesty. The whole concept here is being modest as a woman in your dress—not to be showy, not to be extraneous, not to call attention to yourself. When you look at the Scripture, the Scripture always talks about clothing as a means of calling attention to

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one’s countenance. Countenance is your inner beauty. You and I should dress, women should dress, to call attention to their countenance, not to their physical bodies.

Now that’s what Peter is saying here. There’s an opportunity not only to have a heavenly ordinance, an earthly opportunity, but now a spiritual ornament of how they are dressed.

And men, I think we can take this to our daughters. We need to do something with our daughters, and how we can help them to dress correctly and make sure that they understand what it means to be spiritually ordained internally, versus being dressed externally. So let’s take a look at what he means by a spiritual ornament.

The divinely intended manner of life for wives is to be inward, not outward. It’s an inward beauty, not an outward beauty. The word *adornment* means “ordered universe.” It’s the word *kosmos*. The contrast is the word *chaotic*. The opposite is chaos. The woman who depends upon external decoration and not inward character leads a chaotic life. That’s what Peter is saying. There’s a whole sense of modesty. A woman who counts upon an external decorative style of life and not inward character leads a chaotic life.

Now we need to help our daughters understand this. I don’t know about you guys, but when you go to the mall, notice how girls are dressed, young girls? If you’re looking for some counsel for your daughters, here’s basically what I would say. I’m not going to get into this as a soapbox, but basically three things. Too much, too little, or too tight. They wear too much, calling attention to their external appearance. Too little, calling attention to their external appearance. And too tight, calling attention to their external appearance. It’s too much or too little or too tight.

You see, Peter is saying this. Women need to be dressed in their internal beauty, with a quiet and gentle spirit. Let that be a reflection of their inner countenance, their inner beauty, their inner spirit. That is something that is permanent. It’s not determined by age or by finances. And Peter is talking here about the whole concept of dressing modestly so that their attraction is to their inner being—their inner beauty and not their external physical beauty. Yes, Ted?

Ted: Not only the mall, but in church. (*Groans.*)

Bruce: Thank you, Ted. Yes. (*One man applauds.*) Speak to that for a minute. That’s important, Ted.

Ted: I went to the church, and they were going to let the young adults come up for a mission trip. And as they came up, the pastor’s wife and daughter had a skirt on that was extremely short, and I was seriously distracted.

Bruce: Be honest, guys. That happens to us, even in our churches. We need to help our women understand, and our daughters especially, the whole concept of modesty. That’s what Peter is teaching us here. And part of this willing submission is to be willingly submitted so that you dress modestly, to call attention to your inner beauty, which he will describe in a moment, as opposed to your external ornaments. Yes.

Participant: Okay. At the risk of playing devil’s advocate, (*laughter*), in verse 3, I think the ESV says, “Do not let your adornment be outward.” In the New King James it says, “merely outward.”

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Participant: Mm-hmm.

Participant: Is there a difference?

Bruce: Merely outward?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Versus.

Participant: In verse-- Well, in other words,. I'm sure, you know, that you husbands want your wives to look nice for you, right? You don't want them to look doughy or unattractive, right?

Bruce: Correct. That's a good point. I think the balance here, Don, is this. Physical clothing is to call attention to your inner countenance. In other words, you can dress neatly. You can dress as well as you can. But it is designed to call attention to your inner countenance, to your inner beauty, as opposed to your external physical attributes. I think that's the point of balance. It's the whole concept of what I would call modesty. That's the point of balance here. Certainly they need to dress well if they can, to take care of themselves.

In my judgment, for men also, the first stage of self-respect is respect for appearance, because it's the one thing that you'll have with you wherever you go. That is respect for your physical appearance.

Now that does not mean that I'm going to be a gaudy dresser. It doesn't mean that I have to have a six pack, or be the next model on some GQ magazine. But it does mean this. Whatever I do have, I need to take care of myself so that I'm showing respect for myself and respect for others in taking care of myself the best I can. The first step of self-respect is respect for self-appearance. How do you take care of yourself?

So I think we start with that. We're not saying that they dress doughily, or dress sloppily. We're just saying there's a point of balance, where their external clothing is designed to call attention to their inner beauty.

Now let's see what Peter has to say about that.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: To deal with Don's question, the Greek is *exochen*, which definitely means “from without, or outward.” So it's not merely, so I don't know—

Bruce: The balance point here is modesty. Let that be the resolution of this. The balance point is one of modesty. A woman who depends upon an adornment that proceeds from within her spiritual being leads an ordered life. In other words, the contrast here is between an ordered life and a chaotic life. And the woman who dresses modestly leads an ordered life, versus one who leads a chaotic life who dresses externally, calling attention to herself.

God is more concerned with values than He is with prices. He's more concerned with values, internal values, than with the prices of the clothing that you wear. The principle that adornment should proceed from within has always been God's way of operation.

Notice Psalm 104 verse 2. “He wraps Himself with light as with a garment.” It's an expression of His inner beauty. “He wraps Himself with light as with a garment.” That's a reflection of God's inner beauty. This has always been His concept.

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Matthew chapter 17, verse 2. The light that caused our Lord’s face and garments to shine at the Transfiguration came from His inner being.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It was not His external dress. It was His inner being, His inner countenance, His inner being, the beauty of His inner spirit. That’s what Peter is referring to. That has always been God’s design.

Notice this in creation. Adam and Eve before the Fall were clothed with a radiant glory that was produced because of their inner being. When they sinned, they lost the power to adorn themselves internally. That left them. And upon conversion they had the ability to dress inwardly. That was restored again because you had the concept of understanding what it means to have your inner beauty shine, as opposed to your external glory.

Submission is one of the inward attitudes of dress that a woman is to wear. Being willfully submissive is one of the inward attitudes of dress.

Now understand what I’m not saying. I’m not saying this is blind obedience. That is not what we’re talking about. We’re talking about a willingness on the part of the woman to come under the authority of her husband and to be protected by his power because of the divine ordinance and the relationship between the husband and the wife. It’s all designed to call attention to her inner being.

And brothers, you and I need to create an environment where a woman willingly wants to do that. You’ll notice the next verse 7. After he finishes talking about women, what’s the first word in verse 7?

Participant: Husbands.

Bruce: “Likewise.” It’s not husbands, it’s likewise.

Participant: The New King James says, “husbands.”

Bruce: “Likewise.” It refers back to Christ as our Model and Example. Men, we have the same instruction. We have the same heavenly ordinance as the women do. We have the same earthly opportunity that the women do because of the word *likewise*.

Dress is to be spiritual, not physical. The inward spiritual dress is submission, and the external manifestation, you’ll notice, he says is a quiet and gentle spirit. Those are the same two words used to describe Jesus in Matthew chapter 11 verse 29. He was “meek and lowly.”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Those are the same two words. A quiet and gentle spirit. Meek and lowly.

Now meekness is not weakness. Meekness is living according to the power of God. That’s an inner beauty that you and I have. It means living according to the power of God. I submit myself to my authority, and I trust that act to a God who judges justly, and in that I demonstrate my meekness. I’m living according to the power of God.

Meekness always implies that you have another alternative. The example would be in John 18 when Jesus was being taken captive by the Pharisees and the Roman officials. What did Peter do? Peter is the one who is writing this epistle right now. What did Peter do when that occurred? He drew his sword out and cut the ear off of the high priest’s slave.

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Now, you see, his response was identical in the same situation that Jesus went through. You have a situation there where you have two men responding to the same situation with different responses.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Peter responded out of trepidation, out of fear. Jesus responded out of preparation. Meekness is responding out of preparation.

Prayer is this. What was Jesus doing before His captives?

Participant: Praying.

Bruce: He was praying. What was Peter doing?

Men: Sleeping.

Bruce: Sleeping. Peter responded out of trepidation and fear. He lost control of the situation. In the identical situation Jesus responds out of preparation, which is prayer. Prayer is preparation for the right response for the next event.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That’s what prayer is. It prepares you to make the right response at the next event. That’s what prayer is. As you and I are praying, the situation comes, and we’ve prepared ourselves to have the right inner spirit, and to have the Holy Spirit guiding us in our wisdom, and we make decisions that have prepared us to do the right thing at the right time, which is righteousness. So prayer is preparation to do the right response for the next event. You see that in Christ’s model in His life, and that is meekness.

The same two words that describe a quiet and gentle spirit on the part of the woman are the same two words that Jesus used to describe Himself when He said that He was a Man of meekness and gentleness, and a quiet and lowly spirit. Dress is spiritual; it is not physical. A woman’s clothes must not detract from His beauty. Whose beauty?

Participant: Christ’s.

Bruce: Christ’s beauty. Our Lord’s beauty. Her dress should not detract from His beauty, and will not call attention to herself. That’s the whole idea of dress for men and women. It’s designed to call attention to our countenance, which is our inner beauty.

Any questions on that, men? We have that same responsibility. We need to dress accordingly, so that it calls attention to our inner beauty, which will be a quiet and gentle spirit. Yes?

Participant: When you started this discussion, you related it to our current culture in America.

Bruce: Yes, sir.

Participant: So you take it back. It’s such a rare thing to see this today. It’s very, very-- I don’t recognize it when I see it, because it’s so rare.

Bruce: Now what is so rare, please, sir?

Participant: The way that the Christian church is living.

Bruce: Oh, I see. I see what you mean.

Yes, Ted has a great point. I just have a question. How come every youth Sunday, when we have our young people come up, they always wear tee shirts? Every time my church has a youth Sunday, and they come up, all the kids are sloppily dressed in tee

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shirts and running shorts. Why is that? Are we just trying to identify to make them feel comfortable? What’s wrong with having them dress more properly?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Now some may say, “Well, that’s your opinion.” My opinion really doesn’t count. My point is this. Are we teaching our young people how to dress so that it calls attention to their inner beauty, if they’re in Christ, and not to call attention to themselves? That’s a difficult thing. That’s part of our parenting skills that we need to do. That’s part of our responsibility.

So it doesn’t just relegate it to women. It also requires us men to do the same thing and teach our young men the same thing. We need to teach young men how to dress properly.

Now that doesn’t mean that you need to wear a shirt and tie all the time. All I’m saying is that you do the best you can with what you have. That’s essentially what it means. You do the best you can with what you have. You don’t need to have six packs. That’s not what I’m talking about, or be the next model for GQ. But I am saying to do the best you can with what you have, because it shows respect for yourself, because your physical appearance is the only thing you’re going to have with you wherever you go. It will always be with you.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I think I told you a couple years ago that a young man from one of our Christian colleges came into me about a job interview at PNC. It was in August, so it was a rather hot day. He came into my office, and here is how he was dressed. A graduate of a Christian college here in western Pennsylvania, and he was dressed in flip flops, Bermuda shorts and a tank top. (*Laughter.*)

He came in had handed me his resume and said, “Here’s the job I want.” (*Laughter.*) “I want to start off with four weeks vacation. I want to work between 8-00 and 4-30.” He went on and on with these demands, and he said, “This is the job that I want.” (*Laughter.*)

To control my irritation, I said, “With all due respect, who told you how to approach this interview for a job?” (*Laughter.*)

Do you know what he said? “The college career counseling department.”

Men: (*Groans.*) Oh, my! Oh, my word!

Bruce: At a supposedly Christian college. He was counseled by his career development department to come in because he said, “They taught us to be ourselves.”

Men: (*Gasps.*)

Participant: Wow!

Bruce: “Well,” I said. “I’ll tell you what, my friend. You’re not going to be hired because of yourself.” (*Laughter.*)

He said, “Oh!”

And I said, “May I ask you a question? Do you respect yourself?”

And he stumbled around a little bit, and I said, “You know, the first sign of self-respect is respect for your own appearance, and you flunk.”

And do you know what he said? “That’s an interesting concept.” (*Laughter.*)

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All I’m saying is that you’re absolutely right. We have some responsibility to our children and to our society. And, you know, if the church is going to be like the world, whenever the church loses its distinctiveness from society, the church is no longer Christian. Do you understand that?

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: When the church loses its distinctiveness. Now I’m not saying that you have to wear a tie to church every Sunday. That’s not what I’m saying. But do you understand what I am saying? We do have a responsibility to present a picture that is different than the system of this world. We are not like the system of the world. The church is not designed to be like the system of the world. Don’t you?

Don: Several years ago, whenever I preached at a church, there was a youth pastor there. The youth pastor was conducting the worship, and he was dressed in a clown suit. Now what does that say about the decorum of worship and how we are to approach God?—let alone some of the songs that were sung; I won’t get into that. But wow! You know, what are we teaching our young people when the youth pastor comes dressed in a clown suit for worship?

Bruce: Amen. Now guys, we’re not being fuddy-duddies. That’s not what I’m saying. All I’m saying is that we’re called to be different. We’re not like the world. And the moment we start acting like the world, thinking that it’s going to attract the world, the world is never attracted by error. The world is attracted by truth. And we model the truth. We don’t just teach it; we model it also.

And that’s what Peter is saying about women and men. The word *likewise* is so critical. Christ gives us a model that we’re to follow about willing submissiveness. And likewise, women, and likewise, men, we’re to do that because Christ is our Model on how to do that. We willingly submit to our authority, and take that act of submission, and entrust that to a God who judges justly. And we allow God to work. Yes, sir?

Participant: Christ was in sandals, wasn’t He, Bruce?

Bruce: I wasn’t there, so I don’t know. (*Laughter.*)

Participant: There’s nothing wrong with sandals.

Bruce: The inward dress of submission is an external manifestation of what it is to be a quiet and gentle spirit. Those are the same two words that describe Christ when He talks about being meek and lowly. Her physical adornment will reflect her relationship to Christ.

Now notice what is unfolding here in a woman’s dress. Her meekness and gentleness is brought about by her inner adornment of submission. Her quiet and gentle spirit is brought about by the willing submission that she has because of her relationship to the Lord.

You see, willingness and submission for both of us, men and women, is a reflection of our relationship with whom?

Men: With Christ.

Bruce: With Christ. That’s a reflection of our relationship to Christ. And if you have a tough time being submissive, it means you don’t have a right relationship with God because you don’t understand the concept correctly. Now we’ve done a poor job of

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teaching that in the church, I’ll have to admit. But really, willing submissiveness is a reflection of our relationship to the Person and work of Christ. It is not something that He belittles. It is something that He elevates. It is not an inferior position. It’s an elevated position. Christ never does anything (in an) inferior (way). He does everything and elevates it.

When women today imagine that submission is a loss to themselves they are sadly mistaken. What’s the opposite of a willingly submissive wife? Hardness of spirit. And so when they think that they have lost something by being willingly submissive,--

Now again, men, we’ve got to look at verse 7, which is this. Likewise, men. We need to create an environment where this is easy for them to do, not something where we legislate that they must do. We want to put them in a position to willingly want to do this. That’s part of our responsibility.

Notice who God holds up as a model. That’s Sarah, a woman dressed in the spiritual clothing of submission and trust in her husband, and trust in God. That’s why submission pleases God.

Now I want you to notice the removal. What is removed at the end of verse 6? What is removed on the part of the woman? See the end of verse 6?

Participant: Fear.

Bruce: Fear. You see, what is a woman controlled by oftentimes?

Men: Fear.

Bruce: Notice the Scripture. The thing that is removed in the process of being willingly submissive and following the example of Christ is the one thing that is removed that controls the lives of a lot of women and that is fear. Notice verse 6.

Participant: Bruce, sir?

Bruce: Just one second, please.

Participant: Thank you.

Bruce: Look at verse 5, please. “For this is how the holy women who hoped in God”—notice!—“used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.” Now that just means showing respect. That just means a position of respect. She respected her husband. It doesn’t mean that she bowed down to him and kissed his feet. That’s not what it’s saying. That’s a term that referred to him with respect. She treated him with respect.

“As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.”

In other words, fear is removed when a woman understands the power of being willingly submissive. Fear is removed. Yes? Somebody had their hand up. Yes, sir?

Participant: Bruce, I want to amen that statement, in particular about modesty and shame. I’ve seen too often, in particular with the church, women and men as parents shaming daughters in how they look.

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Participant: And using that as a motivation to try to get them to dress differently.

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

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Participant: Which then creates a hardened spirit later in life, and actually leads to more problems, in particular with sexual immorality and promiscuity because they’re trained and taught by people within the church that their bodies are wrong.

Bruce: Correct.

Participant: That’s something that we need to watch, that we’re not teaching that their bodies are wrong, but their relationship needs to be correct. So I want to amen you on that, and just reinforce that as I’m raising three daughters.

Bruce: Good. As you’re raising three daughters. Very good. Yes, please?

Participant: Sir, I want to go back to your first point, because Sarah ties back into what you were saying, that if a husband is not protecting his wife, she does not need to submit in that scenario. And yet Sarah submitted to Abraham. He and his sons had this bizarre tendency to say, “Don’t kill me! Take my wife!” And she was added to somebody’s harem.

Bruce: Yes, that’s true.

Participant: Sarah submitted to him and he certainly wasn’t protecting her there. Sarah submitted to him, but God protected and blessed them through that.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: So when you start—I mean, if you’re not submitting to someone you disagree with, submission really becomes meaningless. It’s easy to submit to someone you agree with. You’re not really submitting; you’re just agreeing. It’s kind of a slippery slope.

Bruce: Oh, it is, very much.

Participant: You’re not protecting in order to submit.

Bruce: No no, that’s not what I’m saying. My intention in saying that was to give the exception, not the rule. We don’t manage our lives by exceptions. We manage them by the standard, which is to be willingly submissive.

Now I cannot tell a woman who is being beaten by her husband, and being abused physically by her husband, that she needs to stay there and not protect herself. I think what I would counsel her to do is, “Let’s separate and get some counsel. Let’s work with your husband and work with you individually. And you take that act of submitting that to Christ, entrusting that to Him, and He’ll use it.” I’m not opening the door and saying that you don’t have to submit to somebody you don’t agree with. I’m not saying that.

So if I did say that, please forgive me. That was not my intention. My intention was to say that there may be that rare exception when. And then we have a responsibility in the church to intervene in that situation to come on board and protect that woman, to be her husband in that sense for her, not taking away from the responsibility of the church. And so we have a responsibility in the church to be involved in those situations to protect that woman, if that’s the case. So that’s the very, very rare exception, because you’re absolutely right. Sarah did obey in a very, very difficult situation.

Now I cannot tell a woman what she ought to do. That’s something that she has to respond to by the Holy Spirit being in her life. I would just encourage her to go and be prayerful about that, seek wise counsel, and find out what she should do. But I can’t tell

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her what to do, because I’m not her Holy Spirit. That’s a good point. Thank you for bringing that up. Bishop Rodgers, do you want to add anything to that?

Bishop Rodgers: But we really don’t know much about how Sarah behaved in that situation.

Bruce: No, we don’t.

Bishop Rodgers: She may not have had a whole lot of choice in the matter. I don’t know.

Bruce: Yes, there’s just a lot in there. So we have to be careful about examples. But don’t open the door for disobedience. That’s not what I’m doing. I’m not opening the door for disobedience. I’m saying, when you see a situation like that, maybe we need to get involved and be helpful, to protect the woman if she’s in an abusive situation. That’s a very rare thing. Yes, please?

Participant: And so often, you hear the terms referring to wives submitting to husbands, and they focus on the submittal. But they don’t focus on through the rest of the chapter, where husbands are to regard them as equal partners!

Bruce: There you go.

Participant: A wife is not given to a man for his convenience. But she’s a weaker partner. That puts a whole different emphasis.

Bruce: A joint heir in the grace of life. Remember, there is equality between men and women.

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Equality between men and women. That is never the issue. The issue is never equality. It’s alignment of position.

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: It’s not about their person. They are equal heirs of the grace of life. We need to understand that.

Now that’s why it’s so important that you understand that right after he talks about “likewise, women,” what does he say? “Likewise, men.” So let’s talk about “likewise, men” for a moment, as we summarize and wrap this up.

Go to verse 7 of chapter 3. “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.” Now what does that mean? It means that we need to understand and live according to the knowledge of your wife. You need to know your wife’s strengths and weaknesses. You need to understand her irritation points. You need to understand her gracious points. You need to understand those things. You live with her at a point of knowledge so that you can create an environment where she will want to be what?

Men: Willingly submissive.

Bruce: willingly submissive. It’s our responsibility to create that environment by living with her in an understanding way by living according to knowledge.

Also, notice what he says. “Showing honor to the wives, as to the weaker vessel.” Now that does not mean positionally or spiritually or intellectually or emotionally. It means physically. We need to understand that they are weaker vessels physically, and we need to honor that and remember that. We need to live with them according to

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knowledge, and we show honor and respect to them. When we do that, it’s going to be much more likely that a woman will want to be what?

Men: Submissive.

Bruce: Willingly submissive. (*Unclear.*) We have a responsibility, men. So don’t just go point the finger and say, “you must.” We want to create an environment that says, “You now can,” so they will want to do that. So it’s a both/and situation.

I came across some literature recently in some of my historical studies. I read about a Roman writer by the name of Labanus, known for his selfish indulgences. He is known to have said, “What wives these Christian men have!” Now that came from a Roman who observed the conduct of godly wives and said, “What wives these men have! It’s unlike the Roman wives that we have.”

A missionary in China heard newly converted Chinese women say, “Until we became followers of Christ, we never knew that we were women.”

Participant: Interesting.

Bruce: Until we became followers of Christ, we never knew that we were women.” They were just objects, just like animals.

You see, that’s what the Scripture does. It elevates the position of womanhood. It’s not demeaning. It elevates it. In the enfolding of a woman’s character, in the balancing of her spirit to make her a true person of beauty, the Scripture is the only guide.

Peter tells us that a godly woman will always be subordinate to the outward, and more to the inward. A little holy submission is better than a great deal of beauty and riches. Beauty fades with sickness. Wealth has many ways to take it away. But gracious submission lasts forever. It commends before God angels. And a godly man is pleasing to the Father.

Men, this whole section here is dealing with submission on the part of the wife. And Jesus gave us an example. And you’ll see that example in chapter 2, where He gave us an example which we’re to follow. The key word, in my understanding, in this passage is *likewise*. That’s my model. The model is what Christ did for me. That’s the model that I have as a man. That’s the model that we want our women to understand.

It’s the same model. I’m not creating a model for my wife, and you’re not creating a model for your wife. Christ has given us a model that we are to follow. And we need to help her to understand how to do that, just as we need to understand how to do it ourselves. The whole act is willing submission, not blind obedience. Any questions on this? Yes, sir?

Participant: I was just wondering about your thoughts. I felt it was my responsibility, in protecting my wife, to protect her from our kids.

Bruce: Oh, absolutely. (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Somebody has to do the heavy lifting with the discipline of the kids. And I think that since the wife is there mostly full time, we are inclined to let the discipline fall entirely into their hands, and I think that’s a mistake.

Bruce: Absolutely, Bishop Rodgers, absolutely. I have a situation right now where I’m trying to help a young couple, friends of mine. Basically, his attitude is this. “She’ll raise the children. She’ll be the disciplinarian. I’ll be the fun guy.” (*Laughter.*)

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Participant: Plural of fungus?

Bruce: Yes. “When I come home, I’ll play with her. I’ll play with my daughter. I’ll be the fun guy. But you be the disciplinarian.” Now what type of an environment is that? That’s destroying the family.

Participant: Yes, it is.

Bruce: Now we talk a lot about child abuse, and rightfully so. But Bishop Rodgers brings up a great point, in my mind. I think that somebody needs to start a parental abuse ministry, because we let kids parentally abuse our parents. We let kids abuse the parents. How many times have you seen parents go to a slow death because of the disrespect and disobedience of their children? When is somebody going to stand up and say, “Let’s create a ministry of parental abuse? Don’t let kids abuse their parents.”

And one of the ways in which we do that is that we men have relegated and terminated our role as the one doing the heavy lifting and the disciplinary work, and we’ve turned that over to our wives. That is not showing honor and understanding to our wives.

And remember this. Willing submission is a reflection of our individual personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His mercy. If I’m not willingly submissive it’s because I have a problem with my Father, with my Lord. It’s a direct correlation to the relationship I have with Christ in my willingness to be submissive as a man and as a woman.

We’ll pick this up next week. I’ll tell you what we’re going to do next week. Let’s do something special for Good Friday. Here’s a question for you. I’ll prepare a little message for us on this. What if Christ didn’t rise?

Participant: Oh, boy!

Bruce: What if? But He did.

Participant: Yes. Amen!

Bruce: We’ll talk about that next Friday. We’ll talk about that. What if? But He did. Let’s talk about that.

Let’s pray. Father, we thank You for the clarity of Your word. We pray, Lord, that if we have said things that are inconsistent with the revelation of Your holy Scripture, that You would remove that from us. Help us to understand the balance. Help us with our unbelief. Father, we don’t have all knowledge. We depend upon You for that. We trust the ministry of the Holy Spirit to be the means to guide us into all truth. So Father, if we have said things that are untruthful and not consistent with Your character, Your attributes or Your glory, would You remove those from us, and only let us remember those things that have been taught to us by the Holy Spirit. And may it be so for Your glory, but also for our protection, for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!” (*Applause.*)