

Good morning! For those of you that don't know me, my name is Matt and I am the director of youth and outreach here at Eagle Ridge, and I am excited to be sharing God's Word with you today. Well... kinda.. lol... this is a tough section, and certainly gets a lot of the wrong kind of attention... but I think we'll do okay today.

We are in a series right now called, "How, then, shall we live?" And we've been at this for a few weeks, but for today, in particular, it is incredibly important that we understand the context of this letter.

Context, is of course, the who/what/why? But more than that, it is the when, and the culture and situation that existed during this when.

Peter is writing to the persecuted church – the "resident aliens" of a land (specifically people in Turkey). The ambassadors sent by God... He is instructing them how to not only live in this culture, not only to survive in this culture, but to be an agent of God in this culture that might be used by God to grow the family of God.

In our first week of this series Pastor Bill discussed that we are called to be Holy (1 Peter 1:14). As obedient children, ⁱdo not be conformed to the passions ^lof your former ignorance,

(Not on slide) 15 but ^kas he who called you is holy, you also be holy ^lin all your conduct, 16 since it is written, ^m"You shall be holy, for I am holy."

In our second week of this series Pastor Bill discussed that we are "living stones" – we are a royal priesthood, a chosen people for the task that God has planned for us. (1 Peter 2:9). But you are ^za chosen race, ^aa royal ^bpriesthood, ^ca holy nation, ^da people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you ^eout of darkness into ^fhis marvelous light.

And last week Pastor Bill began a discussion that I will continue today on what Peter describes as our "duties" or responsibilities as alien ambassadors in this world. We have a job to do! But... and most of us know what the job is... to make disciples, be God's ambassador, shine his light... but not all of us know how to do it. (Or do it the way God wants us to, with a loving heart).

Cultivate Example of hitting someone over the head with a Bible – and then NOT.

So, last week Bill discussed 2 ideas. Government and Slavery – kind of... Peter instructed the people living as aliens in a foreign culture to Obey the government - Was this because it was Good? Or Right? No... but it is right to obey it – as long as it doesn't go against God's directions for us. Why? Because it will help us to continue to exist in this land as ambassadors so that we can minister to the people that need it the most and witness to them. And I need you to hear this – The government that Peter is directing people to be obedient to is NOT the way God designed things in Eden – it is not the way he wants the world to be... but it IS the way it is now... and while it is THAT way... we need to be obedient to it for a bigger mission – the mission of God.

Then, Peter instructed slaves or servants to obey their masters. Was this because slavery is Good? Or Right? No... but it is right for a someone who in under authority to live under that authority so that they can serve God in that position and be a witness to others – so God can use them. And again, hear this... The masters that Peter is directing people to be obedient to is NOT the way God designed things in Eden – it is not the way he wants the world to be... but it IS the way it is now... and while it is THAT way... we need to be obedient to it for a bigger mission – the mission of God.

Today, Peter is going to talk to women first and then men. Many people think these are verses about how a godly marriage looks... and while they aren't wrong – they aren't right either. These ARE directions, guidance and instructions for how husbands and wives should live in THIS culture so that they can be witnesses to the lost and serve God. But is this framework Good? Is it Right? Not necessarily. Because again, this type of marriage and relationship that Peter is directing people to be obedient to is NOT the way God designed things in Eden – it is not the way he wants the world to be... but it IS the way it is now... and while it is THAT way... we need to be obedient to it for a bigger mission – the mission of God.

Let's start by reading just verses 1-6 as Peter speaks to the women in this culture.

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, ² when they see your respectful and pure conduct. ³ Do not let your

adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— ⁴ 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. ⁵ For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Now, something I want to point out right away is who Peter is talking to. Women! This is a big deal. Peter is identifying that women are leaders, women have power and choice, and women have a responsibility. But more than just women... he is speaking to a specific group of women... Women with unbelieving husbands.

Now, between the two, which is more important – marriage or faith? If you said faith, I like where your head is at, you've got God at #1! – but... you're also kinda wrong. Because to God, the answer is: both! God wants both! He does not want you to sacrifice your marriage for your faith.. he wants your faith to spread into your marriage to Glorify God. To bring your husband to God – to join the family. So, with that in mind.. let's break down some of the guidance that Peter offers.

Now, as we go through these verses, we are going to be taking a lot of notes. So, have your journals out. I'm going to be stopping a lot and suggesting ways you can "mark up" the text. If you would like to do this my way – great – if you have your own way – that's great too. But many people in the room have never taken notes in a Bible before, and I want to help you learn how you can do this.

V1 – **Likewise** (Just like we are all subject to our government and to our masters/bosses), **wives, be subject** (same word that was used before) **to your own husbands** (notice the words "your own" – this is not saying women should be subject to all men – just the husbands that they have entered into the marriage contract with willingly), **so that even if some do not obey the word** (so that if your husbands are not followers of Jesus), **they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives**, (Without a word! Powerful! And counter cultural.)

V2 – **when they see your respectful and pure conduct** (instructions for how we should live in this situation – respectful and pure conduct).

V3 – Do not let your adorning be external – the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear – (Peter is giving examples of how in THEIR culture women emphasized their sexuality or beauty – these are not rules to follow.. The point is that true beauty is not on the outside... Story of Youth Group)

V4 – 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. (True beauty is on the inside – it’s about character, not outward appearances).

V5 – For this is how the holy women who hoped in God adorned themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, (which women? Peter is referencing holy women who hoped in God. In other words if you want an example of how a godly woman behaves, take a look at Ruth, Naomi, Esther, Deborah, Mary, and the other women in the Bible that were praised for their godly character)

V6 – as Sarah obeyed Abraham (one of those godly women), **calling him lord** (this “lord” means something more akin to “sir” – a sign of respect). **And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.** (It is so interesting that Peter references Sarah here... because if you know the story of Sarah and Abraham in Genesis 17-18 what Peter is communicating here becomes clear.)

Let’s look at part of that passage briefly for some context. God/Yahweh and some angels came and visited Abraham, they sat down to eat together and had the following conversation:

They said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “She is in the tent.” ¹⁰ The LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?” ¹³ The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard^[d] for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” ¹⁵ But Sarah denied it,^[e] saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

So, check this out, Sarah was NOT some seen and not heard wife – she actually laughed at something God said would happen! But, if you read the rest of the story, especially the parts that are before this section, you will learn that Sarah and Abraham worked together and she not only followed Abraham’s lead on several occasions, but offered him ideas and advice in others. Now, here, caught in the act of laughing at God, she becomes afraid – afraid of the one thing we should fear – God. While he is telling her she will have a son.

And now, let’s look again at the end of verse 6... **“And you are her children (the DIRECT result of that promise she laughed at), if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening (the ONLY thing we have to fear is GOD – and he tells us not to fear him).**

And then we get to verse 7..

Likewise, husbands, (The SAME EXACT likewise that was used for women – because he is talking to them about the same concept – living as a representative of God in an alien culture) live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, (we’ll come back to that in a minute) since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

So, here, Peter isn’t talking to husbands with unbelieving wives – because in that time period if the husband held a certain faith or view of God, the whole family followed. Which, of course, makes it even more amazing that there were women out there that stepped OUT of that cultural norm and chose to follow Jesus despite what their husbands believed – If you haven’t figured this out yet – this was a big deal and something that was really REALLY hard to navigate.

So, anyway, he’s talking to husbands and telling them to be people who reflect Christ’s character toward their wives. They need to exercise patience/understanding (basically don’t let your male dominant ego get the best of you!) and honor their wives.

Now, it says to honor them as the weaker vessel.. and that could be a reference to a physical strength and build... BUT... let’s be honest... if anyone here has seen their wives give birth.. you know that they have a strength and power unlike any man. One interpretation that I discovered that I liked, and I will share with you, is

that the term “weaker vessel” that Peter uses is perhaps more likely a reference to the “fine china” that people have in their homes. You have the normal dishes that you use on a regular basis, and they get tarnished and chipped, and worn... but the fine china you save for when you have guests. It is special, and beautiful, and to be treated with care – not because it is more delicate (necessarily) but because it is more precious.

Regardless, this concept of “weaker vessel” is not about having a weaker faith or putting women in a lower category than men. Peter makes it clear here that men and women are equal. We are co-heirs of the grace of life. Each created to be image bearers of God and each equally a temple of the Holy Spirit – the greatest honor and duty possible. But then he ends with a warning – specifically to men – because of their inherent duty to honor their wives – and he says **“so that your prayers may not be hindered.”** In other words... You have been given a responsibility so great – to care intimately for another image bearer, a holy temple of God, that God loves so much – that if you falter at this task, your very communication with God can be affected. That is intense... and a warning we need to take to heart.

That’s a LOT for 7 little verses – but these 7 little verse get taken out of context a LOT and used by (predominantly) men to subjugate women. That isn’t what this is about. Peter is speaking to alien ambassadors, citizens of a heavenly kingdom that are NOT AT HOME. They are in a world that is not theirs and they do not belong there – BUT... they are there for now, for a mission. And while on this mission in this place – their job is NOT to fight the culture, but to instead introduce people to Jesus through their word, action, and most important, love. Jesus will change the culture, Jesus will change the world – that isn’t our job.

And Jesus has, over time, changed the world that we live in. Well, some of it. The United States has much different cultural norms than the Turkish people had when Peter wrote this. So, the way that we operate in our culture is different than the way they operated in their culture – BUT – it is still our responsibility to operate INSIDE that culture in favor of the greater mission at hand. This doesn’t mean we behave like the world around us, or adopt their values, but it does mean that we allow Jesus to change things from the inside.

Which brings us to our **Step of Obedience**

Over the last few weeks, Pastor Bill has been leading us in a prayer that focuses on this idea of living in a world that is not our home. I encourage you to take this prayer home and pray it often. Remind yourself of where you live and who you are. Let's read it together:

Father, sometimes following you in this culture makes me feel like a resident alien, somehow not belonging, out of step in this life. Remind me of my true identity as someone chosen by God. Help me to focus my mind on these facts:

- I have hope that no matter what struggles this world brings, you are with me through them and ultimately you will provide a place for me in an eternity without pain, suffering, and struggle.
- Your holiness is what you want for me. You have set me apart to be transformed into your image. I was made new when you saved me and I am being made new through your spirit.
- Remind me to fear you. That means that I am reminded that you are the judge who cannot allow sin. This type of "fear" is not dread, but amazement that you sent Jesus, allowing you to be both just and merciful.
- Convict me if I've marginalized my brothers and sisters and Christ and have not loved them in a way that demonstrates the crucial part they are intended to play in my life. Use my love for them as a witness to this world of your goodness.

As I keep my eyes on Jesus I will be able to make His Kingdom present for those around me. Amen