

1 Peter

Entrusting  
Ourselves  
to a  
Faithful  
Sovereign



# 1 Peter 3:1-7

## Pursuing Marriage as an Apology

### Pursuing Marriage as an Apology

Have you ever heard the word “contronym?” A contronym is a word that has two meanings that are opposite of one another. Some examples of contronyms are bolt, which could mean to fasten securely in place or to run away quickly, oversight, which could mean a careless error or careful watching over someone or something, and strike, which could mean to swing and hit something or to swing and miss a pitch in baseball. So, from your experience, when you heard me say to pursue marriage as an apology, you may have thought I was talking about saying sorry for a mistake you made or something you did wrong. A Christian marriage will certainly involve that form of apology. If you’re married, then you’re a sinner who married a sinner. Repentance and apologizing is part of how you continually renew your relationship with one another. But that is not the type of apology this passage is about today. Peter calls us to pursue marriage as an apology in the sense of affirming and defending a claim, particularly the claim that Jesus Christ is Lord. So, let’s look at our passage and then consider what it is communicating to us.

**3:1 In the same way, wives,  
submit yourselves to your own  
husbands so that, even if some  
disobey the word, they may be  
won over without a word by the  
way their wives live**

**2 when they observe your pure,  
reverent lives. 3 Don't let your  
beauty consist of outward  
things like elaborate hairstyles  
and wearing gold jewelry or fine  
clothes,**

**4 but rather what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.**

**5 For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands,**

**6 just as Sarah obeyed  
Abraham, calling him lord. You  
have become her children when  
you do what is good and do not  
fear any intimidation.**

**7 Husbands, in the same way,  
live with your wives in an  
understanding way, as with a  
weaker partner,**



**showing them honor as coheirs  
of the grace of life, so that your  
prayers will not be hindered.**

**To the whole church, including  
our singles and children:**

**The manner in which our  
married participants pursue  
marriage will affect our church's  
health and its witness.**

To the Whole Church, including our Singles and Children:

+The manner in which our married participants pursue marriage will affect our church's health and witness.

One of the questions the apostles had to answer about Christianity was whether new life in Christ dissolved the institution of marriage. Paul addresses this inquiry more fully in 1Cor. 7. Peter appears to address it in regard to new Christians with unconverted spouses but with implication for marriages between two Christians.

No, your faith does not nullify marriage between husband and wife, even if one is not a believer. Rather, your faith should lead you to persist in it and to pursue the relationship with greater purpose as a testimony of faith in Christ. Church, we have the responsibility to support those in marriages to live for Christ through how they pursue their marriage.

That statement should not shock you. If you have been to a Christian marriage, then you have acted as a witness to a union between one man and one woman for life. Those are part of the vows the couple makes to each other. If marriage were simply emotions of love or always easy then such vows would be unnecessary. We live within a fallen world, so marriage is not easy and the covenant keeps us persevering when we don't feel the warm, cuddly emotions. When we investigate what Peter has to say, we see that he is not writing a full treatise on marriage. He is writing to Christians in the context of suffering. The immediate context is showing proper honor and respect to everyone in light of Christ being your Lord, even if showing honor includes an aspect of suffering on your part. So is it shocking to you that Peter includes marriage in writing about honor amidst suffering? Look, Christians are not free from suffering in marriage. In the very least those in marriage suffer in the sense of having to die to themselves in order to live for Christ. And they have a constant mirror in their spouse reminding them of whether they are doing so or not. And the church suffers along with the married couple in some ways.

Dennis Swanberg, a Christian preacher and comedian, told this funny but true story about a music minister named Bengy Harlan and his wife. I know and worked with one of Bengy's best friends, who confirmed this story. Bengy and his wife had been having an argument just before going to a formal gathering with other church

members. She put on her dress and said, "Can you help me with my zipper, can you at least do that right?" He decided to mess with her and went up and down with that zipper---zip zip zip. He accidentally broke the zipper. They had to leave in 15 minutes, and she didn't have another formal dress. She has to put on a shawl in the midst the hot Louisiana summer and is embarrassed by it the whole night. They go home and go to bed. The next morning, Bengy wakes up and makes coffee to relax before starting any Saturday chores. His wife then walks out ready to go shopping, letting him know that she was going to buy two formals and did not care how much they cost. After she finds and buys the dresses, she comes home and sees Bengy's legs sticking out under the car. He was changing the oil. So she walked up to the car, put the bags down, and went zip zip zip to his blue jeans. She heard a thud as she picked her bags up and proudly walked inside, where Bengy was sitting, watching TV. The next door neighbor, Bubba, had offered to change Bengy's oil for him. The Harlans' suffering in marriage didn't just affect them but affected Bubba's head, too.

Paul also writes about suffering within marriage, even when both the man and the woman are Christians.

25 Now regarding your question about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord for them. But the Lord in his mercy has given me wisdom that can be trusted, and I will share it with you. 26 Because of the present crisis, I think it is best to remain as you are. 27 If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not seek to get married. 28 But if you do get married, it is not a sin. And if a young woman gets married, it is not a sin. However, those who get married at this time will have troubles, and I am trying to spare you those problems.

29 But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. . . .

32 I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. 33 But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. 34 His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. 35 I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

If you know the context of 1 Cor. 7, you know that Paul commends marriage for many within the church as long as it is to a fellow Christian, but he makes very clear that marriage doesn't fix all your problems. Marriage may provide the appropriate relationship for intimacy and growing a family, but it carries with it various responsibilities that require heavy investment on behalf of both husband and wife.

When Peter addresses both wives and husbands in this section, he is putting the church on alert about the importance of Christian character within this union for the sake of our witness. So, if you feel that you can tune out because you are single or widowed, please do not. Please see this sermon as a reminder of how others in the church need you to pray for them, to support them in their marriages and in raising children, and to be friends. To those who are married, pray also for your single friends in the church, as they may long for what you have in marriage, support them in their focused mission for Christ, and be their friend. They are comforted in their intimate relationship with Christ, but they still long for human companionship, which is met through friendship, especially with brothers and sisters in Christ. So marrieds and singles should matter to the whole church.

Now let's see how our passage addresses married Christian women.

**To married Christian women:  
Pursue your marriage as an act  
of obedient submission to  
Christ Jesus.**

To Married Christian Women:

+Pursue your Marriage in Obedient Submission to Christ Jesus.

Remember last week how we had to set the context for understanding Peter's instruction? We again need to view some context. Just as I said last week, so again this week, those being written to for the sake of moral exhortation are being elevated to a higher status than recognized by society. Neither Roman slaves nor Roman wives were treated as worthy of being exhorted to moral expectation within that society. So when Peter writes for wives to submit to their husbands, please do not start with a judgmental perspective against Scripture. Rather, seek to understand it in its context. Peter is elevating the status of wives by addressing them directly. Also, if you understand the text in its context, you'll see that Peter is again calling for the church to shock the status quo of Roman society. Last week, we looked at how Christ sets the Roman slave free inwardly. So what happened when a Roman slave came to faith in Christ under a malicious Roman master? The roles were flipped in regard to the identity of the victim. For the Christian slave, he knew he was freed from sin by the wounds of Christ, but his lost master was still a victim under sin's control. The Christian slave did not suffer with a victim's mentality but with a victor's humble confidence, allowing him or her to serve with genuine love. Such a change would be a shock to the expectations of a Roman household. In a similar way, Peter calls the church to shock Roman households through how and why they pursue the marriage relationship. In Roman society, the wife was expected to have her identity dictated to her by her husband's decisions. His religion was to be her religion. His beliefs were to be her beliefs. But now Gentile wives were coming to faith in Christ, even though their husbands remained pagans.

Now, instead of taking their cues from their husbands for beliefs and life orientation, these ladies are listening to Christ and one of his authorized apostles. They are not to turn their back on Christ for the sake of their husband. A Roman husband may have viewed such a change as an insult, but he would be shocked in a greater way to find that his now free Christian wife loved him better because of faith in Jesus. In reverent submission to Christ, Christian wives, show respect to their husbands as the man God has for you, even if your husband is an unbeliever.

**To married Christian women:**

**Pursue your marriage to point  
your husband to Christ.**

+Pursue your Marriage to Point your Husband to Christ

Point your husband to Christ, regardless if he is a Christian or an unbeliever.

The Christian needs the gospel just as much as the non-believer needs the gospel. Peter gives a concession, “. . . even if they disobey the word.” So Pete’s instruction applies regardless if your husband is a believer or not. You are a woman that has been set free by Christ. You are not constrained by the world’s expectations but constrained by reverent fear and loving adoration of God. Live in that freedom. And if you are living in that freedom, then you cannot approach your marriage as an annoyance. Your husband is not an appendix. Sometimes ladies may view their husbands as an appendix, as something that you know you are supposed to have but you feel it does no good for you. And you are wondering if its going to give out at some point.

Such an attitude is not representative of a life set free by the Spirit. Rather, if you see Christ Jesus as the One to whom you are ultimately betrothed, just like the rest of the church, then you will gladly submit to Christ, even as he calls you to love your husband and gladly respect him. By doing so, you compel him to question what change has occurred in you. By treating him with respect even when he doe not deserve it, you humble him. Both the OT and NT testify to the humbling effect of undeserved love: Solomon records, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." That’s written regarding enemies. How much more receptive should this conviction be to one who has vowed to love you with his whole being and share all that he has with you. Your most effective witness in this regard will be your life that he gets to witness up close. Yes, you will need to use words to share with him about your faith in Christ. Yes, you will need to live for Jesus with passion. But even more effective than your passion or words will be your character. Your husband may even test you on all three, but the one that will carry the greatest weight with him in your consistency in character. If you will depend on Christ daily for life, love, and strength, then God will use you to impress upon your husband the truth of the gospel in your actions. It may take years or even a lifetime together, but God will use your faithfulness to impress the trustworthiness of Christ upon your husband.

**To married Christian women:**

**Pursue your marriage as  
beautiful Christian worship.**

+Pursue your Marriage as Beautiful Christian Worship

Let's clarify something Peter says. When he writes about jewelry, hair styles, and clothing, he is not saying that you are forbidden from dressing up or looking nice. You could stitch your clothes from curtains, throw out all your earrings, and stop washing your hair yet completely miss what Peter is telling us. Let your true beauty consist of what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

Look, Peter isn't saying to become a sacred scarecrow. He is calling you to beautiful womanhood, which is itself worship toward God. He is calling you to be the kind of woman that people admire, one of strength and resilience, one of faith and compassion.

Through v. 3, Peter is acknowledging that men tend to be visually oriented. In order to try to gain their husband's attention, affection, or support, some wives may focus on their outward appearance. Peter is writing against the thought that says, "If I can just make myself more physically attractive to my husband, then it will fix our marriage." There is nothing wrong with dressing up, and there is nothing wrong about your husband being physically or emotionally attracted to you. But there is something wrong with finding your worth in other people's approval of you over God's thoughts of you. Your first love is God, and dwelling on His love for you will grow you in confidence and fulfillment. In the best case scenario for marriage, you have a husband who loves you with affectionate and supportive love as an expression of God's love. But your mere human husband will fail in some way, so you need to orient your worship and love toward God. In so doing, you will then be filled with love by God to love your husband, which is beautiful.

**To married Christian women:  
Pursue your marriage with  
encouragement from those who  
have done so before you.**

+Pursue your Marriage with Encouragement from those Before You

Peter appeals to Genesis 18:12 to show you how Sara referred to Abraham before God. You can go read Genesis 18 later. It is the passage where God manifests himself in human likeness with two angels to visit Abraham and Sarah, promising to provide Abraham with a son through Sarah within the next year. Do you know the story of how Sarah responds initially? She laughs. She laughed because she had already passed through menopause and Abraham wasn't getting any younger either.

When confronted by God about how she viewed herself and her husband in light of his promise, she changed her tune. She referred to him in terms of respect for him as the leader of their home. Look, Abraham was not the perfect husband. When they were younger, he had her lie and put herself in a vulnerable situation with another man to protect his own skin. Also previously, after finding out that God wanted to raise up nations through her and Abram, Sarah lost faith in God's ability to use her in that way. So, she told Abram to sleep with her servant, an act that she despised him for later, even though she suggested it.

But Peter doesn't list all that about her. He reports about how she showed Abraham respect. For Sarah to submit to God's will at that point in her life was an act of faith and an act of submissive respect to her husband.

Look, being married to an imperfect man is not easy, but it is a burden many of you bear with dignity. And God will use it to further His reach through you and your husband.

A book has been written about the marriage of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards. Jonathan Edwards was a well-known preacher and theologian of the 18th century and was highly influential in bringing about the Great Awakening. The book about their marriage is titled, Marriage to a Difficult Man. One of the points of the book is that Sarah had just as much or more influence on Jonathan Edwards as any theologian he read. She actually introduced him to some of their writings. But her constant and maturing love for him helped him, a difficult man to be married to, helped him see beauty in this world. Beauty was one of the mainstays within Edwards's theology that pointed

him and others through him to God.

You have the faithful women of Scripture as your example and those in line with their examples since then. It takes bold faith to live with a man who disappoints you, but it takes bolder faith to love him and be used by God for his good. Be such a woman who can be an inspiration to younger women and wives.

Regarding the last line to wives, Peter is not saying that physical abuse is okay. It appears that some pagan husbands were threatening to abandon their wives or threatening them in other ways, hoping the mere intimidation would scare their wives back into a mentality dependent entirely on them and their false gods. Let your faith in Christ bolster you to walk the line of boldness and respect. If the church needs to help because the husband has taken his attempts at intimidation too far, please let us know. You are not alone in your journey and there are members of our church who can relate to your situation.



**To married Christian men:  
Pursue your marriage as an  
informed participant.**

To Married Christian Men:

+Pursue Your Marriage with Understanding

Most men do not naturally gravitate to studying relationships and marriage. I once heard a pretty wise and accurate statement about how much men and women think about their marriage relationships. The statement is, “Women think more about their men than their men think.” [pause] I think that’s true. Men, if you are going to show the world that your faith in Christ matters, then you should start at home in learning how to care for your wife as an individual made in the image of God and deserving of your love and affection. And you can only serve her in this way well if you know her. Christian men, have you taken the time to learn how to live considerately with a woman in general? How to be polite and respectful to her, how to give of your strength for her and not take hers away? how to clean up after your messes while also being willing to wallow in the mud with her?

I had a pastor who told me how he learned to wallow in the mud with his wife. Frank’s wife, Lori, wanted him just to sympathize with her in her difficulties, to listen to her without judging her or trying to fix her. When he heard her ask him to wallow in the mud with her, using that exact phrase, he misunderstood it as her asking him to grumble and complain. She just wanted him to listen to her and show that he is with her in her difficulties. He said he would not wallow in the mud. That same week he was traveling to work when he turned on the radio to hear a preacher say, “Husbands, sometimes you just need to wallow in the mud with your wives.” He was convicted by the Spirit regarding this teaching we’re looking at right now. Christian husbands, dwell with your wife in an understanding way of her as a woman. There are some books by Christian women on what they need from their husbands to love them and care for them. You can ask a more mature couple who have learned to love each other well.

But you also must dwell with her in an understanding way as an individual. And there is only one person who can give you those answers. How much do you know about your wife? about her personality? about her interests? about her pet peeves? about her limitations? about her strengths? about her dreams? about her struggles? about her needs?

Maybe you need to start writing down your findings about this strange but beautiful creature in your household. Maybe you just need to put down your phone, video game controller, or remote and pay attention to what takes up her time and attention and get involved. You'll be amazed at how much you learn about her.

**To married Christian men:  
Pursue your marriage with  
gentleness.**

Pursue Your Marriage with Gentleness

Peter writes that you should dwell with this feminine marriage partner of yours as the weaker vessel. Men and women are alike in many ways but are also different. They are shaped different physically, with their bodies designed by God to pursue and endure different tasks. This is not to say that women can't play sports, and it is not to say that men can't enjoy aesthetics. They are shaped differently emotionally and relationally. Men and women have many characteristics, but there are distinctions between the two sexes, and Peter is expecting you respect those distinctions as a blessing from God.

Husbands, let me ask you a question. What do you have as the central display on your dining room table? Is it a bowling ball? No, for many it may be a vase of some sort.

What do you have hanging on your living room wall? Is it your trusty or rusty 7-iron? No, I'm sure it is something more delicate and fragile, maybe a frame with a family picture, a family heirloom, or ceramic artwork. Which would you handle more carefully, your golf club or your irreplaceable family heirloom? Your wife is not being compared to a tool that you keep in your shed. She is being compared to the delicate artwork crafted by the master of the universe. He made her precisely as he did in order to help awaken you to beauty and to share joy with you.

If you have children, have they ever asked you to take them to ride a horse? Would you place them on a horse that bucks wildly, snorts loudly, and seems uncontrollable, or would you rather place them on a horse that is gentle with them? For a horse to be gentle, it must have strength, strength that it harnesses for the care of others, so that they feel welcome and safe with that horse. But one who is gentle is also able to protect those under his care. You as a father would make sure that your child was saddled with a gentle horse because you care about your child, and you want your child to know you are trustworthy.

Your wife surely asked God for a husband at some point if she married you. Your treatment of her speaks to her of your heavenly Father's care for her. Are you

representing His care accurately? Has he provided her with a gentle husband who harnesses his strength so that she feels comfortable and welcome in your presence, that your embrace feels like home to her?

It should.

**To married Christian men:**

**Pursue your marriage as an expression of God's grace to your equal coheir.**

Pursue Pursue Your Marriage as an Expression of God's Grace to Your Equal Coheir

God makes clear that your wife is your equal recipient of His grace. Your genders may be distinct and complementary, but you are of the same essential worth before God. Remember how we said that Peter's address to women was going to be a shock to Roman society for the gospel? Peter's instruction to you men is going to be a shock to the world today if you follow through on it. It takes a bold and courageous man today to uphold both our equality with our wives and our gender distinctions. C.S. Lewis pointed out that the fall has made marriage a funny thing. Husbands and wives are equal. They should seek to always act in unity, but one of them must lead if they are to persist together. If they disagree and each insist on being right without one leading, then they find themselves at an impasse. And if pride of independence is the basis for decisions, then they have no way to resolve their differing views.

But what if the husband attempts to claim that he has been given the responsibility of leadership and she is to follow? Wives may fight against the leadership that their husband seeks to express.

So what if he resigns his role as leader over to her? Then she may resent him for being weak and unmanly.

Then what are we to do? We can't say and should not say, "Follow me, I'm the leader," nor can we forfeit our responsibility. We clearly can't choose the option of pulling all the power to ourselves, nor can we choose the option of pushing all the power over to her.

How about instead of stalling about power plays, you instead begin serving as a leader should. Your job as spiritual leader is not to take away her voice. Your job as spiritual leader is not to make decisions for her. You cannot make her respect you as head of household.

But you can make it easy on her to follow you by walking with you. If her heart belongs to Christ and is set on following Him, then husband follow Jesus in such a way that your wife wants to keep up. Follow Christ in such a way that she desires to hold your hand as you lead her and your children toward God. Seek God so intently that your life with them becomes more consistently an expression of God's grace to them.

**To married Christian men:**

**Pursue your marriage as a trust  
from God.**

Pursue Your Marriage as a Trust from God

Husbands, you have been entrusted with one of God's greatest gifts. You may not feel like it after a long day or a trying week. But Scripture describes a good wife as a beautiful jewel that you should want to display with joy. You have a major role in fostering her beauty. You also can damage it. Some of you husbands are familiar with business terms. So let me speak in that way.

You are a trustee with fiduciary responsibility toward your wife in caring for her, and if you fail in this trust by harming her physically or abusing her emotionally or abandoning her spiritually, then God has harsh words of judgment for you. All the good benefits that you have experienced in this life through having the privilege of prayer will be cut off as long as you fail in your responsibility as a trustee of this treasure known as your wife. Are we clear?

If your marriage has devolved to the point of abuse by either spouse, please seek help. Please speak to one of our caring well representatives, or an elder, or a community group leader. We can also help connect you with a Christian professional counselor if need be.

The fame of Christ should be enough to call each of us to care for the marriages of this church, but sometimes we can become calloused. So God speaks directly to this carelessness. Husbands, your hands and words are meant for caring for your bride as a husbandman cares for a garden, raising it to be beautiful. Wives, your husbands need help. They need your help. God has gifted you in particular to point them to Christ as you seek Him yourself.

Church, help foster beautiful marriage relationships within our church. When the world comes with their hypotheses about gender identities and their renunciation of Christian marriage as outdated, don't apologize in the sense of being bashful. Show them the beauty that arises out of such relationships that we foster, which become a

base for ministry even to enemies that we desire to become our friends in Christ. The beauty, compassion, and care that we display together will be a defense of our faith that they will not be able to forget.