Preaching Series: The Christ-Centered Family
Sermon Title: Becoming a Godly Wife

Text: 1 Peter 3:1-6 -- Likewise, wives, <u>be subject</u> 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, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing— 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, <u>by submitting</u> to their 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.

Introduction: On July 29, 1981, one of the most highly publicized and glamorous weddings in history took place. Britain's Prince Charles married Lady Diana in a ceremony watched by an estimated audience of **750 million people worldwide**. **Forty-five hundred pots of fresh flowers** lined the route to <u>St. Paul's Cathedral</u>. **Twenty-five hundred people crowded that grand church** where more than **75 technicians with 21 cameras** worked to enable the world to watch this wedding. <u>For many people, this was a modern fairy tale. A royal prince weds a lovely lady in a grand cathedral surrounded by adoring subjects. They were the envy of millions. They were rich, young, and handsome. It was a "**marriage made in heaven.**"</u> Sadly, we know that the fairy tale eventually became a nightmare. The couple grew more and more distant. Affairs ensued. The storybook marriage made in heaven eventually collapsed into adultery and divorce before Princess Diana died in a tragic car wreck. **It turns out, it takes more than a prince, a lady, and a palace to make a happy marriage**. As someone said, "**Marriage may be made in heaven but the maintenance must be done on earth**." For marriages to be all that God intended, they require regular maintenance. **They require effort and faith in the Lord as evidenced by one's obedience**. Today, in the third message in the series, **The Christ-Centered Family**, we are going to address the role of wives in a Christian marriage.

Let's begin by tackling the elephant in the room as Peter does in the first verse of our passage. "**Wives, be subject to your own husbands**." The word means to "**arrange oneself under another**". I'm very aware that the idea of a wife submitting to her husband is not a very popular concept today. Even Christian women who know what the Bible teaches push back on this one! I suspect the reason why is many women see this as an ADMISSION OF INFERIORITY, though

the Bible certainly does not teach that this is the case. In **Genesis 1:27** we read that God made all human beings to bear His image (**God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them**). **Galatians 3:28** tells us that He does not view anyone as superior to another based on nationality, social status or gender (**There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus**). For many women, this raises the question, "***If we're all equal before God, how can wives be asked to submit to their husbands***?"

First, let me point out that he is not the only one who held to this view. So did the Apostle Paul (**Ephesians 5:22 -- Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord; Colossians 3:18 -- Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord**). Yet, there are some Bible writers today (**Gilbert Bilezikian, the mentor to Bill Hybels is among them**) that argue that Adam's rule over Eve is a result of the fall (**Genesis 3:16 -- To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you"**) and therefore no less satanic in origin than death itself. But that's largely because these people can't envision a world where **mutual submission and the exercise of authority** go hand in hand.

Bible scholar, *Wayne Grudem*, the author of the book, "**Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism**," responds to those who feel this way by pointing out that before the fall, there was an observed line of authority that was God-ordained.

- ***Adam was created first, then Eve*** (**See Genesis 2:7, 18-23**). In the Old Testament, the pattern is that the birthright belongs to the firstborn son giving him the authority to lead that generation unless special circumstances intervene to change that fact (**See Genesis 25; Deuteronomy 21:15-17**). This is, by the way, the reason why God spoke to Adam first after the fall (**See Genesis 3:8-10**). He, as the leader, was called to account for what had happened (**1 Corinthians 15:21-22 -- For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive**).
- ***Eve was created as a Helper for Adam*** (**Genesis 2:18 -- Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him").** The Apostle Paul sees this as significant enough to base a requirement for a difference between men and women when it comes to worship (**1 Corinthians 11:7-9 -- For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man**

was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man). Though there is some debate on what this text means, clearly it is stating that the woman is under the authority of the man because she came from the man.

- ***Adam named Eve*** **(Genesis 2:23 -- she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man**). The fact that Adam gave names to all the animals indicated his authority over the animal kingdom (**See Genesis 2:19-20**). The act of naming Eve indicated a leadership role on his part as well.
- ***God referred to the human race as "man," not "woman"*** **(Genesis 5:1-2 -- When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them).** The naming of the human race with a term that also referred to Adam in particular suggests a leadership role.
- ***Adam, not Eve, represented the Human Race*** **(See 1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:15**).
- **The Curse brought a distortion of roles, not new ones.** Each would still bear the same responsibilities, just with greater difficulty. In **Genesis 3:16-19 He said to Eve -- I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." But to Adam God said -- Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**
- **Our redemption in Christ reaffirms the created order**. Jesus came not to perpetuate the works of the devil, but to destroy them (**See 1 John 3:8**). New Testament commands concerning marriage reaffirm the order and distinction of roles that were there from the beginning of God's good creation. **SO, THE BIBLE AFFIRMS THAT AS FAR AS MANKIND IS CONCERNED, IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS WITHOUT EQUAL ROLES.**

SOME CAUTIONS REGARDING SUBMISSION.

- **Submission does not mean slavery**. We do not submit because we are forced to do so. The word in **Ephesians 5:21** is in the middle voice. Thus, the idea is that we choose to submit to others because we are properly motivated, knowing that every one of us must give an account of ourselves to God.
- **Submission is about a difference in function, not value (See Galatians 3:28)**. The Scriptures teach us that Jesus submitted to the Father (**John 8:28-29 -- I do**

nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him). Yet the Bible tells us that He is of the exact same essence as the Father (John 10:30 – I and the Father are one). In the same way, a wife's submission to her husband is not in any way negating her value or importance to the relationship. It is simply a difference in function.

- **Submission is easier when authority is exercised in loving service (Ephesians 5:25 – Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the church). The best way for a husband to illustrate his headship over his wife is by doing what Christ did for the church**. He laid down His life for her. THIS IS HOW THE MAN SHOWS THAT HE IS SUBMITTING HIMSELF TO HIS WIFE. Any man who feels the need to force his wife to submit is very likely not loving her in this way! A husband should never have to force his wife to submit.
- **Submission is not expected when it would result in disobedience to Christ (Acts 4:19-20 -- But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard; Acts 5:29 -- Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men**). The apostles understood that Christ is the ultimate authority and Christians must always submit to him first and foremost.
- **Submission is not "faith" based**. Some women might argue that if one's spouse is not a believer, submission is not required. Peter addresses this issue here in **1 Peter 3:1**. He writes to women whose husbands are not followers of Christ. Having seen their husbands reject the gospel, Peter does not release them of their responsibility to submit, but argues that they will be even more effective in their witness to their husbands by virtue of their godly lifestyles. Listen to his words again: **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, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of clothing— 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 husbands. What's the apostle saying?** A holy life will have a far greater impact on winning one's husband to Christ than mere physical adornment. Not that it is wrong for a woman to dress up or look pretty. He's simply pointing out that a godly wife is much more concerned with who she is on the inside

CORRECTIONS OF MISAPPLIED SUBMISSION:

- **Husbands must be careful NOT to do two things:**
  - **We must not act in a selfish, domineering or abusive way.** This kind of action is a result of the fall and will bring greater destructiveness to their marriages. We are called to love our wives, to consider their needs and to honor them (**1 Peter 3:7 -- Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life**). THE WISE MAN IS THE ONE WHO LISTENS TO AND RESPECTS HIS WIFE AND DOES FOR HER THE THINGS SHE CANNOT DO FOR HERSELF.
  - **We must not fail in our responsibility to lead the family.** Many men will hand over this duty to their wives because it presents some challenges. We are called to "**servant leadership**" that puts others first (**See Matthew 20:28**).
- **Wives must be careful NOT to do two things as well:**
  - **You must not usurp the authority of your husband in the family.** This would be a failure to recognize the God-given roles of a man and a woman in marriage and result in a perversion of God's plan (**See Genesis 3:16**).
  - **You must not become a doormat for your husband by failing to contribute to the decision-making process.** *Submission doesn't always mean agreement*. Look women, you know that left to ourselves, men can make really bad decisions **(See the story of David, Nabal and Abigail in 1 Samuel 25**). ***That's why we need your input***.

    Many years ago, Laurie and I were invited to go with another couple to a timeshare presentation so that we could get a gift certificate for dinner for two at a nice restaurant. We both agreed that we would not buy anything. I am embarrassed to say that I wasn't in that meeting for more than a few minutes, when I turned to her with a smile on my face and said, "**This is the greatest thing since sliced bread!**" I was even offended when she gave me one of those looks that said, "**You've got to be kidding me!**" Sadly, we signed on the dotted line and largely because of my stupidity, purchased a timeshare for way more money than it was worth, not to mention the annual fees we pay that have now surpassed the actual value of the timeshare. If I had only listened to Laurie, but alas I did not. Today, I tell anyone who is thinking about buying one to do this instead. Give me $20. I'll slap you in the face really hard and then explain why this would be the dumbest decision you could ever make. ***If only I had listened to Laurie's***

advice. MEN, ONE OF THE REASONS GOD GAVE US WIVES WAS TO KEEP US FROM BEING RULED BY OUR OWN OCCASIONAL STUPIDITY.

Conclusion: Let's review what we've talked about. (**1**) Submission in marriage is a Biblical idea; (**2**) There are a lot of misconceptions about submission (It doesn't mean the wife must be a slave to her husband or that she does not share equal value. It's easier when authority is exercised in loving service. Submission should never result in disobedience to Christ and it's not faith-based); and (**3**) There are some mistakes to avoid when it comes to submission (Husbands should never use their position of authority in a domineering or abusive way. And the failure to lead one's family is unacceptable to the Lord. Wives Should not try to take over the family or rob their husbands of their wise counsel). If we get this right, husbands and wives will enjoy a marriage that truly reflects the goodness of God in every way.

Winston Churchill, whose leadership played a large role in saving the world from the evil domination of Adolph Hitler and Nazi Germany, once said, "**My most brilliant achievement was my ability to be able to persuade my wife to marry me.**" Ladies, it is my prayer that you would embrace your roles as wise, loving and supportive helpmates to your husbands so that ***THE SAME THING WOULD BE SAID OF EACH ONE OF YOU.***