

# OpenTheo

## 1 Peter 2:24 - 3:7



### 1 Peter - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg delves into the meaning of 1 Peter 2:24-3:7, focusing on the themes of suffering and submission. He discusses the biblical concept of being a slave to Christ and how Christian slaves were viewed in the early church. He also explains the significance of the imagery of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb of God and how it relates to healing. Additionally, he delves into the importance of selfless love and serving in marriage, and how mutual submission can lead to a more harmonious relationship.

## Transcript

We're turning now to 1 Peter, the end of chapter 2. We're going to be mainly looking at chapter 3, but there's two verses at the end of chapter 2 that we were unable to fit in to our treatment in our last session. And they belong to the section we were talking about before, but they also have stand-alone value. In the last section, Peter was addressing those Christians who happened to be in the institution of slavery.

In Rome, lots of people were slaves. Some were slaves by choice. That's because they couldn't handle their finances adequately.

They got into debt over their heads. They couldn't get out, so they sold themselves into slavery. Their debt got paid off that way, and they simply were obliged to serve their masters for the rest of their lives.

But that could be a good deal if the master had comfortable digs for them. I mean, the master would provide housing and food and medical, pretty much clothing, everything you need. Frankly, there are some people in our free society who don't have everything they need, even though they hold two or three minimum wage jobs.

So, I mean, it's not always the worst possible thing. Economically, for some people, it was desirable, and they chose it. Other people didn't choose it.

They were prisoners of war from some of Rome's campaigns. They were brought in to Rome to serve as slaves of the conquering Romans. But it was often the case that slaves would be attracted to Christianity more than free people would, for one thing, because

Christianity calls people to be servants of God.

In other words, you kind of give up your autonomy when you become a Christian. You've got a lord now. You've got a master now.

To become a Christian means you embrace God and you embrace Christ to be your master, your lord. And therefore, in many respects, you take on the mentality of a servant anyway. And Paul, when he was talking about this same subject back in 1 Corinthians 7, he said, you know, it doesn't make a big difference whether you're a slave or not in the church, because if you're a slave and you come to Christ, you're free in Christ.

You still, every day, work as a slave for your master, but you've got this inward freedom that other people, even who aren't slaves, don't have if they're not Christians. But he said, on the other hand, if you're free, he said, you're Christ's slave anyway. So becoming a Christian means that you give up, essentially, your rights to, you surrender.

You acknowledge God's authority over you and you serve him. You do his will, not your own. So there's something of a, there's less to lose for a person who's already a slave in the society to become a Christian.

They're already used to, their rights have already been given up. So it's a small step for them to embrace Christ and be his servant. Free people often have a little harder time of it.

And for that reason, it is believed that the majority of Christians in the Roman Empire were in fact slaves. Not necessarily the overwhelming majority, there were free people too, as we know, but there were slaves in great abundance. So that Paul, in several of his letters, addresses Christian slaves, and Peter does too.

Now, these people were not in the position to get out of slavery. And so he teaches them how to be good Christians in that state. And of course, he always urges them to be submissive and to be cooperative with their masters and so forth.

At the end of chapter two, he's talking to slaves about, especially those slaves who don't have good masters. It was a toss-up. If you're a slave, you might have a good master or a bad one.

You're out of luck if he's a bad one because he might be cruel and ruthless and unfair. There's as much a possibility you'd have a master who had a conscience, who cared about his slaves and they were part of the household along with his other family members. And he wouldn't want to be cruel, he wanted to be just.

You could be in either condition. A slave who had a just master was certainly much more to be envied than one who had an evil master. But of course, that latter situation

existed.

And Christian slaves who had abusive masters needed to know what to do about it. Should they try to escape? Should they fight? What should they do? Well, Peter and Paul both say that Christian slaves should be the best kinds of slaves. The best kind of people, in fact.

Christians should be the best people around in any state that they're in. And so he urges Christian slaves to be submissive to their masters even when their masters are unfair or even abusive. And he says to them in verses 19 and 20 that if you get picked on and disciplined and chastened by your master when you haven't done anything wrong, well, that's an injustice.

But at least you've got a clear conscience before God. Better that than to get beaten by your cruel master because you were being disobedient and, you know, wrong. If you're doing the wrong thing.

Better to be punished for doing what's right than what's wrong. That's a strange mentality unless you're a Christian. Because as a Christian, it's better to have a clear conscience even if you suffer for it than to escape suffering by violating your conscience and living with the knowledge that you've done what's not right.

The Christian conscience is a major concern. Now, in telling them to behave non-aggressively toward masters that are cruel to them, he says, well, it's not as if Christ is asking you to do something he wouldn't do. Christ himself has done this and set the example for us.

And so in verse 21 he says, to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps. So Christ suffered injustice in a big way and he showed us how it's done. He didn't fight back.

He didn't threaten. It says in verse 23, when he was reviled, he didn't revile back. That means when they insulted him and hurled verbal abuse at him, he didn't verbally abuse them back.

Jesus, during his lifetime, showed that he was definitely a match for any debate opponent. And he had a quick wit and he could certainly have hurled back abuse more probably effectively than those who abused him verbally. But when he was reviled, he didn't revile him back.

He held his tongue. When he was suffering, when they beat him and so forth, he didn't threaten them. He could have because he'd just wait till I'm back.

You know, he just kept his mouth shut. The Bible says in Isaiah 53, like a sheep before shears is dumb or mute. So he didn't open his mouth.

But he committed himself to him who judges righteously. It's this line that we finished on last time that later in chapter four of 1 Peter, Christians are told to react the way Jesus did. If you suffer unjustly according to the will of God, that is because you're following Christ, someone punishes you for that because some governments have done that.

Communist governments have done that to Christians. The Nazis did that to Christians. Muslim governments do that to Christians.

Christians in many parts of the world have suffered martyrdom, imprisonment, beatings, torture, all kinds of things. It's been a very commonplace thing in Christian history. And even now in the world, there are many places where this is happening to Christians.

We're fairly oblivious to it because we've got it so easy, but this is a normal thing in Christian history to happen. And so he says, but that was normal for us to go through because Jesus went through it. We're trying to be, we want to be like him.

We're not going to bring suffering unnecessarily on ourselves. But if we do suffer in the will of God, we accept it. We accept it as part of the price of following Jesus.

It's just part of the cost of doing it. He says that Jesus just committed himself to God. How so? When Jesus was about to be arrested, but not yet arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed and said, Father, if it's your will, let this cup pass from me.

I'd like to have this not happen. Could you work it out that I don't have to die like this? But he said, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. And when they came to arrest him and Peter pulled out his sword and tried to defend Jesus, Jesus said, Peter, put away your sword.

The cup that my father has given me, shall I not drink it? He prayed that the cup would pass from him and he wouldn't have to drink a figure of speech. And when he realized that he was going to go to the cross, he just committed himself in God's hands. I'll drink whatever cup you give me.

And on the cross, he said, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. Instead of retaliating against his enemies or doing anything hostile toward them, he just submitted to what he knew was the will of his father. And he committed his case into God's hands.

And that's what Christians are told to do in 1 Peter 4, 19. If we look there ahead at some point, we did last time. But now we're in verse 24 of chapter 2. It's still talking about Christ and his suffering, and particularly his suffering death.

It says, who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. The tree means the cross. That we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness.

By whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray. But you have

now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Now, these lines are to a large extent lifted from a passage in Isaiah 53, which is the most frequently quoted chapter from Isaiah by New Testament writers. New Testament writers quoted lots of stuff from Isaiah, but they never quoted anything as often from Isaiah as they quoted Isaiah 53, which they saw as a prophecy about Christ. And in that chapter, it says in verse 4, we could even look before that, verse 3, it says, he is despised and rejected by men.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid as it were our faces from him. We were ashamed of him instead of loyal to him.

He was despised and we did not esteem him. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way, but the Lord laid on him, on Christ, the iniquity of us all. The imagery here of our sins being laid on Christ harks back to the Old Testament animal sacrifices.

The ritual of offering animal sacrifices in the tabernacle involved the high priest, who represented the average Jew who brought an animal for sacrifice. The priest was his representative and would lay his hands on the animal and confess the sins of the people on the animal. This symbolically, not in a real sense, but in a symbolic sense, was transferring the guilt from the guilty person to the unguilty animal.

The animal was innocent. Therefore, the animal bore the guilt of the people. Then the animal would be sacrificed.

It's as if the guilt of sin was transferred from the sinner to an innocent victim, and the innocent victim died, paid the penalty for the sin instead. It's not very nice, but it was a lesson that God was teaching. This is what God himself would do.

He would come down, make himself a lamb. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. And Peter tells us that he bore our sins, 1 Peter 2.24, he bore his sins in his own body on the cross.

This is like the animal that receives the penalty for the sinner's sin upon himself and dies in place of the sinner. Well, that's what Isaiah 53 said. Isaiah 53 said, All we like sheep have gone astray.

We're the ones who sinned. We've turned everyone to his own way. That's not the right thing to do when you're supposed to be going God's way.

And it says, And God laid our iniquities on him. That's what Isaiah said, and that's what Peter says. Isaiah says, The Lord laid the iniquity of us all on Jesus.

Peter says, He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. And while he's on the topic, he makes two other allusions to Isaiah 53. Because he says at the end of 1 Peter 2.24, he says, By whose stripes you were healed.

That's also the last line of Isaiah 53.5, slightly changed. Because Isaiah 53.5 says, By whose stripes we are healed. Peter says, By whose stripes you were healed.

Then Peter says in 1 Peter 2.25, For you were like sheep going astray, but you've returned. That's an allusion to Isaiah 53.6. All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way.

So, Peter is borrowing images here, quite a few images from Isaiah 53. And applying them to the death of Christ. But what does it mean, By his stripes you were healed.

This is an important question because this verse is quoted a great deal by some Christians. And applied in a way that I think is not intended. And in a way that can actually be dangerous, believe it or not.

A lot of mistakes you make in biblical interpretation aren't necessarily dangerous. They're just wrong. Some can be actually dangerous.

Like if you're looking at Mark chapter 16, where Jesus said, These signs will follow those who believe. They'll take up serpents and they won't be harmed. Well, if you misunderstand what's being said there, you could get yourself killed.

If they drink any deadly thing, it won't harm them. Well, don't try it. There are times when such miracles have occurred.

He's not authorizing you to do these on your own. This is when inadvertently a person is snake bitten or drinks something that's not healthy. That God has on occasion preserved their lives.

This is just an occasional sign. But likewise, when it says, With his stripes you were healed. To misunderstand that can be a problem.

It can be fatal, in fact. Because many people say that when Jesus died on the cross, he died for our sins. But when he was flogged prior to being crucified, he was flogged for our sicknesses.

That just as his atonement covers our forgiveness of our sins, it covers the healing of our sicknesses. Where do they get that? From Isaiah 53.5. With his stripes, we are healed. The stripes are, you know, flog marks, flogging scars.

And when Jesus was whipped at the whipping post, some say, Well, see, he purchased our healing. We know the Bible says that when he died, he purchased our forgiveness of sins. He purchased our salvation.

But they say he also purchased, besides that, our physical healing of all diseases. And they would say, Just as it is inappropriate to trust in anything other than Christ for your salvation, it's inappropriate to trust anyone other than Christ for your healing, including doctors. There are some who go so far as to say, Since Christ has healed us through his stripes, it is lack of faith to go to a doctor.

These people, if they follow their own convictions, often die, or their children do. And there have been many that that has happened to. There's a preacher who preaches this way named Hobart Freeman, who it is said in his church over 90 people have died who could have been helped by basic medical care, but they just wouldn't see a doctor.

It was their conviction that God is their healer. They shouldn't see a doctor. That's lack of faith.

What do they base it on? By his stripes, we are healed. Now, even people who don't go that far, many Pentecostal people, there's a doctor called the Word of Faith that's very popular among the TV, Christian TV shows, most of which you should never watch. Christian TV is about the worst thing that's ever happened.

It's about the worst thing that ever happened to Christianity that I know of is Christian TV. But almost all the Christian TV shows are Word of Faith oriented, and that doctrine is that when Jesus died, of course, he purchased our salvation. That's true.

But when he was flogged, he purchased our healing. And that they say the way to be healed appropriately is to confess that you're healed. In other words, they know that even though they say Jesus purchased our healing, they know that we still get sick.

But they say you're supposed to have faith that God has healed you, even before you have any evidence of it. After all, if you have evidence of it, it's not faith after all. If you wait until the symptoms go away, where's the faith in that? When my symptoms are gone, I say, well, without any faith at all.

It's what is obvious. They say the faith comes in when you still feel sick, when you still have all the symptoms. That's when your faith in God's Word is tested, and you need to confess God's Word despite the evidence, despite the symptoms.

They say Jesus did heal you 2,000 years ago. If you have symptoms of sickness, that's the devil's deception. The devil's trying to deceive you into thinking you're well.

You need to confess that you are well. And if you are well, you won't take medicine, of course. If you are well, you won't go to the doctor.

Why do you go there if you're well? So the idea is you're already well because Jesus died and suffered for your sin and your sickness and took care of all that. Now, those Word of Faith people who actually survive can testify to the fact that they were sick and they made such a confession as this and held their faith and they got better. Whether they would have gotten better without that or not, no one knows.

A certain number of people who are sick get better anyway. But they have their testimonies of how they confessed faithfully that God healed them and lo and behold, eventually they got better. And this encourages those who listen to them and think that they're right to do the same thing when they're sick, just confess that Christ has healed me.

Now, the Bible doesn't actually teach what they're saying. They are misconstruing the meaning of this verse. With his stripes we are healed.

What does that mean? Well, first of all, we have to know what healed means in Isaiah because Peter is quoting Isaiah. What is Isaiah talking about? Go back to Isaiah chapter 1 and you'll see. Isaiah has, first of all, Isaiah is written in poetry.

And therefore, you should expect that there's some poetic license. There's some imagery that's not literal. Poetry should very seldom be taken in a strict literalness.

It's not intended that way. It uses impressionistic images and so forth. But when God is describing Israel's condition in rebellion against God and under God's judgment, the nation at that point had been invaded by Assyria.

Many of the villages had been wiped out by the Assyrians. The nation was in terrible shape. God compares Israel with a sick person.

He says in verse 5 of Isaiah 1, Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head there's no soundness in it.

But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, they have not been closed or bound up or soothed with ointment. In other words, the nation is like a sick person, sick from head to toe. And it's got running sores and putrefying wounds and no one has treated it.

They've had no physician. It's a little bit like the man who fell among thieves in the story of the Good Samaritan. He was beaten up and left by the side of the road with his wounds exposed, in danger of dying.

That's the condition the nation of Israel is in, described here figuratively speaking. It's like a man. It's personified.

The sickness, of course, is not physical organic sicknesses in individual people. It's the



nation is sick. In what respect? In that it's alienated from God.

Verse 4 says, Now, here's it. Their sickness is that they've departed from God. Their relationship with God is lacking.

And that makes them sick as a nation. And the healing they need is to be restored to God. And therefore, when you turn to Isaiah 53, which is the passage we were looking at, from which Peter quotes, we find that it is this kind of healing that he's talking about.

Because look at verse 5. All these have to do with the relationship. Our healing, our iniquities, our wounds, excuse me, our iniquities, our transgressions. These are the things that alienate us from God.

But Christ was wounded in our place so that we could have this remedied. He says, That's the chastisement. And as Jesus received the beating, for us to have what? Peace with God.

A restoration of relationship with God. And with His stripes, that's that chastisement, we are healed. Healed of what? Healed of the sickness that Isaiah introduced at the beginning.

This alienation from God. You're living under alienation from God. You're like a sick man.

You need to be healed. Well, with Christ's chastisement, with Christ's stripes, it was for our peace, for our restoration. What is healed is our relationship with God.

And that this means this is made very clear by Peter's use of it. Because in 1 Peter 2, at the end of verse 24, he says, Now, verse 25 is going to justify the statement he just made. That is, your relationship with Him is broken.

You wandered away from God. But you've now returned. That's the healing.

It's a spiritual healing it's talking about. It's not talking about physical healing at all. And by the way, I do believe that God can miraculously heal people and has done so.

I'm not opposed to the reality of miracles at all. But I believe that there's no promise that will be healed. And that's the problem.

There is indeed a promise that our sins will be forgiven because of what Jesus did. But if there's an equal promise that we physically healed because of what He did, then, you know, it'd be as wrong to look to anyone other than Jesus for healing as it would be to look to anyone else for salvation. And therefore, if He purchased our physical healing from sicknesses, which is not what this is saying, then, of course, you shouldn't go see a doctor.

But the Bible does not teach that Jesus did that. God heals people when He wants to.

And He doesn't when He doesn't want to.

Healing is not always the best thing for them. Even Paul himself had a thorn in his flesh. He called it an infirmity.

He referred to it as an infirmity. And he said he prayed three times. This is 2 Corinthians 12.

I prayed three times that the Lord would take away this infirmity from me. And the Lord said, My strength is made perfect in your weakness. So Paul said, Oh, okay, well, then I'll just accept this infirmity because when I'm weak, then God's strength can be seen in me.

And so here's an apostle who had healed many other people. Their gifts of healing were in the apostles. They did many miracles of healing.

But when he was sick and he prayed to be well, Christ said, No, in this case, that's not what I'm going to do. I'm going to just give you the grace to go through this instead of take it away from you. It's very clear in Scripture that healing is not always going to be guaranteed.

Even to people who have faith. Paul had faith. It's when God wants to.

He will. When he doesn't want to, he won't. Sometimes not being healed has a better spiritual benefit on the person than being healed would be.

If God just removed all of our burdens, all of our pains, all of our trials immediately, we would never have any occasion to become stronger or to grow. And the Bible does indicate that our trials are for our improvement, but we'll never improve if they go away instantly. As soon as we do the right thing, the right hocus pocus, or have the right words come out of our mouth, suddenly all the pains disappear.

That'd be wonderful. We'd be like magicians. But Christ hasn't called us to be magicians.

He's called us to be disciples. His servants. And sometimes servants have, you know, there have been servants of actual masters who have been tortured by the master's enemies because they wouldn't give away their master's secrets or something like that.

You know what I mean? You have to be loyal to your master. Sometimes you suffer for that. But the point here is, in Peter's statement, by his stripes you were healed, he is not affirming the so-called word of faith, doctrine of healing on demand.

He is not saying that Jesus has purchased everybody's healing. He's not talking about that kind of healing, in Isaiah or here. Now chapter 3. He's finished talking to servants, now he's going to talk to wives.

Now I mentioned earlier that we are strangers and pilgrims in this world and that we

have a different culture than this world has. Many times the things in the Christian culture are offensive to people who are in the non-Christian culture. That is, by Christian culture I mean following the word of God, following scripture.

And people who are not informed by scripture often have an extremely different opinion, strongly held against what the Bible teaches. For example, we've been talking about slavery. The American mentality is, if you're a slave, you should stand for your rights.

You should not submit to your master, you should stand up for your human rights. Well, that is something that naturally, especially with our American modern mentality, we would think that's probably true. But the scripture says there's something to be said for submitting to suffering that's unjust.

In a sense, it's Christ-like. There are times to stand up for the rights of others and maybe your own rights too. But more Christ-like is when you actually can just accept an injustice against yourself and trust God to avenge you, trust God to do the right thing by you.

That's what Jesus did. He committed himself to God instead of retaliating or standing for himself. Likewise, just as our society is very much against slavery, we're also against anything like hierarchy in the family.

That is to say, the idea that the husband is the head and the wife is, in some sense, to submit to the husband is absolutely out of fashion in modern America. In all societies before ours, it was not a problem because it was understood that men and women had separate roles. They were not adversarial roles.

A husband and wife are supposedly on the same team and they have a joint project and that is a household to manage. They have different roles to play. Just like in a corporation, all the employees, there's a hierarchy there.

Some employees submit to other employees, not because those people are better than them, but because there's a hierarchical structure. In the military, the same way. I'm sure there's been many a private who's been the superior intellectually to his sergeant.

In fact, the way sergeants are depicted in most movies and stuff, I would think that almost anyone would be the intellectual superior to them. But I'm sure it has been the case that men of lower rank or women of lower rank have been truly superior to persons of a higher rank that they were obliged to take orders from. Likewise, slaves often were superior to their masters.

But the Christian idea is not that the superior person always gets to rule. It'd be nice if everyone who ruled was superior to the people they ruled over. But rather that the Christian is supposed to be the servant of all.

That means that even the person who's in the authority position needs to be a servant.

In fact, Jesus said, if anyone wants to be chief among you, let him be the servant of all. So even in a sense where there's a hierarchical structure, if Christians are in both positions, they're going to bend over backward to serve each other.

Because the one who's the greatest in the kingdom of God is the one who serves the others the most. Now, in the family, the Bible assumes everywhere, from Genesis through these epistles, that the husband is the head, and the wife and the husband are a team. They're not in a power struggle against each other.

They're not adversaries of each other. They are a team, just like in a company, the employee and his supervisor are a team. The employee might wish he was the supervisor, but he's not.

But they're both working for the company, and their roles are defined. We no longer live in a country where wives' roles are defined in biblical categories. That is, our culture doesn't accept this anymore.

And we have to decide, well, what's more authoritative, the general opinion of our modern culture or the word of God? Not all Christians have the same opinion about this. I personally am committed to the word of God, and therefore I don't have a problem here. Now, of course, a lot of people have said to me, well, Steve, if you were a woman, would you teach the same thing? Would you believe that men are the head? I'll tell you what.

If I was a woman, and a Christian as I am now, I would believe whatever the Bible says. I've never been interested in shaping the Bible or forming the Bible to teach something that's to my advantage. Maybe some people do that, but I can't imagine having any interest in that.

If I'm going to make up my own religion, it's not going to be Christianity. I'm going to make up some kind of hedonist religion for myself, rather than some kind of restrictive religion, and just kind of modify it a little bit to make me feel more comfortable. As a Christian, my obligation is just to find out what the will of God is and do it.

And I'd have that same goal as a man, a woman, or a child. Or, if there's anything else, an alien from another planet. I'd still want to do whatever God revealed was right.

And in all the epistles where family relations are discussed, it is assumed there's a hierarchy. Now, in our society, we have something called egalitarian roles. Egalitarian is the opposite of hierarchical.

And we accept hierarchy in every institution except marriage in our society. We accept it in employment. We accept it in the military.

We accept it in terms of rulers ruling and making laws for other people. We accept it in terms of parents having authority over their children. Hierarchy is not a bad thing in our

minds unless it's in marriage.

That anyone would have any kind of a role of subordination to somebody else in a marital relationship, it freaks people out today. It didn't always. It used to be that all the hierarchical relationships that were recognized in Scripture were also recognized in society.

Now, of course, the problem with a hierarchical relationship is that if someone is, by definition, the leader, then that person is capable of trampling on the wishes and the sensitivities of the other person. And since most people are selfish, most people in leadership are selfish. Many husbands have been selfish.

They're very happy to hear that the wife is supposed to follow his lead. And so a lot of husbands have been very insensitive to their wives and been giving their wives misery. Of course, some parents have done that to their children.

Some rulers have done that to their subjects. It's a problem. Wherever you have authority in a hierarchical institution, the possibility is always there, and there's always some people who make it a reality, that the persons in authority will be abusive of that authority.

The Bible does not indicate that the solution to this is to abolish the hierarchy but to change the people. That is, if a man is, in fact, the head of his home, then he'd better behave like Christ, not like some kind of a tyrant. And if the parent really is over the children and they have to obey, then the parent ought to bring up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord sensitively.

Paul actually, for example, in Ephesians 6 says, Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Don't discourage your children. Don't treat them in a way that makes them upset with you.

In other words, the Bible is always taking for granted that not only the home but many other institutions in society are hierarchical as opposed to egalitarian. Egalitarian means everyone's on exactly the same level, but that becomes a problem in an institution where there's only two people. You see, in a society or in a church or in a corporation or in some settings, there might be two or more people.

You can settle things with a majority vote. When you've got an institution that by definition is only two people, a husband and wife, a marriage, then how do you decide to run the thing? And some people say, well, when the husband is right, they should do what the husband wants. When the wife's right, they should do what the wife wants.

Of course. Of course that's true. But the question is, doesn't the wife always think she's right? And doesn't the husband always think he's right? What if the husband and wife disagree about who's right? Then what? Who casts the deciding vote? You can't break

the tie when there's only two people.

And by definition, marriage only involves two people. So as in any situation where there's just two people, someone's got to take the lead. And the call was made.

In scripture, the husband does that. And the Bible does not deny that some women are a lot smarter than their husbands. In fact, there's quite a few examples of them.

One of the most notable is Abigail, who is the wife of Nabal. Nabal, her husband, the name Nabal means fool. And he certainly is depicted as a fool.

And she's depicted as a wise woman. And she's, you know, the Bible is under no illusions that men are smarter than their wives. No doubt some men are, but some wives are smarter than their husbands.

It's not a matter of who's smartest. You might say, well, in a marriage, the smartest person should be the one in charge. True.

But don't they both think they're the smartest? You know, you've got to have some outside person saying, well, you're the one who's in charge. And God says, I'll settle that. The husband's the head.

Now, C.S. Lewis was talking about this in his book, Mere Christianity. He said a lot of people object to the husband being the head. But he says, would you rather the wife was the head? Would society be better if the wife was de facto the head? It wouldn't really, you know, there's no argument that can be made that says wives are always going to make better decisions or husbands are always going to make better decisions.

But the peace in the home and the harmony of the home apparently is more important to God than that every decision is the smartest conceivable decision. It's more important that people love each other, they're serving each other, and that they are in harmony with each other. And you'll find that what Peter says here in chapter 3, verses 1 through 7, he addresses the women, the wives.

He tells them to be submissive. But he also tells the husband what to do in verse 7. And this is typical of what Paul also does in his letters, in Ephesians, for example. In Ephesians 5, Paul said, you know, the marriage is supposed to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church.

Christ is like the bridegroom and the church is his bride. And he says, you wives submit to your husbands and all things like the church submits to Christ. And you husbands love your wife as Christ loves the church and gave himself for it.

In other words, the husband has to give his life for his wife. Now, many people think, well, if he's in charge, why does he have to give his life? Because that's what being in

charge means when you're a Christian. Jesus is the one ultimately in charge and he gave his life.

That's what being a leader means. It means you lead into the tree chipper. If you're both going, you go first.

You're the leader. You know? It means you take the heap. You take the brunt.

The shepherd goes ahead of the sheep into the dangerous valleys. If there's a wolf or a bear in there, it gets the shepherd, not the sheep. The idea of leadership is not you stand in an ivory tower and hand down orders to your slaves.

The idea is that you take the lead in life. In many cases, there's dangers in life. And if you're in the front, if you're the lead dog, well, then you face those dangers first.

And that's the assumption. Jesus is the shepherd. He laid down his life for the sheep, he says.

A husband is told in Ephesians 5, You husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself. He means died for her, for the church. And so, you know, the assignment in a secular way of thinking where the person who's the supervisor has a better job than the person who's the underling or the person who's the CEO gets a bigger salary than anyone else in the organization.

We have come to think that rising to the top of a hierarchical chain is the desirable thing. But Jesus said, you want to be the chief? You be the slave of everybody. And he didn't mean that by being the slave, you will earn the right to get out from under there and be the chief as a reward for being the slave.

Being a slave is being the chief. Serving, laying down your rights, endangering yourself for your wife. That's being the leader.

And so, again, the Bible assumes a very different set of presuppositions about hierarchy than the world does. And that's why we have the Bible. Because God's thoughts are not the same as ours and we wouldn't know that if he didn't tell us.

He says in chapter 3, Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, not to everybody's husbands, by the way. Women are not told to submit to men generally. Just wives to their own husbands because they have a corporation.

They have a marriage they're trying to manage and work out. So, wives submit to your own husbands so that even if some, that is some husbands, do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of the wives. Now, Christian wives who have non-Christian husbands have no greater desire than that their husbands would become Christians.

I said Christian wives, Christian, assuming they have Christian attitudes. The Christian attitude of everyone is that the people they love will also be Christians. If I'm saved, I want everyone I love to be saved.

If I'm a husband, I want my wife and children to be saved. If I was a saved, a Christian wife and my husband was unsaved, I'd want nothing more than that my husband and my children be saved. Now, Peter says, you want to win your husband? Don't preach at him.

Don't be sanctimonious and self-righteous. Just be a good wife. And it says, so that even if your husbands are jerks and they're disobedient to God, they might be won by the conduct of the wives while they observe your chaste conduct coupled by or accompanied by fear.

Now, fear means reverence. A wife should be a reverent toward God and should be chaste, which means she's not chaste in other men. Being chaste means she's morally pure.

She's not being chaste, she is chaste. And by her, in others, by her faithfulness to her rotten husband, if he is a rotten guy, and that's the assumption here, he's a man that's not what she wants him to be. She wants him to be a believer.

She wants him to be a good Christian husband, but he's not. Well, she can win him over by her submissive, chaste, reverent behavior. This is not the way people in general or women in our society are particularly told to operate within their relationships, but this is what Peter says is most likely to work.

You want to win your husband? This is how you do it. He says, Do not let your beauty be that of outward adorning, of arranging of the hair, or wearing of gold, or putting on fine apparel, but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. Now, the Bible is very old, but apparently people haven't changed much in thousands of years because Peter feels he has to address the women's tendency to be vain.

Now, if he was right in today, he'd have to speak about men's vanity too, because now we have a lot of men primping a great deal too. They didn't do that back then. Men didn't worry about their looks back then.

They didn't care if they were big and fat and stuff. They didn't count on their looks. But women have always in all societies pretty much counted on their looks to, I don't know, gain attention and status or snag a man.

That's pretty much in societies. That's not necessarily a criticism of the woman, but of the men, because they know the men are shallow, and so they have to try to look good for the men or just live without one. And so Peter's addressing that issue among women.



Don't let your adorning that you're concerned about be that outward adorning. Don't worry about that. The jewelry, the clothing, the hairstyles, don't let that be your adorning.

Let your adorning be an inward quality, the ornament of a meek or a gentle and quiet spirit. He said that's of great value to God. In the sight of God, that's a great price.

Now, again, Peter is assuming that the women he's writing to are interested in pleasing God. And if you want to please God, then you want to be attractive to him in your spirit and not so much worried about how attractive you are to men outwardly. Now, there's nothing here forbidding women to be attractive outwardly.

It says just don't let that be your concern. Some women are attractive by nature. Some women with very little fixing up look great.

Other women would take a lot more, and some, even with a lot more, don't look too great. Not everyone's beautiful. But Peter's saying don't worry about that.

Don't make that an issue. The world makes that an issue. It's interesting how much the world does so, because not only men notice beautiful women, but women notice beautiful women.

Every advertising agency knows all you need to do is put a beautiful woman on the ad, and they're going to sell more products to men and women, because men are turned on sexually by beautiful women, and women, they may not be turned on sexually, but they admire. That's what I'd like to be. I'd like to be like her.

She's gorgeous. It's amazing how women can exploit physical beauty if they have it. And, of course, little girls who are more attractive than most, they get fawned on all their life.

They learn that they're pretty, and they learn how to use that, and they learn how to exploit their looks, because the world will let them do that. The world encourages them to do that. And, therefore, women who are beautiful often count on that for their success in life, and promotion and things like that.

And women who aren't beautiful often think, you know, maybe I could do a little more, a facelift, or more makeup, or something else is going to make me have those opportunities that the beautiful women have. Now, Peter says that's all wrongheaded. It's easy enough to understand the temptation.

If the world is going to fawn over you and give you what you want, if you've got all that beauty, then the woman is going to be tempted to want to be as beautiful as possible for those purposes. And there's nothing wrong with being beautiful or being at least as attractive as you can naturally be without too much attention devoted to it. But he says don't let that be your objective.

Don't let your beauty, your adornment be the outward. Spend more time adorning the inward, because that inward gentle and quiet spirit is what God honors. And you know what? In my experience as a single man, talking to other godly single men, that's what men are looking for too.

Sure, men want their wife to look good to them. Men are men. But the thing is, a lot of men, I remember, in the churches I've been in, in the men's groups, when I was with godly men, and I was a godly single man too, of course we wanted an attractive wife if we could get one, but if she wasn't all that attractive, at least give me a godly wife.

Because a marriage is going to be happier if you've got a quality person you're living with rather than a beautiful person. And you know, when men are single, they often think that they're a real catch for women, though they don't often have good reason to think that. It's just the male ego.

But maybe the men think, well, I'm kind of studly, I'm ripped, I work out at the gym, and the women are obviously going to fall off me. You know what, guys? When you're married, if you're ripped and you're not a good person, your wife doesn't give a rip. It's amazing how that is.

Women aren't as much like men that way. Sometimes, but not as much. If you want to have a good spouse and you don't have one, work on who you are more than what you look like.

Because you know what? Even if you're real successful in working on what you look like, if you're going to be married for your whole life, you're not always going to look that way. No one looks like Brad Pitt forever. Even Brad Pitt won't.

Now, Sean Connery will, but he's proven it. Very few men will look as good as they looked when they were in their 30s or 40s, when they're 80. But what you've worked on is the inner person.

Now, by the way, women, especially if they've been counting on their outer beauty, they have much more to be disappointed about early on, when they age. And it's just not - it's a sad, it's a tragic thing to see old women striving to look young, getting another facelift until their skin looks like it's a drumhead, and just having all this makeup on until they look like a clown, because they're trying to hide the fact that they're aging. It's pitiful.

And to most people, I know, it's repulsive. But the poor things, they've been conditioned all their life to think, you've got to look beautiful or you're nothing in this society. And so they try and try and try, but it's a losing battle.

After a certain point, if that's all you've cultivated, you're just going to see everything you've invested in fading away. But if you've worked on the inner person, if you've worked on being a kind person, a gentle person, a caring person, a faithful person, if

you've worked on your character, that is of great value to God and to anyone who has God's mentality, and hopefully godly people do. If you have a godly man, he values what God values in a woman.

And by the way, no matter how old you get, that inner beauty, it doesn't fade. It matures. It can get better.

No matter how old you get, there's no limits on how beautiful your inward person can become the older you get. And so Peter says, listen, don't invest in that which is passing and vain and worthless. But develop the inner beauty, the inner person of the heart, the ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit.

He says in verse 5, For in this manner in former times the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. You say, me submit to him? That's terrifying. Well, don't be afraid.

Just trust God. Now, like Sarah. Now, Sarah called her husband Lord.

That sounds rather hierarchical. But actually, she wasn't calling him Lord in the sense of master, or like she's the slave. The only time we know of Sarah calling Abraham Lord, and it certainly must be the only time that Peter knew of too, was in Genesis chapter 18, when Sarah was told by an angel that, or by God, that she would have a child even though she was past menopause and she was very old and had always been barren.

Even when she was young, she couldn't have children. Now she's post-menopausal and God says you're going to have a child a year from now. And she kind of laughed and said, can I, at 80 years old, conceive my Lord also being old? Meaning her husband.

She referred to him as her Lord, but not in the sense of, you know, like I'm his slave. It's more like my Lord was a term that meant, it was a respectful term for a man, really. In biblical times, to say my Lord was simply a way of saying sir, or something like that.

And so she spoke respectfully about him, and she's set up as a model for the wife's behavior. And it says that, it says if you are like her, you'll be like, you'll be her daughters, so to speak. Just as Christians in general are said to be children of Abraham, because he's the father of the faithful, Sarah's the mother of the obedient, I guess.

And Christian women who are like her, it says you are her daughters, if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. But then he speaks to the men, in verse 7. Likewise you husbands dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. Now he says that if you don't behave rightly toward your wife, your prayers can be hindered.

I mean God himself will withhold the answer to your prayers, if you do not follow your role as a man toward your wife. What is it? Well, it says dwell with them with understanding. Now this may be the hardest assignment for a man, is to understand his wife.

Frankly, she has a hard time understanding him too. Men and women, they're different in the way they think a lot of times. A lot of humor, a lot of comedians, they basically humor on these differences.

Because everyone knows it's true. In our society, we try to say everything is just the same. It doesn't matter what sex you were born.

Everyone is just alike. But not everyone is just alike. That doesn't mean one is inferior to the other, but they're not alike.

Things that are equal to each other are not always interchangeable. There are parts of my car that are equal in value to other parts of my car, but they're not interchangeable parts. Just because two things are of equal value, doesn't mean they have the same function and they do the same job.

You can't interchange everything that is of equal value. And therefore, God has made men and women equal but different. And for men to understand their wives is a huge challenge.

Because if they're trying hard to understand their wives, one day their wife seems to want such and such things, and the man takes notes of that, well, this is what my wife wants. And if he follows the same things he made a list of a few weeks later, that's not what she likes anymore. She wants something else.

In fact, she'll wonder why he's doing those things. Well, I wrote that down when you said you wanted that. Well, no, I don't want that anymore.

I have something else I want. Now, women, that makes sense to them. Whatever they're going through is something that makes sense to them, but men can't follow that, can't track with it.

And the way men think doesn't make sense to women. To try to learn how your spouse thinks is the ideal thing. A man should try to understand as much as he can what makes his wife tick, what pushes her buttons, what upsets her, where her fears are, what her cravings are, and so forth.

I mean, a man should seek to understand his wife's idiosyncrasies, her personality, her desires, and, of course, to live with her according to that understanding. That is, accommodate that. Accommodate her.

Marriage is an education, and you're learning about the other person, how to bless them, how to love them in a way that helps them. You know, there's a book that's been out for many years now called *The Five Love Languages*, which basically a Christian psychologist wrote it. And he was talking about marriages that fail because the couples speak different languages, love languages, that is.

He said, if you spoke only English and you married a Russian girl who only spoke Russian, you might say, I love you all day long, but she'll never know that you said it because she doesn't know that language. She has a different language. You have to say it in her language.

And he said, people have different love languages, that there's different ways that different people recognize that somebody's showing love to them. He said, one of those is words of affirmation. Another of those is spending quality time.

Another of those is receiving gifts. Another of those is acts of service. Another of those is physical touch.

And one person might say, I love you by physical touch, and another person says, I love you by giving gifts. But if it's a different language, and the one who gives gifts doesn't care about physical touch, and the one who's into physical touch doesn't know that they don't respond to gifts the same way, then they're both showing love to each other in their own way, but neither is understanding the language because they speak a different love language. It's an interesting book.

It's kind of a bestseller because it's designed to help couples understand their partner. What is it that you want? What is it that you respond to? How can I make you feel loved? I know how I would by nature make you feel loved because I have this love language that's in me, but what is yours? And to learn to understand your spouse and accommodate them so that you can bless them. This is the Christian husband's duty to try to make his wife's life a happier one.

And of course it'll make his life happier too if he succeeds because mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy, as everyone can testify. That was my wife's slogan in my previous marriage, and it was quite true. But this is just saying that a man has to figure out what it is that pleases his wife and do it.

It doesn't mean he becomes a wimpish, spineless husband who just has to submit to his wife even when he thinks it's the wrong thing, but he's just afraid of her. It's rather that because he's the leader. He wants to lead in love.

He wants to lead as a servant. He wants to find out what he in his position of leadership can do that'll make his wife happy. You know, a lot of husbands complain that their wives are rebellious against them and that they won't submit to them.

And husbands often preach to their wives, you got to submit to me because I'm the head. The Bible never tells husbands to tell their wives to submit. The Bible tells husbands to love their wives.

And in many cases, probably most cases, if a wife really feels like she's loved, to do what her husband wants is pretty much, it feels safe. You know, when I talk to men who say their wives are rebelling against them and making their life miserable, I always want to know, well, what does your wife think you're doing? Does she think you're serving her or serving yourself? You see, if a husband is serving his wife's interests, she won't feel like she has to push for her interests. They're already being pushed for by her husband.

Her husband's in her corner. He's looking out for her interests. She can relax and just go along with the system.

But if the wife feels like the husband's only interested in what he's interested in, her interests are being trampled all the time, she is tempted at least to rise up and defend her interests against his. Now, frankly, if a wife has that temptation, I think she should resist it. But the husband needs to understand, and he's told to live with his wife according to understanding, that the wife is going to find it easier to be a team player if she has the profound impression that his decisions are taking her interests into consideration, that she doesn't have to fight for her way because he's going to fight for her way, for her.

That's what a shepherd does with sheep. He fights for his sheep's safety, not for his own. But lots of men are selfish husbands, and they're not considerate of their wives, and therefore it's a power struggle.

The wife knows what she would feel safe with, and he knows what he wants, and there are different things. And so she feels unsafe because he's not looking out for her, and then there's a fight. Well, there shouldn't be a fight.

Frankly, if the husband is a bad husband, the wife can still submit and trust God. And if the wife is a rebellious wife, the husband can still love her. That is, your duty, as this makes very clear, is not based on your partner performing their duty.

He says, you wives, even if you have a disobedient husband, still be submissive. If he's disobedient, he's not going to be doing the right thing, and it's going to be harder for you. But husbands are sometimes in that position, too.

I know. I know from experience. A husband can be committed to loving his wife and serving his wife, and depending on how whacked out she might be, because some of them are, they can be awful to live with.

There's both problems on both sides. But the point is, we, in marriages, are commanded to do the part that we're supposed to do, whether our partner does their part or not. If

things go as they should, both partners doing what they're supposed to do, the marriage will be blissful.

And I can say, as a person who's only been married a short time at this point, that my wife certainly and I both are committed to doing what God wants, and it's been, frankly, blissful. I mean, I didn't know that marriage could be this easy. And I think she's found it easy, too, which is interesting, because when you've got two people both trying to do what God wants, that means they're serving each other.

No one's thinking, I'm the boss and you have to obey me. One takes the lead for the benefit of the other person, and it's a team effort. And I've seen marriages and, frankly, been in a marriage previously where it seemed like it was adversarial.

I was on the side of the family, but the other party wanted something totally different and saw me as a tug-of-war. I mean, it's miserable to be in a marriage where the two are not looking out for each other's interests. So Peter says, You husbands dwell with them according to understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel.

Now, what's he mean by weaker vessel? We might think weak means physically weaker. In fact, he might even mean that it's possible, although there are certainly some women stronger than some men. There's wimpy little men.

There's big, burly women. But in general, on balance, women and men have more portions of their body. They're muscular.

I mean, they are stronger. But I don't think that's what Peter's talking about. I don't think he's talking about them as the weaker vessel physically.

I think weaker here could be understood to be more delicate. Like, when men are dealing with each other, they can be pretty rough verbally. Right, guys? They can put each other down.

They can be rough on each other. And then they walk away, and they're still friends. Men are like, you know, bowls carved out of stone.

You know, they don't break easily. Women are more like china in many cases. More valuable, but also more delicate, have to be treated more delicately.

If a woman insults another woman, there's a good chance they'll be enemies for life. Or if a man insults a woman, it's guaranteed they'll be enemies for life. A man insults another man, they walk away, they forget it immediately.

Next time they see each other, they're buds again. It's just a different kind of thing. Now, I realize I'm overgeneralizing.

Not all women are the same, and not all men are the same. But let's face it, it's

observable. For the most part, there's a difference in that respect.

Women are somewhat more delicate. Now, they can become hard. They can become tough.

And in our society, where a lot of women have been abused or abandoned by their men, women rise to the occasion and become as tough as men. They can do it. But that's not what they're supposed to have to do.

The husband is supposed to be tough for them. He's supposed to treat them as something that is more fragile and treat them delicately. I'm not saying treat them as if they're wimps, but just recognize the different norms in relationships.

A man is supposed to take care of a woman. That's what Peter's suggesting. You give her honor as the weaker vessel.

Sometimes we think if someone's weaker, you're dishonoring them to think of them as weaker. But if they're weaker because they're made of china instead of stone, that's more valuable. That which is weaker in the Bible, in the biblical values, when you're weak, that's when you're strong.

That's what God said to Paul. My strength is made perfect in your weakness. To be the weaker person is sometimes desirable.

God had to make Paul weaker than he was so that he could be used more by God. Weakness is something that God values. He said women in some ways are more delicate than men, need to be treated with more deference than men do.

You need to see that you and your wife are heirs together of the grace of life, he says. In other words, they're equal, co-heirs of the grace of God given to us, of eternal life. Men and women are not going to have hierarchical roles in the next life.

This is just for this life, for this arrangement for families and so forth. There won't be families in the next life. Jesus said there won't even be marriage in the next life.

But in this life, there's the institution of family and it functions just like any other corporation with some people in a hierarchical relationship, some subordinate to others. Not everyone's happy to be subordinate, but that's how corporate things work. That's how it works to have people functioning in harmony with each other.

Well, we're about out of time here. In fact, we are out of time, so I'm going to have to stop there.