

1 Peter 3

Read 1 Peter 3:1-6: Every member of God's Kingdom must use their position in this life to further the Kingdom. How can a wife do that? The underlying question about slaves and wives in that culture is really: "How can a person with seemingly-less influence and control advance the kingdom?" The answer is the unspoken gospel. It is a living example of love and service and excellence towards all others. It will make people realize that there is something different about you. This is frequently how I communicate the gospel on the job site. People will definitely take notice that you are special for some reason. People appreciate it when you jump to accommodate them.

Being a wife in a culture where they were just property and second-class citizens is a tough platform to impact others. Even today, there are challenges to godly women. If she gets pushy with her husband it becomes a misrepresentation of grace. If she gets loud and angry about the fact that her husband does not make it to church it will result in a loss for the marriage and the Kingdom. If she closes up; and resents his lack of spiritual leadership the marriage will suffer; and the Kingdom of God will take a loss. It can be a fine line between issues of the flesh and issues of the spirit. We can call our reactions to uninspiring spiritual responses from others to be righteous anger. It is equally likely that our anger comes from having our plan resisted by others.

Being the perfect wife is the best recourse. She needs to begin by fully feeding her own spirit. She should not fail to attend church and have her quiet times; regardless of her husband's view of spiritual things. Our best action towards stubborn or indifferent unbelievers is to draw as close to God as we can. God will bring in help. You have to make this whole effort a spiritual activity.

Read 1 Peter 3:7-13: The path to a more satisfying life is given to us. Surprisingly, it has less to do with what comes our way. Here are a few rules towards more joy:

1. Speak what is true. Don't fudge or imply something that is not really what you are saying.

2. Get away from any evil coming your way. Don't allow it on your TV or radio. Don't stare at things that stir up harmful feelings. Stay away from conversations when they go dumpster diving. We have to be salt and light.
3. Do what you can to bring about peace in every situation.

The role of a woman in that culture was dismissed by others. It is similar to being a Samaritan. The Jews avoided them altogether. Jesus taught us that the societal outcasts can be perfect vehicles of grace.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. (1 Corinthians 1:27)

Anybody can be a *Good Samaritan*. The wife is designed to be a help mate; not a replica of her husband. In addition, a wife's perspective will be different than her husband. I have found that God has used my wife's opinion to help me make the best decisions. The husband and wife are to be as one. One way to interpret that is to say that a man is lacking the women's perspective on things.

Peter tells us to live with understanding; not as a husband who dismisses his wife's interests. It is equally-important that the needs of the wife are fulfilled. She has a need to converse about things more than the man. The man who belittles or ignores his wife's comments will have hindered prayers. Why should God listen to my ridiculous perspective, if I will not listen to my own wife?

I can put out all kinds of energy to get my own needs squared away; but things can keep going wrong. God wants me to speak kindly to others and about others. He wants me to pursue peace. He wants me to serve others. He wants my wife to be blessed too. If I want peace to come to me; I must send it to others.

Read 1 Peter 3:14-17 : We need to live a transparent life. Realize that we will be second-guessed and criticized. Live with a clear conscious before God and man. Some believers use their faith as a marketing tool to convey sincerity. They do us all a huge dis-service. God built us with a conscience for a reason. Telling lies and deceitfully never gives us peace.

We can suffer for doing the right thing. That is OK; because it is not on us. It is on the sinner. Let the bad thing come if it is coming. It won't roost on you in the way that you think it will.

Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest. (Proverbs 26:2)

Read 1 Peter 3:18-22: It is OK to be used in an unfair way to bring about good. We might be treated shamefully for our righteous behavior. We may not see any evidence of positive results from our obedience. Our spiritual development accelerates as the things that please the flesh are removed from us. Jesus was clearly mistreated, mischaracterized and unappreciated. His resulting death allowed him to do a work by overcoming death. Jesus overcame death because it could not hold him.

This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,²³ put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. (Acts 2:23-24)

In doing so; he broke open a door for us to escape as we follow him.

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. (Colossians 1:18)

God used the mistreatment of Jesus to make a pathway from this death-land to heaven for us. Without Jesus being wrongly-treated we could have never gotten to heaven.

1 Peter 4

Read 1 Peter 4: 1-6: We cannot go in two directions at once. You will tend not to fall into sin if you are stepping forward in faith. To not move forward in faith will result in a spiritual fade and indifference.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever¹⁸ you want. (Galatians 5:16-17)

Read 1 Peter 4:7-11: Peter reminds us that there are consequences for every decision or indecision. We are not far from entering the eternal state. We need to be agents of mercy and love. Love makes up for a ton of bad decisions and mistakes. Showing godly love towards our fellow man smoothes over a lot of our own mess ups. There is a correlation to my curbing my criticisms of others and the mercies I receive for my own oversights. We are not forgiven by our good works; but we do receive extra grace according to the measure that we provide.

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19: One way to know that you are in the game when it comes to spiritual activity is when all of the craziest things keep happening. Peter is telling us to prepare ourselves for faith trials. I have been part of many *tiny* trials lately; which have all turned out to be no problem in the end. They were not even directly faith trials. We should be able to actually rejoice when our faith gets us into trouble. The worse it seems in the flesh, the better it is in reality. Facing hardships over bad decisions does not count. That is another reason to pray for wisdom in advance. Peter tells us that we will have bad things come out of left field and blindside us. Expect it. Learn to embrace the bad news; no matter how repulsive. Find a way to praise God for it. The bigger the issue...the more faith that is on display to have peace with it. To actually endure a setback for your faith is incredibly valuable. It is proof that God's Spirit is resting on us. The Bible is really saying that there is a big invisible gift in every set back; if we handle it correctly.

We tend to think that we are squared away with spiritual things until the next trial comes. Peter tells us that it is very hard to save and perfect a man.