



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Peter 3:1-7

"Evangelical Feminism and the Bible – Part V"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, it's 7:30 and let's begin our class with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee again for the word of God and we thank Thee for the privilege of having it before us. We thank thee for the divine revelation contained within it, and we thank Thee for the way in which it ministers to the needs of those whom Thou hast created. We thank Thee for the plan and purpose of God as revealed in holy Scripture and especially Lord do we thank Thee that in the marvelous wisdom and grace of our infinite God, Thou hast included us among the people of God, by Thy grace. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the ministry of the gospel to us. And how, when we were lost in our sin, Thou didst give us enlightenment through the Holy Spirit, regeneration, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee for all that was involved in the atoning work, all of the sacrificial work on his part, all of the self-surrender involved in it, and especially as we reflect upon it the eternal love of our triune God. We thank Thee Lord, we praise Thee, we acknowledge most surely, and certainly, and fully, and freely that we deserved eternal condemnation, eternal hellfire and all of the judgment that belongs to those who do not know Thee, who have rebelled against Thee, and who have rejoiced in it.

We thank Thee for the coming of the Holy Spirit who has entered our lives and who has begun the work of sanctification, transforming us into the likeness of our Lord Jesus. What a marvelous hope we do have. And we pray, Lord that Thou will give us submission to him as he seeks to work in our lives, both individually, in our families, in the family of God, and among our friends, and among those with whom we are thrown into contact. Enable us Lord to be effective witnesses of Thy marvelous grace to us.

We pray Thy blessing upon us this evening as we continue another session in the study of biblical feminism in the Bible. Enable us to think clearly, above all enable us to think scripturally. We give Thee thanks now and look forward to the time together in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] After the last message some of you came up and asked me some questions about some of the implications of some of the things I said, and specifically regarding participation of females in the meetings of the church. And I thought I had made it plain what I stood for. But it's certainly true that I did not elaborate upon it. And then I have discovered that since I talked with one or two of you, that I have another week in this series, that is next week this time. So what I would like to do is to go ahead and treat the passage that I had put down as one of the passages that we would deal with. And so next time, the Lord willing, we will take a look at 1 Corinthians 11, verse 2 through verse 16.

Tonight is 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 1 through verse 7, and the reason that I made the substitution is that I felt that this passage has some very personal kinds of things that would be especially useful to us and would in a sense bring a more human approach to the topic of biblical feminism in the Bible. I think particularly when a man gets up and treats a topic like this, there is a tendency on the part of some people in the audience, some of the females perhaps, and some of the men perhaps that in the light of the feelings that our society is emphasizing in our day, that we ought to look at it from a

double standpoint, that is from the standpoint and the standpoint of the man. So I thought it would be helpful for us to look at 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 1 through over 7, because this is a passage that lays a great deal of stress, at least to me as a man, upon the man's side of the relationship in the family, the relationship of a man, a husband to his wife or the female. So it's "Evangelical Feminism in the Bible, Number Five" and I'd like to read verse 1 through verse 7 of 1 Peter chapter 3. And I want to give again a somewhat lengthy introduction, but we'll try to deal with the entire passage later on in the exposition. But in chapter 3, and verse 1, Peter writes,

"Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, (Now some of you in the audience have the Authorized Version, and you have a rendering something like this. I didn't try to memorize it but it's "Even if some do not obey the word, they without the word may be won by the conduct of their wives. And I'm going to say something about that in a moment and I'd like for you simply to note it; verse 2,) when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear. Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel—rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God (The Greek text has the word hope but the sense is surely similar) who hoped or trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror."

The present age as I read it, and you understand of course, I shouldn't have to say that. I'm sure some of you if you disagree with me, that's what you would say afterwards. You would say, "That's the way he reads it." But the present age as I read is full of claims

that sexuality is undergoing significant transformation. In the media parade to which we are exposed constantly if we listen to the radio, or if we look at the TV, or if we read our newspapers, strange creatures predominate. George Gilder, who has written not only books on the female revolution, but has an excellent chapter in this book called *The Myth of the Role Revolution* wrote these words a couple of years ago. He said, "In the media parade, sultry detectives belted in karate follow fire persons glossy with bright red lipstick, Charlie's Angels and Rather's Maidens race after police cars. Miscarried west pointers march on with hard-hatted construction queens and hot carriettes. Glamorous dealers incorporate leverage, lesbian mayors, women dunking basketballs and space cadets actually tumbling in space, vengeful call girls flaunt their guns on the streets of San Francisco and the streets of New York, all interspersed with homosexual magnets and middle linebackers, men finding new fulfillment in nursery and needlepoint." There's a comma after that, but I thought it was worthwhile looking at?

How many of you find fulfillment, you men, in nursery and needlepoint, would you raise your hands? Well, there probably is a man or two. I don't mean here, but somewhere. But I'm sure they're rare. "And epicene authors and psychologists of every imaginable sex bemoaning the tortures of being a man or a woman or not. Before this vivid show in *En Sol et Lumiere*, sound and light, our own lives somehow pale to inconsequence. Our very bodies fade away in our minds replaced by strange creatures on the screen and their manic messages of change." In another place he says, "In addition, many pundits contend that the evolving American economy will increasingly favor women throughout the job market, from clerical roles to the highest echelons of management. Not only is male physical strength increasingly irrelevant to most jobs, but male aggressiveness and drive are also alleged to be counterproductive in the age of information and services."

There is something id this, of course, because it's true that with the age in which we are living, particularly in the age of the computer and other technological kinds of

things, the women has the physical capacity to perform those tasks as well as the men, sometime better. And he adds later on in the paragraph, "Indeed some analysts assert some feminine skills will tend to prevail over male aggressiveness in all of the major businesses of the future." Well, he has a rather lengthy treatment of this, but then later on he goes on to say that "Such figures confirm the," well I didn't want to go quite that far, let me see if I can find it. Well I seem to have, yes here it is, "A reader after all may be excused for remaining skeptical toward the story of a historic change in human behavior that after being featured in the media for twenty years can still be presented as a scoop. The counts of major change in the roles of men and women in America, in fact stand as a prime example of the pitfalls of statistical sociology and journalistic hype. There are many changes buffeting American life, but a transformation of sexuality is not among them. We don't deny, of course, that it is true that many women are doing things that we in ages past thought of as being done by men." So it's true that women are more aggressive and are able to do things that a long time ago were not being done by women.

We saw this for example just over the weekend in which a lady, a little long in years, long past middle age, age forty-five, but Lynn St. James, some of you are looking at me strangely, but it's biblical. Thirty-five is middle age; do I have to keep saying that? Please, in Believers Chapel remember me for one thing, thirty-five is middle age, and also put the biblical writers too back of it. If by reason of strength eighty is your number of years, forty is middle age. But at any rate, there was a woman who qualified to run the Indy 500, Lynn St. James, and as you may know the day afterwards she was given the accord and the acclaim of being the rookie of the year at forty-five years of age. And it was quite an accomplishment for a woman to ride in the Indianapolis 500 and to be one the nine or so, ten, or eleven, that finished out of over thirty, I think, that began, that's a work of some significance, too.

But to argue on the basis of this, and this is often done in the media, but to argue on the basis of this, that women as a class can run in the Indy 500 as well as men is, of

course, to go far beyond the evidence that exists. We applaud her for what she did. It was a magnificent thing. She says that she is going to run next year. It will be interesting to see what she's doing. And it's not at all the point of a man to deny that many women may be better than almost all men in certain activities. That is generally true. But nevertheless we must remember when we talk about someone like Lynn St. James the ones that she must compete with are not the other men like you and me. I get nervous when I get over seventy-five miles and hour in my car. She ran for two and half or so hours at an average speed, well the winner was one hundred and thirty nine miles an hour, and they occasionally get up around two twenty-nine. So I'm sure I would be too nervous for that. But the point is the Lynn St James must race against the top men, not men like you and me. And it's true she could out drive all of us in this room, and perhaps all of us in this city, and we applaud the accomplishment.

When we talk about the way in which God has given men certain physical characteristics, mental characteristics, biological characteristics, we need other ways of determining what we are and what we're able to do than to single out one person. In politics, now personally I feel that Isaiah was write, to put the hands of Israel in the future in the hand of a women, as he said in Isaiah chapter 3 was a judgment upon Israel, but there is one woman that I wouldn't mind being the President of the United States for the rest of my life, and that's Margaret Thatcher. She was a great Prime Minister, one of the greatest, greater than our presidents. Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in Ashkelon, better than Ron Reagan in my opinion, the Iron Lady. But when we're talking about Margaret Thatcher we're talking about one in millions, men and women, for that matter.

Well, George Gilder goes on to say, "They will have to compete," he's talking about the fact that many women are "more aggressive, physically strong or technically adept than most men moreover makes little difference in the organization of roles requiring these abilities. In each function or hierarchy of the society women will not have to compete merely with average men. They will have to compete with those men whose

aptitudes lead them to specialize in the particular task. In many economic activities they have to compete with the best in the entire world. It does not help women chess players, or wrestlers, or mathematicians, or microchip entrepreneurs, or commodity traders that they are better at these activities than millions of men. What matters is that only a tiny number of women are willing or able to compete near the top male level in any of these fields."

I think this is illustrated in one more thing if you'll allow me to read this from Mr. Gilder. He says, "A case in point is Karen Valenstein, E.F. Hutton executive featured on the cover of the *New York Times* magazine and celebrated from some ten pages inside for her amazing achievements. Earning \$250,000 at age thirty-eight as a First Vice President, specializing in utility finance she told the time she had overcome enormous obstacles of sexism and hostility. 'You have to be thirty percent better than a man to make it,' she claims." Now we've heard those statements and sometimes we listen to them and we don't recognize the significance of them. Gilder points out the significance, "She fails to explain why she and her oppressed sisters do not leave to form their own firms and gain the benefits of this superiority for themselves. Jean Kirkpatrick," I always admired Jean Kirkpatrick, "a rather obscure professor promoted to U.N. Ambassador of National Imminence by the Reagan administration despite being a democrat began whining about sexism and discrimination failed to put her in charge of U.S. National Security policy. Feminist critics of the Silicon Valley continually speak of sex discrimination as the reason for the dearth of women in the high echelons of these fiercely competitive firms, as if they," that is these firms, "could afford to forgo any conceivable advantage in their rivalry with the Japanese."

The point of this, and the point of taking this time on it is to underline the fact that if you'll look at the whole picture instead of reading the Loch Ness Gazette [Laughter] that's my term for the media, the Loch Ness Gazette, you'll have a much better picture of what really is taking place in our society, and you won't be so worried when you read the

front pages or the middle pages or the today section on Wednesday mornings when women are featured. You won't be so disturbed if you realize that what is being done by the media is picking out the exceptions, the outstanding exceptions and then seeking to make them the rule, and then overthrow what God has in his creative power installed within the human bodies of males and females. In fact, when everything is said and done, there is no significant transformation taking place in males and in females. Our society with more information about sexuality in marriage than every before has more sexual problems than ever before. Marriage, divorce, pregnancies, all of the things that you know about and that you have read about are with us.

Well, enough of that. Let's turn to see what the big fisherman Peter has to say for help as he talks about how we should live in the world. This part of 1 Peter underlines that fact. He goes all the way back to the second chapter in the 11th verse and says, "Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." And then he goes on to talk about the kind of life that you and I as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ should live in the world. Notice he says, "Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good." I think it's important to notice that he says that all of us, males and females, should submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, and talks about the responsibility that we should owe to the political leaders of our society.

He goes on to talk specifically about submission. In fact he uses those terms, verse 13, "therefore submit" and then in verse 18, "Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters," and then the third time in chapter 3, and verse 1, "Wives likewise be submissive to your own husbands." Now, it's evident as you read these seven verses that we're going

to look at now for a moment or two that what Peter's point is is that headship is not dictatorship. We lose a whole lot if we ever confuse being submission with the idea of dictation. No happy marriage can survive with a dictator. And it is true that many men have read this as if this means that they are the dictator and that everything that they say within the marriage should be accepted without any discussion whatsoever. I would have made many, many mistakes more than I have made, had I not listened when my own ideas were put forth within the context of family. And I certainly acknowledge the fact that in my case, at least, I have profited and I still profit from my help mate who is anxious to let me know her viewpoint, too, for which I'm glad.

What Peter says is that headship is not dictatorship, but headship is the loving exercise of divine authority for it is given by God to the husband under the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, let's look at the conduct of the wives specifically. "Likewise," now when he says likewise he's talking about, he merely said, this is another in the series, he had said back in verse 11 they are to have their conduct honorable among the Gentiles and then in verse 13, submit themselves to every ordinance of man, verse 18 he takes up servants and he says that they are to be submissive to their masters with all fear. And now wives likewise, in other words, like those referred to in verse 13, all of us, and then like the servants in verse 18, now in chapter 3 verse 1, discussing the wives. So this is a series in the realm of submission.

Since Christian women are more likely to have unbelieving partners than men at that time, they were more liable to hostility, and so Peter deals specifically with the Christian women who have an unbelieving husband. He does not deal with Christian men who have an unbelieving wife for the simple reason that that was much more unusual in the culture, and I am told on good authority that if the Christian man was the head of his house, that the unbelieving wife, and the servants, and the children all adopted his religion whether it was something they felt to not. So consequently the idea of a non-Christian man with a believing wife was something that really was a problem in

their society much more than the other. And that's why Peter deals with the wives, asking them to be submissive to their own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they may without a word be won by the conduct of the wives. So Peter's point then is the virtue of submission.

Now, you'll notice that he's making again the same point that Paul makes, the same point the biblical writers make, the same point that Moses made in Genesis 2 and 1, that is that the husband and wife are equal before the Lord. Now, if you have any doubt about that just look down at verse 7 where he says "as being heirs together of the grace of life." So the point from which he is doing his specific exhortation is the equality of the husband and the wife before God with nevertheless different roles. The role of the husband being the role of the husband; the role of the wife being the role of the wife, not being identical roles, not undifferentiated roles, but nevertheless equality within them. And of course in some respects there was mutual responsibility too. If you turn back to 1 Corinthians chapter 7, and I'll read just a few verses here. These verses are sometimes overlooked, and I don't want to deal too heavily with them right now, because it's really something of an aside explaining the mutual responsibility. But Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7,

"Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. (Now this is the point that is of interest from 1 Peter chapter 3) Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*."

In other words, there are mutual responsibilities and it's plain in the context there, I think, that he is talking about sexual things. That is that the husband owes his wife sexual love. The wife owes her husband sexual love. So they have mutual responsibilities in that respect. The new freedom that Christian women felt, for they did feel great freedom with Christianity in comparison with Judaism, the Judaism of that time. The new freedom Paul is saying does not release from the old authority. "Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives."

Now, I want to say that this does not mean that a person can be converted without the gospel. Do not think that Peter suggests that at all. That would be impossible. Christian faith is made up of propositional truth. Those truths have to be the part of any man's conversation. But I'm sure that what the apostle has in mind is the constant reiteration of Christian things on the part of a believing wife that would pose a difficulty for a husband. "Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives." In other words, nagging is not winsome. Nagging does not win the other person, that's what I mean by winsome, it's not winsome. That's not what winsome means, as I understand it. So, "without a word," I think this is interesting for people who study the Bible and like hermeneutics the principle of interpretation, one of the things that you learn in the study of the Bible is that words, of course, have different senses, but if a certain writer uses the word and he uses a word again, the logical thing is to find the same meaning and the next use of the word, because we tend to use words in the same way. We develop little patterns of speech. You probably know mine better than I. And probably some of you could illustrate how I talk, and I probably would smile at the things that you discover in my speech.

I know, for example, Wilford Webby's not here tonight, one of his things is take off his glasses like this and put them back on, and I find myself doing it too. There

comes a time when you need these glasses to read absolutely correctly. Now, of course I don't need them, so I'm putting them away for a moment or two, but anyway. We all have our little patterns. So in this text, the word "word" is used in two different senses, isn't it? "Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word." The word is the scriptural word, the word of the gospel, the words about the gospel, "they, without a word," that is a word from you in your conversation, "may be won by the conduct of their wives." So the term word has two senses in this verse. You don't have to remember that.

So the virtue of submission first of all Peter underlines, but then secondly he said wives win their husbands not only by being quiet and not nagging constantly about how they are not believers, but they win their husbands by beauty of character. Isn't that interesting? Beauty of character, so difficult, isn't it? But nevertheless that's what a Christianity should show forth, so they may be won "when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear." Fear of the husband? No, not fear of the husband, fear of guide. "Your chaste conduct accompanied by fear," reverence. "Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward." The word adornment incidentally is the Greek word kosmos. It's a word that refers to the world, too. But kosmos is an order, and it's the word from which we get cosmetic. So ladies, some men, but ladies you who are interested in cosmetics, here are the biblical cosmetics that you should put on. What are they? Not outward adornment, "arranging the hair," your hairdo, "wearing gold," the expensive things that some of you may have and like to show off, "the putting on *fine* apparel," the clothes that mark you out as a fairly well to do person or a very, what shall I say? A person who has class, good sense of what is beautiful and what is not, style, the kinds of things that we treasure. And when they come naturally fine, but Peter is talking about the outward. In other words, the things that we should major in are the chaste conduct accompanied by the fear of God, the Godly mother.

One of the greatest of the conversions of Christians is the conversion, of course, of Augustan. And in Augustan's case his conversion was traced to his mother Monica. He used Monica's witness and her prayers to win both Augustan as well as her husband to the Lord Jesus Christ. But he was not won until near his death, incidentally, so don't give up ladies. She didn't give up and finally he came to the knowledge of the Lord. Augustan wrote in his confessions, one of the greatest of the Christian devotional works, she served him. Augustan, you know, in the confessions talks to the Lord through the whole thing, "She served him as her Lord and did her diligence to win him unto Thee, preaching Thee unto him by her conversation," that is her behavior "by which Thou ornamentest her, making her reverently amiable unto her husband." No wonder she had success ultimately in winning her son and winning her husband to the Lord.

Now, there is one other thing that is down in the 6th verse that I want to mention, where he says, "As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror." Now that last expression "if you're not afraid with any terror," is another side of the way by which women, Christian women are to exalt the Lord in their lives. They are to be submissive to their husbands. They are to have beauty of character, purity, reverence, the kind of inner beauty that the Scriptures speak about. And then they are to have the absence of fear. But here the fear is fear of her husband. In other words, they're to stand firm in their faithful actions. Someone has called this revolutionary subordination. I don't know whether that's a good term or not. But the point is that a woman who is married to a non-Christian man should hold firm to her Christian faith and trust the Lord to give her deliverance in the situation, just as evidently Monica did in her case. So if you have a difficult man to whom you're married, you remember the promise of God if you belong to the Lord, and the promise of God is that you give submission to your husband in accordance with Scripture and look to him to enable you in the times in which fear might be a problem.

Now, there's something else that should be said about this, I think. And that is what do we do when our husband's are individuals who are asking us to do things that are contrary to the word of God, then what are we to do. Well, so far as I know the best guidance is the guidance that is given in the Book of Acts in chapter 4, verse 13 and following. I'll read these verses,

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them *is* evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it*. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them that from now on they speak to no man in this name. So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

And you know that in the next chapter, chapter 5, and verse 29 when again we have persecution and Peter is involved and the other apostles are involved in it, in verse 29 of Acts we read, "But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men." So a woman married to an unbelieving husband, and there are many who are married to such, should remember that her proper response is set forth by Peter here. She should not fear, trust the Lord, and seek by the Godly life that God is able to give her, to have an influence upon him trusting the Lord to transform his heart.

Now, in verse 5 and verse 6 the apostle brings forward the exemplary authority of tradition. And the apostle is just like the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. He sees a very close relationship between the kind of life that is recommended as believing life in the Old Testament, and the kind of life that is believing life in the New Testament. In fact some men have said that what we have here is simply the continuity between the people of God in the Old Testament and the people of God in the New Testament. And like so many preachers Peter turns to illustration. And turns to the best of all illustrations which are not found in the jokes and the anecdotes of the day but are in the biblical record. "For in this manner, in former times," Peter writes, "the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands." In other words, Peter suggests that when you do what I as an apostle am saying to you is the will of God, you may expect, he wouldn't say this, because as far as I know he didn't know about the epistle to the Hebrews, but he could have said something like this if he had known, the Old Testament cloud of witnesses of the faithful of the Old Testament are in heaven cheering you on in your obedience to the will of God. And in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1 and verse 2 comes to mind.

But he singles out one particular person for special attention, "As Sarah obeyed Abraham." Sarah, one of the four mothers of Israel, so the Jews spoke of her. The other three were Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel. One of the four Sarah, one of the great ones, and he says, "As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good." Now I don't think that means do good in the sense of doing simply good works in order to be justified. But it means to do good works as the product of faith. So doing good, that is doing the things that a vital faith in the Lord always produces. "Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." So I think it's very interesting if you look at what Paul says about Abraham, and he says, "People who walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham are sons of Abraham," aren't they? Well yes, they are sons of God through faith. They belong to the Abrahamic believing family. And here it's turned to the

female side and he says as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him Lord, whose daughter's you are if you do good, and not afraid with any terror. So the sons of Abraham and the daughters of Sarah belong to the same family, the faithful family. So as I'm a son of Abraham, in fact the Bible speaks of male and female as sons of Abraham, because we believe in Christ. So you ladies who are married have the opportunity of being also called the daughter of Sarah as well. What a lovely thought.

Now, Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him Lord. You turn back to the passage in Genesis chapter 18, in verse 12 is where this occurs. I'll just simply read it and make a comment upon it. "Therefore," now the preceding context, "Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing." And she had been told, of course, that she is going to have a son. "Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" My lord, the Greek translation of the Old Testament has the word *kurios*, my lord. That's the word that was used of the Lord God of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament so it's quite a title. But at the same time it also was used in common language of sir. So we can't make too much over that.

But Sarah called him Lord. Warren Wiersbe has a little book on 1 Peter and he says that, well I'll give you his exact words because I'm going to dispute them. He says, "Christian wives today would probably embarrass their husbands if they, their wives called them lord." Now, Warren, we wouldn't be embarrassed. Wouldn't it be nice to have your wife call you Lord? You won't believe it but Martha calls me lord quite frequently, but never yet has she called me lord without smiling. Some might call it smirk, but I call it smiling. So Warren Wiersbe, I wouldn't be embarrassed, but I sure would like to feel like my wife, and I speak for all of you men, that my wife was seeking to follow the words of holy Scripture. I'm not looking for the term lord, but what Peter talks about as being the Godly life of a wife who seeks to please the Lord first of all and then her husband, and

family and children, what a treasure that is. So "Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror."

Now, I was hoping we would finish it up before we got to the husband, but we still have time don't we? So in verse 7 he says something about the conduct of the husbands. "Husbands, likewise," that is, I think as the wives, they have obligations of mutual love, just as the wives have obligations of mutual respect. So we have obligations of mutual love. Paul spells out and underlines the love aspect, perhaps a bit more than Peter but the thought is here, too. Someone might ask the question, why so many verses for wives and so few for husbands? Why would that be a problem? Why, we all know that men can more easily fulfill their obligation than the women theirs, isn't that the reason. The wives need six verses we only need one. No, really the reason for it is probably in the culture of the times, and that is that the problem that he specifically addresses with reference to the women, Christian women, was an ongoing problem of significance, whereas in the case of the husbands, their status in the society was such that the kind of problem that was envisaged with the believing wife and the unbelieving husband would not occur. But though there are not as many verses, men look at what Peter says.

He says first of all, "Husbands likewise dwell with *them* with understanding," with knowledge. Marriage is fundamentally a physical as well as a spiritual relationship with sexual overtones. Dwell with them with knowledge, according to knowledge, according to experiential knowledge. God's interest in authority extends to the marriage bed. That's precisely what Peter is underlining; extend precisely to the marriage bed. 1 Corinthians 7, verse 1 through verse 5, we just read that, the mutual responsibilities. So husbands dwell with them with understanding, or with knowledge, kind of experiential knowledge, personal loving insight is the husband's responsibility. Incidentally, that dwelling according to knowledge has been thought by some to be dwell with them according to the gospel that is according to the knowledge of Christ's death and sacrifice and salvation.

That's a possible interpretation but probably is not the sense that is used. The word knowledge is used here. It's the personal loving insight that is referred to. The kind of way in which a husband should love his wife most intimately and most deeply. Someone asked Mrs. Albert Einstein if you she understood Dr. Einstein's theory of relativity and she replied, "No, but I understand the doctor." Well, if we are to dwell with our lives, living with them here, as Peter says, according to knowledge. It means that we are to devote attention to the personal, loving insight that enables us to properly understand in the most loving way the way in which we are united in holy matrimony. He also says that we are to give honor to her. Notice how he puts it, "giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel." Honoring her, not running her down, but honoring her; she is the more vulnerable one, because she is of the more vulnerable sex, because she has the weaker body, not weaker mind. The weaker body, we all know that the other is not true. But she does have the weaker body in the physical sense. It's interesting she has the weaker body, but now the women live longer than the men, do they not? But nevertheless the weaker body and Peter evidently has that in mind, "giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel." How marvelous it is when a husband gives honor to his wife, makes such a difference doesn't it, to those around such individuals. But notice the climax, he says, "*As being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*" Two reason why we should dwell with them with understanding and why we should give them honor, first of all, they are fellow heirs of the grace of life, the equality is underlined there, fellow heirs of the grace of Christ. They have everything that we have so far as heirship is concerned. So equality with differentiated roles is what the apostle underlines. The close relationship to God demands secondly, that our prayers be not hindered. Heirs together that our prayers be not hindered, so one can see that the relationship between husband and wife has the greatest kind of significance, because you are all heirs together and that your prayers be not hindered. How important it is then for us men to respond to Peter's words, to dwell with our wives with understanding, the

insight of love and affection and caring for them, giving honor to them by reason of the fact that they are the weaker vessels. And as being fellow heirs of the grace of life, that our prayers be not hindered. I would imagine that the prayers belong not simply to the man, but to the woman as well. Although some have sought to make that that men's prayers alone might not be hindered.

Well, let me conclude with just a word or two. Peter talks, you will note, about duties rather than rights. We live in a day when rights is the popular word. What rights do I have? Everybody talks about rights. What my right is in every kind of situation, the apostle talks about duties, what one is to give, not what one is to claim, but what one is to give in the Christian family and in the Christian life. He has used the word "ought"; he has used the word "oh" and rather talks about what we may give our duties. And let me conclude with this last statement, marriage is only rightly understood when one recognizes it's not the end in itself, our fellowship with God is the ultimate end that it serves. And if we, whether female or male, if we are not in harmony with what the apostles have set forth as our relationship within our family, we can be absolutely positive that our spiritual life is thereby effected. We are suffering. We men, who do not love our lives, live with them as Peter puts forth, are harming our own spiritual life before the Lord God. We cannot claim the kind of fellowship that God would have us to have if we are not following the instructions that Peter has given us here. And the wives cannot claim the fellowship with God that the Scripture speaks about if they are not following the words that have to do with their relationship to their husbands.

May God in his marvelous grace enable us to fulfill our responsibilities? We live in the day in which a Christian man living as a Christian man and a Christian woman living as a Christian woman becomes more of an outstanding example in our society. And I have not doubt but that one of the ways by which we can reach others with significance is to have the kind of family that the apostles set forth. We trust the Holy Spirit will

influence our friends whom we would like to influence for our Lord in that way. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the instruction that the apostles have given us. We thank Thee for the marvelous life set forth that we are to live and undergirding it all Lord, we know is the divine power of the triune God enabling the men to be what they could not naturally be, and the women to be that which they could not naturally be, but by Thy marvelous grace, of which we are fellow heirs, we are able to overcome...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]