

A New Testament Biblical Theology of Marriage and the Family Excluding Divorce

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Section One, Foundational Issues

This study will limit itself to the New Testament passages that relate to marriage or the family. Passages that involve the issue of divorce will be omitted. Passages in the New Testament that are built from Old Testament quotes will also be omitted. This paper is not intended to be a study of the role of the woman in the church, yet often the Bible speaks to both subjects in one place. Where it is appropriate, interaction with the roles of men and women in the church will be included.

The paper is divided into three sections: Foundational Issues, Biblical Observations, and Concluding Applications. Section one considers the presuppositions of this paper, section two is interaction with the text, and section three takes the form of a doctrinal statement to integrate the findings of the study.

Few theological subjects reveal one's hermeneutic more rapidly than the theology of marriage. Perhaps this is due to the pointed need the church feels today. Not only have the issues of divorce and remarriage created concern, but entire denominations have divided over the woman's functioning in the church.

The temptation is to approach the Bible as an answer book for twentieth century problems. Groups with disparate interpretations both claim to base their beliefs on "what the Bible teaches."

Throughout this paper it will be assumed that the primary goal of interpretation is to understand an author's intended meaning. The record he produced was superintended by God in such a way that what he produced is authoritative, without errors, and intended by

God to be binding upon any audience that shares the essential characteristics of the original audience. Although the human author may not have intended his work to be read by more than his particular audience, the divine author did.

It is also assumed that the present record of the New Testament is accurate. The various books are each regarded as a unified piece of literature. Textual variants that relate to the formation of a theology of marriage and the family are insignificant. Where there are textual problems preference is given to the Majority Text. In matters of theology the credibility of the text becomes vitally important. One's theology is usually determined by the hermeneutic chosen. This is certainly the case with Elisabeth and Louis Tetlow. They write:

In approaching the text of Scripture, the scholar must sift out background and origin of different words and phrases, and decide which of these reproduce earlier traditions, which are editorial comments upon traditions, and which are compositions by the later writer. In this task it is necessary to utilize scientific methods, such as literary, historical and redaction criticism. The process helps to sort the various types of material and, by understanding their origins and contexts, to interpret their meaning for Christians living today.¹

This hermeneutic becomes the basis for dismissing 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

It (1 Timothy 2:8-15) is post-Pauline, written by an author coming most probably, from a Pauline community but several decades after the death of Paul himself.²

This study assumes that the text is authoritatively binding upon the twentieth century church. It is considered transcultural unless the author's intention is to "localize" his message. An illustration of a message not intended to be transcultural is 2 Timothy 4:13, "Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come."³ It is not Paul's intention to begin a "coat ministry" throughout the church age. He simply wants Timothy to bring his coat.

The authors of the New Testament speak authoritatively to today's church. Chapter 2 provides interaction with important sections of their material.

¹ Elisabeth and Louis Tetlow, Partners In Service, Toward a Biblical Theology of Christian Marriage (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1983, p. 42.

² Ibid, p. 59.

³*The New King James Version*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 2 Ti 4:13, and so throughout the paper.

Section Two, Biblical Observations

1 Corinthians 7:1-9

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman. ²Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. ³Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴The 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*. ⁵Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. ⁷For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

⁸But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; ⁹but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.

Outline:

1. There are advantages to being a chaste single, 7:1.
2. Marriage allows sexual needs to be met, 7:2-5.
3. If one is not tempted sexually it may be best to remain unmarried, 7:6-9.

Idea: Nothing solves sexual temptation better than marriage.

Exposition:

7:1

In chapters 1-6 Paul had written to the Corinthians about matters he considered more important than the answering of their questions. Now with chapter 7 he turns his attention to the matters they asked about. Because of their present trials (7:26), his advice is that it may be better for a person not to marry. That “good” does not mean morally better is clear from both this passage and the rest of the New Testament. Most commentators take “touch” as a euphemism for sexual intercourse. It seems, however, that this graphic term is hardly a euphemism. It is better to understand Paul as viewing the sexual relationship as touch from beginning to end.

7:2

This verse restricts the meaning of verse 1. Even under their present distressful circumstances, marriage may be the very best route. Paul’s strong injunctions against immorality (i.e. 1 Co. 6, 1 Thess. 4:3) show the absolute necessity of moral purity. Marriage is the proper realm for sexual expression.

7:3

The husband is obligated to supply the sexual needs of the wife and the wife the sexual needs of the husband. It is improper for either husband or wife to abstain from relations. This is the point he will argue in vs. 5.

The terms Paul uses in vs. 3 view the conjugal responsibilities as a debt that is to be paid rather than a favor to be extended. His intent is to make each person in the marriage feel the responsibility of supplying the needs of the other.

7:4

The wife is probably mentioned first because she was mentioned most recently in the text.

In marriage the rights an individual has upon his/her own body ends. Because of the responsibilities toward one's spouse on partner cannot say "My body is mine to do with as I please." Equality of the sexes is stressed in this area of sexual satisfaction. Husband and wife possess the same rights in this area of marriage.

7:5

The previous verses regarding one's obligation are the basis for the strong terms used here. It is fraudulent for one to abstain from sexual relations with his/her partner. The present imperative verb indicates that some were actually doing this. Husband and wife are not to abstain. The only exception is when both agree to do so for a short time. The reason for such mutual consent is to provide the time necessary to enhance one's relationship with God. Anything other than this provides an opportunity to the Devil for temptation.

7:6

The "this" probably refers back to verse 2. There Paul commanded that each man should have his wife and each wife should have her husband. Some might take this as an absolute command requiring everyone to marry. Paul does not intend it as such, as this verse shows. If one chooses to marry there are obligations to be met. Even with all the extra responsibilities marriage brings, it may be the best choice for some. If possible, however, it is best to remain unmarried. This is the point of the next verse.

7:7

At this point in his life, Paul was unmarried. Perhaps he was a widower, but the evidence is slight as to his previous marital experience. He was a member of the Pharisees (Acts. 23:6) and may have also been a member of the Sanhedrin (Acts 26:10). Assuming that he was in his early thirties at the death of Stephen, it is most likely that he was married. We do know that his Christian experience was as a single person.

Paul received a spiritual gift from God that enabled him to be single and not tempted by immorality. God does not will all to receive this gift of self-control.

7:8

There is nothing to be ashamed of if one is able to remain unmarried. In fact, Paul calls it good. This is where he began in vs. 1. There are definite advantages to remaining unmarried.

7:9

The general rule is that people do not have the gift spoken about above. This is not sin, it is an indication that they should marry. If one lacks self control the solution is marriage, for even with “the present distress” and the addition of marital responsibilities, it is better than unfulfilled passion.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

²Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you. ³But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God. ⁴every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonors his head. ⁵But every woman who prays or prophesies with *her* head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. ⁶For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. ⁷For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man is not from woman, but woman from man. ⁹Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. ¹⁰For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of authority* on *her* head, because of the angels. ¹¹Nevertheless, neither *is* man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. ¹²For as woman *came* from man, even so man also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God.

¹³Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? ¹⁵But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for *her* hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the churches of God.

This passage deals with a problem that had arisen in the church over the women discarding their veils. It seems that they were doing this due to theological reasons based on passages such as Galatians 3:28. If, as that text states, there is no difference between male and female it does not matter whether women adhere to feminine attire or not. In order to demonstrate their freedom in Christ some of the women had begun a pattern that caused concern within the church. This particular problem is a localized cultural concern and not something the church is concerned about today. Within the passage itself Paul appeals to their sense of rightness by saying, “Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?” (11:13). In some countries this still remains a concern, but not in Western societies.

The discussion regarding the veil is based on the created differences between male and female. The masculinity and femininity concerns are an important teaching of this passage.

Outline:

1. God gave the man and woman different positions, 11:2-6.
 - a. God established different positions for men and women, 11:3.

- b. Men should be masculine, 11:4.
 - c. Women should be feminine, 11:5-6.
- 2. God gave men and women different roles, 11:7-12.
 - a. God wants men to glorify Him, 11:7a.
 - b. God wants women to glorify men, 11:7b-10.
 - c. As Christians we are to depend on each other, 11-12.
- 3. Keeping the genders distinct is the right thing to do, 11:13-16.
 - a. Conscience says so, 11:13.
 - b. Nature says so, 11:14-15.
 - c. The churches say so, 11:16.

Idea: spiritual issues do not blur gender distinctions.

Exposition:

With 11:2 Paul begins a new section that deals with corporate life, that is, issues that the church faces whenever they get together. The section continues from 11:2-11:40. This large section can be divided into two sections. The first dealt with a problem that occurred whenever they got together. The second dealt with problems that occurred only when they came together for worship. As one moves in the second section (11:17) the phrase “come together” is repeated several times. This serves as a key that Paul is moving from general corporate life to the worship service proper.

11:2

This verse states that the church as a whole had kept the traditions established by Paul and provides an opportunity to praise them. With 11:17, however, he says that he cannot praise them. The traditions mentioned in 11:2 probably refer to “faith and practice” passed on to them by Paul. Part of the tradition may have dealt with modesty. It does not seem that Paul is asking the women to begin covering their heads in contrast to the culture, but is urging them to continue to observe a cultural symbol that was appropriate to Christian theology.

When necessary, Paul is not opposed to imposing Jewish cultural mores upon Gentiles (cf. chapter 14). It does not appear that this is an illustration of that.

11:3

The question in this verse is whether “head” means only source or whether it includes the concept of authority and ruler-ship. Even if it means only “source” one still must ask the significance of this in the Apostle’s argument. Hodge may be correct when he says that “the obvious meaning of this passage is that the woman is subordinate to the man, the man is subordinate to Christ, and Christ is subordinate to God.”⁴ To say that the passage only has “source” in view would leave some question as to the relationship of Christ and the Father. The Father is not the source of the Son, although the Son clearly placed himself under the authority of the Father.

⁴ Charles Hodge, Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), p. 206.

The verse does not speak to husband wife issues, but to masculine and feminine issues.

The head of the woman is the man... This does not particularly regard marital relations, but the relation between man and woman everywhere especially where Christ is worshiped as Head, i.e., in the church. "Head" does not have an article, nor does "woman" have the indefinite pronoun "every." That means that man's headship over the woman is not as absolute as Christ's headship over all things. "The man," not the husband of a woman, but every man, man as man. Of every man it can be said that he is above the woman.⁵

11:4

A man dishonors himself when he adopts for himself things that the culture has determined to be feminine. For a man to pray with his head covered then would be similar to a man showing up at a Bible study wearing high heels and a dress today.

11:5

As it is shameful for a man to adopt feminine dress, so it is shameful for a woman to become masculine. Discarding her veil (her veil being a symbol of her femininity) placed her among those who shave. The word "head" is not in the last phrase of 11:5. Paul is not saying that her head should be shaved, but that she has put herself among those who do shave.

11:6

If she wishes to no longer be feminine then she should also get her hair cut like a man. But if this is unacceptable to her, then let her hold on to all the symbols of her femininity, including her veil.

In their culture it was quite easy to tell when a woman adopted masculine practices, for the veil was a recognized symbol. In today's culture things are not as clear. There are things that are clearly feminine, but there is nothing masculine that has not already been incorporated into the woman's wardrobe or hair styles. Thus dress or hair styles become secondary to attitudes and roles.

11:7

Man ought to be masculine because of his position in creation. Man reflects the image of God differently than does the woman. God could have created Adam and Eve at the same time and in the same way, but chose not to. Adam was created to rule and exercise dominion. He, not Eve, named the animals. Eve was created to correspond to Adam. She was created for him (11:9). As man reflects the image and glory of God, so woman reflects the glory of man. The woman is created in the image of man, for the term "glory" includes "image" as well.

The essence of masculinity seems to be initiation. Femininity is responsiveness. A man who leads and exercises dominion glorifies God. A woman who is responsive to the man glorifies the man.

⁵ F. W. Grosheide, The New International commentary on the New Testament, First Corinthians (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 250.

11:8-9

The created order of man and woman reveal the divine intention. God created man and woman for different reasons. The woman was created subsequent to the man and from the man so that there would be no misunderstanding as to the difference between masculine and feminine.

11:10

It is entirely in keeping with Christianity for women to retain culturally acceptable feminine symbols. Such a symbol shows her willingness (eagerness?) to be feminine as God intended her to be. The reference to the angels has raised many questions. Perhaps it is included because of the similarity in temptations. The angels' temptation was to abandon their positions for which they were created. The good angels accepted their position in the divine order and did not set out with Satan to find "greener pastures."

11:11-12

The created order of man and woman provides responsibility and opportunity for nurturing not oppression. These two verses remind the man of this. "In the Lord" means that as Christians there ought to be no abusive oversight. God established ("all things are from God") the mutual interdependence.

11:13

The section concludes with a variety of appeals to the "rightness" of men being masculine and women being feminine. The consensus of the group would be that maintaining masculine and feminine distinctions is proper.

11:14-15

The reference to nature probably means that Paul's point is consistent with any culture of any time. As a rule, men have always had shorter hair than women. For a man to keep a feminine hair style is not an honor to himself.

The last phrase of 11:15 has been used to say that Paul intends the hair to be the covering and therefore women could dispense with their veils. Such an interpretation would go against all that he has argued for. It is better to understand him to be adding yet another reason for the veil. If nature has provided the woman with a covering, it is certainly not inconsistent to hold to a feminine symbol that is also a covering.

11:16

Knowing that some would still argue over the masculine-feminine issue, Paul exerts his apostolic authority. Understood in the verse is the thought that this is the way Christians do things, and if anyone wishes to remain a part of the Christian community they must do things this way. It is not open for further discussion.

The idea of the passage is that spiritual issues do not blur sexual distinctions. When a man becomes a Christian he does not become a woman. When a woman becomes a

Christian she does not become a man. Masculinity and femininity are enhanced and encouraged by Christian theology. Any culturally acceptable distinctive should be maintained by Christians.

1 Corinthians 14:33b-38

as in all the churches of the saints.

³⁴Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says. ³⁵And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

³⁶Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached? ³⁷If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. ³⁸But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

This section is part of a larger body of material that deals with problems that arose in connection with the worship service. After resolving the problem of disorder at the Lord's Table, Paul deals with disorder in the worship service. The tendency of this group was to bring into the church worship forms familiar to their pagan, pre-Christian days. A survey of chapters 12-14 shows that Paul intends them to learn a new way of worship that is free from the ecstatic states of their idolatrous ways.

Survey of 1 Corinthians 12-14

1. As unbelievers they were involved in worship without understanding, 12:1-3.
2. All the gifts are necessary to the body, especially the less honorable ones, 12:4-31.
 - a. The Spirit sovereignly distributes a variety of gifts, 12:4-11.
 - b. There is one body composed of many members, 12:12-14.
 - c. Each member of the body is essential to the body, 12:15-27.
 - d. Not all members of the body have the same gifts, 12:28-31.
3. Love is more important than gifts because love outlasts gifts, 13:1-13.
 - a. Gifts must be exercised in love, 13:1-7.
 - b. Gifts will eventually be unnecessary, 13:8-13.
4. Edification only happens as understanding is enlightened, 14:1-25.
 - a. The church should desire gifts that edify the body, 14:1-5
 - b. Edification requires understanding, 14:6-19.
 - c. The church should grow up in its understanding of the importance of understanding, 14:20-25.
5. Edification of the body at the worship service requires order, 14:26-33a.
 - a. Those addressing the body should take turns in their speaking, 14:26-33a.
 - b. Women are to remain silent in the worship service, 33b-38.
 - c. Allow the exercise of gifts, but do it orderly, 14:39-40.

When the church gathered for worship, certain individuals claimed that God had moved them to action and that such action could not wait. The result was confusion. Such

confusion, assures Paul, does not come from God. In chapter 14, he enjoins a partial silence on two groups of people (prophets and those speaking in tongues) and then enjoins an absolute silence upon the women.

Outline:

1. The Corinthian church is to follow the established traditions of the other churches Paul planted, 14:33, and 36-38.
2. Women are to be silent as a sign of their submission, 14:34.
3. The women are to seek spiritual instruction from their husbands at home, 14:35.

Idea: As a sign of submission, women are to be silent during the worship service.

Exposition:

14:33

There is some debate whether this section begins with 14:34 or 14:33b. “Taken with what follows the words are an appropriate reminder that this commandment is not given to the Corinthians alone but to all church.”⁶

14:34

The term translated “silent” is used elsewhere in the passage (cf. 14:28 and 14:30). It is not correct to take this as a reference to attitude or manner. In other passages relating to the woman “quiet” may mean “silent” or refer to the woman’s manner. Here, however, the context would make such a translation difficult. The word translated “speak” is a general word that would certainly include other terms such as “teach, preach, evangelize, or herald.”

The reference to “the Law” also saying the same thing that Paul has just said probably comes from the Genesis 3:16 where the Lord said “Thy husband shall rule over thee.” “He draws the conclusion that the speaking of the woman in public is in contradiction to the position assigned to her by the Divine will expressed in the law.”⁷ Paul’s concern seems to be that for women to speak in the worship service does not demonstrate submission.

14:35

This verse does not in any way discourage the education of the women. It assumes that they will wish to learn. If ever there were an appropriate time for a woman to speak in the worship service, one would expect it to be when gaining an explanation from her husband. This too is excluded and delayed for the domestic interaction. The degree to which it is unacceptable for women to speak in the church service is accented by the term “shame.” The term is used to refer to that which is ugly, deformed or of anything that excites disgust.

14:36

⁶ Grosheide, p. 341.

⁷ Frederic Louis Godet, Commentary on First Corinthians (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1977, p. 739.

Although this passage violates the Corinthians' sense of cultural correctness, Paul assures them that the practice he has outlined is proper. They are part of something God is doing around the world and cannot keep unbiblical practices as if they should receive deferential treatment.

14:37

Anyone in the church, claiming to be a spiritual leader will accept the Apostolic authority with which Paul writes. It is not the will of Paul that is the only concern in the worship service. It is ultimately the will of God. The commands concerning the proper way to worship God come from God. They are his commands.

14:38

An issue that is so contrary to culture will always have dissenters. To them Paul issues a warning. Those who intend to follow a path different than the one just given are free to do so, but they are not free to remain in the church. They are abandoned to their inexperience and bare the responsibility for their theology.⁸

This passage has caused no little trouble among those who wish, on the one hand, to remain theologically conservative, and yet on the other, to not face the confrontational heat of the American culture. Numerous attempts at making his passage less confronting have been offered. Typical objections are as follows:

Objection #1: The genre relates only to a woman's public exercising of her gifts.

Counter: the problem with this explanation is that the terms used are very general. It is "speak" not "preach." The argument Paul gives is simply that it is shameful for women to speak in church.

Objection #2: Because the passage in 1 Timothy 2 can be understood to mean "quiet" rather than "silent," 1 Corinthians 14 should be understood to refer to the woman's disposition as well.

Counter: The context helps us define the term in 1 Corinthians. In 14:30 the same term is used and clearly means silent. Else where in the New Testament the term means to "say nothing," "become silent," or "stop speaking." The term used in 1 Timothy 2 can mean "quiet," but it is also frequently used to mean "silent." Therefore the terms are used to speak to attitude, but go beyond attitude to physical silence.

Objection #3: The genre relates only to the exercising of independent authority over the man. The argument is given that it is proper for women to speak in the service provided they do so with the authority of the male powers that be.

Counter: The trouble with such an explanation is that Paul excludes even the asking of questions. As a sign of submission, the woman is to even refrain from asking her own husband questions.

⁸ Godet, p. 745.

Objection #4: since the primary problem in the Corinthian church was the disruption of the service, women are to be permitted to speak provided such speaking does not disrupt the service.

Counter: It is certainly true that the problem was disruption of the service (as is also true of the problems created by a disorderly use of the gift of tongues and prophecy). It is not, however, the identification of the problem that is difficult, it is Paul's solution. In light of the appeals to both tradition and the practices of other churches, it seems that Paul intends to not only solve a problem, but also call them to a commandment of the Lord for the church (14:37).

Objection #5: Such a literal interpretation of the text would exclude a woman from such things as singing in church or participating in congregational, responsive worship.

Counter: From earliest time, congregational singing and antiphonal readings have been part of the church's tools for worship. It does not seem that the Apostle's intention is to exclude the woman from participation in such congregational activities, but rather to keep her from speaking out individually, either to the congregation or her own husband. The text is restrictive enough without narrowing it even more.

Objection #6: Since 1 Corinthians 11 assumes that women exercise the gift of prophecy and also pray in public, it is impossible to reconcile chapter 11 with chapter 14. Therefore chapter 14 is not Pauline.

Counter: The solution to harmonizing these two chapters lies with the intention of the author. In chapter 11 he is speaking to any time people from the church get together, but they have not gathered for the purpose of worship. Keeping in mind the differences between the sexes and the other biblical passages, it is appropriate for women to exercise their gifts in the presence of men. Chapter 14, however, deals with the particulars of the worship service. At that meeting, women are to demonstrate their submission by silence. Both chapters were written by Paul.

Galatians 3:26-29

²⁶For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

It is outside the scope of this paper to do an exposition of this passage. Paul's intention is not to deal with marriage, the family, or the role of the woman, but the means and basis of salvation. In contrast to the false teachers in Galatia who taught the addition of works of the law to faith, Paul teaches that there is only one way to be saved, and that is by faith alone (3:26). All who have believed have been identified with Jesus' death for sins (3:27). There is only one means of salvation and this salvation by faith is true for every person of the human race regardless of race or sex. All have the same Savior who is Christ Jesus (3:28).

Ephesians 5:22-33

²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

²⁴Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. ³⁰For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹“*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.*” ³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband.

Outline:

1. Wives are to pattern themselves after the church’s relationship to Christ, 5:22-24.
2. Husbands are to pattern themselves after Christ’s relationship to the church, 5:25-32.
 - a. This includes sacrificial giving for her spiritual development, 5:25-27.
 - b. This includes personal, careful, intimate ownership of his wife, 5:28-31.
 - i. He is to care for her in this way because the wife is the husband’s body, 5:28-29.
 - ii. He is to care for her in this way because intimacy is the basis of the relationship, 5:30-31.
3. Let the pattern of Christ and His church stand as significant, 5:32.
4. Let each partner walk wisely by following their pattern, 5:33.

Idea: Husband and wives should relate to each other as Christ relates to the church.

Exposition:

5:22 The first major question one faces in interpreting these verses is the connection of vs. 22 with the preceding passage. Many would argue for a mutual submission between husband and wife because of the “submitting to one another” of 5:21. This line of interpretation falls short of adequately handling the last three chapters of Ephesians. The structure seems to be a beginning exhortation (4:1) and a concluding exhortation (6:10) with two sets of four exhortations sandwiched in between. The first set of four are marked by the Greek conjunction “therefore” [4:17, 4:25, 5:1, and 5:15 (Greek text)]. The second set of four are marked by various groups: wives (5:22), husbands (5:25), children (6:1), and servants (6:5).

Although the verb for 5:22 is supplied from 5:21, it is incorrect to argue that Paul intends for mutual submission on the part of husbands to their wives, parents to their children, or

masters to their servants. Had that been his intention, the inclusion of the verb at each new group would have been necessary.

Much discussion has also been given on the nature of the term “submit.” There is not a single English term that fully communicates the meaning of the Greek term. It is used in marriage contexts only in the middle voice. This indicates that it is something done voluntarily and is not the result of being conquered as the English term “submit” indicates. It should also be noted that “submission” has nothing to do with equality. The proof of this is that the Son was in submission to the Father. Submission is the voluntary use of one’s self to further the purposes of another.

This submission is to be done because of the woman’s relationship to the Lord. “As to the Lord” makes the woman’s submission a part of her responsive obedience to her Savior. It may be considered a religious duty.

5:23

The reason for the wife’s submission is explained in this verse. The husband is head of the wife in the same way that Christ is head of the church. Christ is the Savior of the church in the fullest sense. In a limited sense the husband is the savior of the wife. Paul’s intention is not to imply that the husband has any atonement capabilities, but rather, as her head he protects, nurtures, provides, and directs. One only needs to observe a family where the husband has not taken his headship to see how the husband’s headship is essential to the health of the family.

5:24

This verse is similar to 5:22, but here the extent is spelled out. She is to yield in “everything.” Sometimes it is asked, “What should a woman do if her husband asks her to do something that is biblically wrong?” All authority is delegated authority. The Word is over everyone. One must always obey the highest authority—even if that means disobeying lesser authority.

The times that a husband would ask his wife to do something wrong are so rare as to not even be considered by the Apostle. As the church is to Christ, so the wife is to her husband.

5:25

The remainder of this passage deals with the husband’s responsibilities.

The husband is to give himself for the wife’s nurturing. In the illustration, Christ spent his entire life and even his death for the nurturing of the church. This labor was done out of a motivation of love and not self-gratification. The husband is to be motivated by love in his care of the family.

5:26

Christ’s love for the church is manifested in His involvement in its sanctification process. His desire is for her purity. The means by which this is achieved is the Word of God.

Although the Greek text does not have an article before “word,” it seems best to take the reference to the Word of God. In 6:17 a similar construction is found, and there it clearly refers to the Bible. The washing by water is pictorial of the cleansing that takes place as his bride, the church, appropriates the Scriptures.

The husband, likewise, must facilitate the appropriation of the Scriptures within his marriage and family. This may take a variety of forms and need not be regarded as formal family devotions only. Echoing Deuteronomy 6: anytime is a good time to talk about the Lord.

5:27

The goal of the Savior’s work with the church is the ultimate presentation of it to Himself—fully sanctified. “Himself” is brought forward in the sentence in order to show the Lord’s personal ownership of the church. “Glorious assembly” is explained as the absence of defect, or to say it positively, “holy and blameless.”

When the husband is involved in the nurturing, spiritual development of his wife he is not only providing himself a glorious “bride,” but he is also working together with the Lord in the provision of His heavenly bride. It is God’s intention that the husband care for his wife as Christ is caring for His church.

The kind of care to be given is explained in 5:28-31.

5:28

The tendency by the interpreter is to see Paul developing a comparison in this verse. It is not Paul’s intention to say that the husband should love his wife with the same degree of love that he has for himself. Rather he is to love her because of the constituted relationship. She is his body in the same way that the church is Christ’s body. The primary ideas are headship and ownership—not degree of care to be given by the husband.

Recognizing the relationship between husband and wife certainly has its benefits to the husband, as is explained by the last phrase of this verse.

5:29

A man provides personal, careful care of his own body. Should he not also do this for his wife who is his own body? The answer is yes, as is demonstrated by the Lord’s example.

5:30

The textual problem in this verse has sometimes cause interpreters to miss the meaning of this text. It seems that the majority Text as translated by the Authorized Version is correct, but that question is outside the scope of this paper. At question is the “of his flesh and of his bones.”

Christ cares for the church because “we are His body.” How this happened is then specified by the “of His flesh and of His bones” clause. The precise translation of this

phrase is literally “out of His flesh and out of His bones.” Had the Son not been incarnated and taken on flesh and bones there would not have been a church. In order for the Spirit to come and institute the church it was necessary for Jesus to die. Before He could die He needed to add to His deity a human nature. This required that He have a body. The church exists because Christ was incarnated.

5:31

The application of 5:29 is evident. By quoting from Genesis 2:24, Paul reminds his readers of woman’s origin from man (bone of his bones, flesh of his flesh), and this is the basis for marriage. The man leaves his family of origin to be joined to his wife in a union that bonds two persons into one entity.

This intimacy is the basis of the husband’s care for his wife and her responsiveness to him.

5:32

“This mystery is great” is intended to help the reader recognize that the revelation of the new truth given in this passage is significant. The new truth or mystery is that the relationship of Christ to his church stands as the model for Christian marriage. That this is his intention is explained by the phrase “I speak regarding Christ and regarding the church.”

5:33

The conclusion takes the reader back to the functional issues of marriage. The “however” of this verse returns the reader to behavior and attitudes from discussions of theology. “As himself” would again mean “as being himself.” The wife is to fear or reverence her husband, fear being a further amplification of submission.

Ephesians 6:1-4 and Other Children Passages

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: ³“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

⁴And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Little is said in the New Testament about the children’s role in the family. Relevant passages that deal with children will be dealt with under this section.

Outline:

1. Children who obey and honor their parents will be blessed, 6:1-3.
2. Fathers are to nurture, not frustrate their children, 6:4.

Idea: Fathers are to nurture their children so that they obey and honor their parents.

Exposition:

6:1

It is directly to the children that Paul speaks. Although it is certainly the parents who carry the educational responsibility, it is ultimately only the child that determines his/her behavior. The “in the Lord” is omitted in some texts, but seems to be part of the original. This adds a spiritual dimension to the child’s obedience. When obeying his/her parents the child is doing what is right and is pleasing to the Lord.

The extent of their obedience is not specified in this passage, but in the parallel passage in Colossians 3:20 Paul says, “in all things.”

6:2

The quotation from Exodus 20 is an amplification of what it means to obey. Obedience is to be rendered with a certain kind of attitude. “Honor” explains how the child is to obey.

Although the mother is omitted from 6:4, she is included here. The child’s responsibilities clearly extend to both parents. Disobedience to parents is regarded as a very serious sin within the Christian community, and is listed as a sin for those who have not retained any knowledge of God (Romans 1:30, 1 Timothy 1:9, 2 Timothy 3:2).

If disobedience is such a serious sin, it seems that a discussion of to whom the commandment applies is in order. Some have said that the commandment always applies, for one never ceases to be a child. Realistically it seems impossible to read this interpretation into the Apostle’s words. A child is one who is unable to function independently within the society.

Some have divided “obey” and “honor” by saying a person must always honor but not necessarily always obey. This is not the intention of the author. Honor and obey are held together in a literary unit addressed not to adults, not to parents, but to children.

The “first commandment” has produced many opinions among the commentators. Perhaps the simplest solution is to view the comment as the first commandment of the second table of the Decalogue. This would make it not only the first commandment, but also the first commandment with a promise. The promise is explained in verse 3.

6:3

Obedience to parents will spare a person from the pitfalls of sin that shorten one’s life. Parents will instruct children to be cautious, sober, industrious, and benevolent. The wise is intended to be taken as a general rule to which there may certainly be exceptions.

6:4

The term “parents” in verse one includes mothers. Here, however, Paul singles out the fathers as holding the responsibility for raising the children. All agree that the mother plays an indispensable role in the raising of children (cf. 2 Timothy 3:15), yet it is the father who is to nurture the child. To “provoke” means to irritate or throw into a passion. Each child has a desire to please that can be destroyed; this should not happen. Rather the

father is to nurture them. This has in mind tenderness and careful care of the child. It is the environment in which two things take place. First there is “discipline.” Discipline refers to the entire upbringing process, part of which is physical discipline. Second is “admonition.” Admonition refers to the spoken word. It is the putting into the mind of the child the things of the Lord. Hendriksen’s division between what is done to the child (discipline) and what is said to the child (admonition) is a good one.⁹

1 Timothy 2:8-15

⁸I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; ⁹in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. ¹¹Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹²And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. ¹⁵Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

This passage is perhaps the most significant one for the church. 1 Timothy is written to tell Timothy how the church should function. In chapter one Paul declares the importance of seeing people saved; this, he explains, happens as we pray for God to save people. Although the text seems to assume that both men and women will be present at the times of prayer, each is given a distinctive responsibility.

Outline:

1. Prayers for the salvation of people are to be offered by the men whose lives are holy, 2:8.
2. Women are to be holy also, 2:9-15.
 - a. Holiness for the women is:
 - i. Attractive character rather than a seductive demeanor, 2:9-10.
 - ii. Silence with a submissive spirit, 2:11.
 - iii. Deference to men in the areas of doctrine and government, 2:12-14.
 - iv. Emphasis on child-rearing, 2:15.

Idea: Evangelism is done most effectively as men and women fulfill their biblical responsibilities.

Exposition:

2:8

This is a restatement of 2:1. Paul has argued that the good warfare (1:18) is waged by prayer for God to save people—especially those in authority. Verses 2:3-7 are an explanation and defense of why God does indeed wish for all to be saved. Prayers to that

⁹ William Hendriksen, Ephesians (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967) p. 262.

end are quite welcomed in heaven. He is now ready to continue his explanation about prayer. Who is to be responsible for prayer in the church? It is the men. The term used can only mean “males” as opposed to “mankind.”

Do the Apostle’s words apply to anytime Christians are together, or is his intention limited to the gathering of the church? His concern is the church rather than the home, but his scope is broader than just the worship service. The theme of the book is clearly the functioning of the church (1 Timothy 3:14-15) and there is no reason to assume that Timothy will attempt to do more than regulate the operations of the church.

2:9

Having explained the male’s responsibility, Paul parenthetically turns his attention to the women. His statements in verse 8 would surely have raised the question from the women, “What about us?” The “in like manner” does not refer to the manner in which women ought also to pray. It refers to Paul’s desire that the women also be holy. Paul just spoke to the men and explained how they should behave; now he speaks to the women.

The term for “apparel” is literally “something let down” and refers to her dress. It is to be well-arrayed, orderly, and modest. They are to adorn themselves with proper reserve and discretion (literally, good sense). The terms selected by Paul clearly have a sexual nuance. As a Christian woman, she is to be beyond the world’s sensuality. The hair styles of the rich and famous were works of art intended to direct attention to the woman. Gold strands were woven into the braids. Such extravagance and emphasis on outward adornment should not be the woman’s goal, and certainly not as she is preparing herself for the worship service.

2:10

Her adornment is to be primarily good works, for it is good works that truly demonstrate her fear of God. The text would specify that her adornment is by means of her good works.

2:11

The main point of the passage is given in this verse. His command is that women should learn and that they should learn in a particular way. Two prepositional phrases govern the command to learn. The first is “in silence.” A number of the translations have translated this term as “quite,” which certainly is easier to accept. It seems, however, that the translation is based upon twentieth century intentions rather than the author’s intention. Baure, Arndt and Gingrich are correct in translating it “silent.” The term includes one’s use of words, as a passage like Acts 22:2 shows, but it goes beyond the use of words and speaks to attitudes of the heart as well. This is born out by the second prepositional phrase “in all subjection.” The “all” provides the extent of submission and could be translated “with complete submissiveness.” Paul’s concern is that a woman learns. Stone-cold silence, done in ridged compliance to the letter of the law falls short of the submission required in the last phrase. Submission without control of the tongue falls short of “silence.”

2:12

Here Paul applies submission to two areas of church life. Paul does not permit or allow women to teach. Presumably this means she is not to teach men for other passages speak of her teaching other women and children. Nor is she to exercise authority over a man. In later Greek the term came to mean “one who governs or exercises dominion over someone,” that is, “one who acts on his/her own authority.”

It has been said that it is proper for a woman to teach men provided she has been given proper authority to do so. This verse would not allow that. The negative particle is “oude” and “always make reference to something preceding” (Thayer). This particle creates a “neither...nor” construction that makes it clear Paul intends to exclude both activities. A paraphrase would put it like this, “I neither allow a female to teach nor to exercise authority over a male.”

In contrast to what the society encouraged, Paul repeats the phrase from the previous verse “in silence.”

2:13

It seems that the next two verses give reasons for the statements of 2:12, but the reasons come in reverse order. She is not to exercise authority over a man because of the Divine prerogative in creating her at a time later than Adam. God could have created the man and woman at the same time and in the same way, but chose not to so that His intention as to who has the final authority might be made known.

2:14

When the woman did exercise initiative, trouble came upon the race. By acting independently from her husband, she succumbed to the lies of the enemy and fell into transgression. This point serves to underline why she is not to exercise authority over a man, but it also serves to explain why she is not to teach a man.

Paul’s intention is not to fix blame for the fall, but to underscore the reason for the injunctions of 2:12. That she was deceived and Adam was not shows that he is the one to teach her, and not she to teach him.

2:15

The “salvation” spoken about in this verse may be understood in a secular nuance. She will be delivered from not having a ministry by “specializing” in the area of children. By means of having children and the fulfillment of the “if” clause to follow, she will undo the effects of the Fall and have a significant impact upon the world for the kingdom of God.

The last clause of the verse may refer to her children. The verb of the first clause is singular (she shall be saved), whereas the verb of the second clause is plural (if they continue). The commentators, however, all take “they” to refer to women. This is probably the correct interpretation. They (the women) are to continue or abide in faith, love, and holiness. All three traits are to be characterized by good sense. This term (good

sense or discretion) is the same as the one used in 2:9. It again has sexual modesty as part of the scope of meaning.

1 Timothy 5:3-16

³Honor widows who are really widows. ⁴But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. ⁵Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. ⁷And these things command, that they may be blameless. ⁸But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

⁹Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, *and not unless* she has been the wife of one man, ¹⁰well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.

¹¹But refuse *the* younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, ¹²having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith. ¹³And besides they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.

¹⁴Therefore I desire that *the* younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, and give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. ¹⁵For some have already turned aside after Satan. ¹⁶If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.

Outline:

1. All the widows are to be godly, 5:5, 10, and 14.
 - a. What Godliness is:
 - i. Godliness is a woman given to prayer, 5:5.
 - ii. Godliness is a woman given to ministry, 5:10.
 - iii. Godliness is a woman given to building her home, 5:14.
 - b. What Godliness is not:
 - i. Godliness is not yielding to lust, 5:6.
 - ii. Godliness is not casting off one's commitment to Christ, 5:11-12, 15.
 - iii. Godliness is not idle gossip, 5:13
2. The church should only care for a few qualified widows, 5:16.

Some widows may actually be able to care not only for themselves but also for other widows as well, 5:16. If they are unable to care for themselves, then their relatives should do so, 5:4. If they have no relatives, then other believers should be encouraged to care for them, 5:16. Any believer who does not care for his relatives is guilty of moral violation, 5:8. If there are not other believers to care for them, as a last resort the church should care for them, but only if they are of godly character and meet specific qualifications, 5:9-10.

Idea: All widows are to be godly; all who can are to care for themselves.

Exposition:

In the face of a large number of young widows, the church was struggling with knowing what the fair, just thing to do was. Some of these widows were quite young, others much older. The church had actually begun to suffer as they tried to administrate this growing group of women. Paul writes to clarify the church's responsibility, Timothy's responsibility, and the widow's responsibility. It is valuable to the discussion of marriage and the family because in this passage Paul spells out several clear goals for what men and women are to be doing.

5:3-4

The church does have a financial obligation to those who are widows indeed. If there are family members still alive, it is their responsibility to care for the widow and not the church's responsibility.

5:5

The one who is really a widow is described throughout the passage. The real widow must meet requirements on two levels. The first has to do with her circumstances, the second with her character. This verse indicates that she must be alone. She also has given herself to prayer.

5:6-7

If she has given herself to self-gratification the church should regard her as devoid of spiritual character. Such a woman needs Pastoral attention that her life might change from the direction she has set.

5:8

Again Paul underscores the need for family to provide for its own. "His own" is left vague on purpose. The obligation to help another is not limited to the nuclear family, but extends to everyone that a person regards as his/her own.

5:9

Younger widows are any who are under sixty years of age. Any widow sixty years old or older, who has not been married more than once, is eligible to be included in the widow's group. This group of widows received special attention from the church that included financial aid when necessary.

5:10

This verse continues the qualifications of widows to be considered as part of the group mentioned in 5:9. The items listed here can be summarized as a woman who has given herself to ministry. Her life is characterized by good works.

5:11

Widows younger than sixty are not to be included in the group for in all probability they will grow tired of their dependency on the church and look for other means of support.

5:12

The “casting off their first faith” refers to a woman’s remarriage outside of the Christian community. The thought seems to be that even a non-Christian husband is better than no husband. Such a disregard for the Lord’s will brings judgment.

5:13

If younger widows are given support from the church, they may not use their time wisely. They, says Paul, make the circuit of houses and function as “central broadcast.” This is no help to the church at all!

5:14

The responsibilities of being a wife and mother surely solve the problem of idle time; therefore it is good for the younger widows to marry and bear children. They are also to be house managers. The term could be translated “house steward.” Perhaps the cliché that the husband is the head of the house should be re-thought. True, he is the head of the woman. This verse seems to imply that she is the head of the house.

The Christian woman who has given herself to the building of her home robs the Devil of opportunity to destroy the work of the Lord.

5:15

Paul is aware of damage that has already been done, presumably due to churches not following his council.

5:16

The majority text places responsibility of caring for a dependent widow on either the man or the woman. The family, not the church, has the responsibility to provide. Only when the family members have all died should the church get involved.

Although this passage does not directly speak to the issue of the woman working outside the home, it does give some help. God wants women to be women of prayer, 5:5, women given to ministry, 5:10, and women given to building their homes, 5:14. If these three requirements have been met, is it proper for woman to work outside the home? It would seem so, for otherwise how can she provide for her widowed relative, 5:16?

Titus 2:1-6

¹But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: ²that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; ³the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— ⁴that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own

husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. ⁶Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded,

This passage shows what shape godliness takes through the seasons of life. The theme of the book is simply “sound doctrine produces sober living.”

Outline:

God wants:

1. Older men to be mature in faith, 2:2.
2. Older women mature in ministry, 2:3.
3. Younger women in love with home, 2:4-5.
4. Younger men given to discipline, 2:6.

Idea: At every age God desires people to be godly.

Exposition:

2:2

The older men are to be careful that their character remains grounded in the faith. Endurance and love are to also be theirs.

2:3

Here we find another area of ministry opened up to the woman. The older women are to be teaching the younger women things that are right. This verse has been taken as a *carte blanche* for instruction in all subjects, whereas the next verse specifies the subject matter.

2:4

The older women are to teach the younger to be in love with their husbands and their children. The love that needs to be learned is the warm, emotional, friendly kind of love in contrast to the love that does what is best for the other person.

5:5

They are to teach them how to manage their homes in a chaste, discreet, healthy way. They are to teach them how to be submissive to their own husbands. The clear assumption is that the teacher has been successful in the subject matter taught.

5:6

Young men are to be sober-minded, that is, they are to give themselves to learning discipline.

Hebrews 13:4

13:4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Idea: Maintain sexual purity, or receive God’s judgment.

Exposition:

13:4

This verse is part of a series of exhortations that fall under the need to continue brotherly love. “Chastity is not opposed to charity.”¹⁰ The first problem in interpretation is the verb that is to be supplied. Is the author making a statement or issuing an injunction? It seems best, due to the explanatory nature of the last clause, to take the verse as an injunction. “Marriage is to be honorable.” In typical Jewish fashion, the two clauses are parallel, “and the bed undefiled.” How marriage is to be kept honorable is explained by the subsequent clause, namely it is to be kept free from defilement.

Some have taken “among all” as an argument against asceticism found even today. They equate this verse with other verses such as 1 Timothy 4:3 where Paul warns against those who would object to marriage. It seems, however, that the phrase is intended to be understood as “in all respects.” Thus the intent is that marriage is to remain pure in all respects, especially in the area of sex. The reason this should be is then given.

Fornication generally refers to wrongful sex of every sort, generally before marriage, and extending to both heterosexual and homosexual behavior. Adultery would be the violation of the marriage vows. In these two terms the author addresses every sort of sexual defilement and promises that God will indeed judge the person guilty of this sin.

1 Peter 3:1-7

¹Likewise you wives, 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, ²when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. ³Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; ⁴but 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. ⁵For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. ⁷Likewise 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.

Outline:

1. Her words won't win him, 3:1-2.
2. Her beauty should be internal not external, 3:3-4.
3. Her godliness will please God, even if it doesn't please her husband, 3:5-6.
4. He is to share life with her in an understanding way, 3:7.

Idea: The woman is to quietly defer to her ungodly husband.

Idea: The husband is to share life with his wife in an understanding way.

¹⁰ F.F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 392.

Exposition:

There are two ideas in this passage. The first deals with the problem of being married to a man that is disobedient to the Word. Women tend to be more responsive to spiritual things than men. As a result, the church frequently finds a significant number of women who have trusted Christ, but whose husbands remain unbelievers.

3:1

This section (3:1-6) is part of a larger section that begins back in 2:13. Peter is directing attention to various groups in the church. The “likewise” may have additional meaning in that the suffering of Christ (2:21-25) serves as an important model for the women in this trial.

The “disobedient to the word” certainly includes those who are non-Christians, but also includes those believing husbands who are walking according to the flesh. Thus the scope of the passage applies to any Christian woman whose husband is not performing his responsibilities. The goal is the “winning” of the husband. The term has the meaning “win over to a point of view,” and almost carries the sense of “convert.”

The procedure for the wife is to live the Christian life before her husband rather than to win him through verbal arguments. The text would literally say, “without a word.” This theme is similar to other passages that prohibit a woman from instructing or teaching a man, but it is unusual in that this context is the home rather than the church. The sharpness of the command is due the dynamics of male-female interaction. Many an unsaved man would prefer to spend eternity in Hell rather than admit his wife was correct. To avoid unnecessarily driving her husband away from Christ, she is to resist the urge to convert him.

3:2

Her pure life and chaste conduct, accompanied by a reverence for both God and her husband, are the tools she needs to please her Savior and perhaps win her husband.

3:3

The woman’s beauty is not to be the gold-entwined braids or the clothes she wears. Peter is not saying that the woman should attempt to be ugly, but that she will not win or keep her husband through external adornment only.

3:4

The hidden person of the heart refers to the immaterial part of a woman that manifests character. The two adjectives “gentle” and “quiet” go together in order to intensify the single virtue of submission. Loud, intemperate, and irate speech and action should be foreign to the Christian woman.¹¹

¹¹ R.C.H. Lenski, The interpretation of 1 and 2 Epistles of Peter, the Three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p. 132.

Even if such behavior is unacceptable to her husband, the wife has the certain confidence that with such a person God is well pleased.

3:5

It is internal beauty that makes women beautiful. The history of the redeemed has born this truth out. Regardless of the present society's words to the contrary, the holy women of the Scriptures still radiate their beauty. They relied on God to enable them to develop the character necessary to continue being in submission to their own husbands.

3:6

Peter singles out one such woman, Sarah. Believers have long held to the concept of becoming the "sons of Abraham" by faith. Here the thought is presented of becoming, by faith, the daughters of Sarah. Peter singles out her submission to Abraham as an illustration for the Christian women of his audience.

The New King James Version is weak in the translation of the last part of this verse. Although it is certainly possible to render the participles as conditional, it may be better to see them as adverbial participles of purpose. Taking this interpretation, it could be translated, "whose children you became (Aorist, passive, Indicative, 2 person plural) that you might continue doing good and not being afraid of any terror." They became the daughters of Sarah when they believed in Christ. Now they should continue doing good and not being afraid of anyone, including their unbelieving husbands.

3:7

There is some question as to the significance of the "likewise" that begins this verse. Most commentators prefer to see it as Peter's way of taking up a new topic under the general subject of submission that began in 2:13. If this is the case, the link may be that as the wife is to be submissive to the husband (3:1) so the husband is to be submissive to the word.

"Dwelling together" surely includes sexual connotations. Thayer defines the term as "to dwell together (Vulg. Cohabito): of the domestic association and intercourse of husband and wife." The term is not limited to sexual issues. The husband is to extend effort to enhance his understanding of his wife and her needs. "It calls for and justifies such instruction for Christian marriage as is contained in much modern literature of the subject."¹²

The knowledge of his wife is demonstrated in two areas both of which are set off in subordinating clauses. The first clause is "as with a weaker vessel giving honor to the female." The second clause is "as indeed being coheirs of the grace of life."

The "weaker vessel" phrase has puzzled commentators. Perhaps it is a reference to the generally smaller physical size and strength of the woman. Perhaps a reference to the

¹² Edward Gordon Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter (London, England: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1977), p. 186.

ability to cope with prolonged stress. It is unlikely that either of these thoughts can be proved. Concerning the weaker sex Selwyn says:

The great change which has taken place since ancient times in the economic and legal position of women has certainly narrowed its application: it cannot be held to apply to character or to ability, nor is it true of health or physical endurance without many reservations. And yet the Apostle's phrase answers to some deep-seated truth which both sexes alike still agree to recognize. "Heavy" industry, for example, such as calls for the handling of great physical weights, is by common consent assigned to men; and the heavier responsibilities, such as are involved in the initiation and management of large business enterprises or the conduct of war, are mainly confined the male sex.¹³

The "co-heirs" clause shows that the husband and wife stand on equal ground in their relationship to God. "Grace of life" includes the couple in all that they experience from the hand of God, both in this age and the age to come. It is this life that determines one's inheritance in the next. Husband and wife share together in receiving the grace of God that ever brings them closer to each other and closer to God.

Dwelling according to knowledge, that is, giving his wife honor, and sharing the richness of God's grace together, will produce a vibrant prayer life. They won't stop praying because of the emotional frustration that comes with marital problems.

¹³ Ibid., p. 187.

Section Three, Concluding Applications

The following statements are synthesized from the exegetical notes above. Synthesis is always more difficult than exegesis, but it seems that the Bible is teaches the following:

1. General statements about marriage.
 - a. The chaste single life has advantages over the married life (1 Corinthians 7:1, 7).
 - b. The general course of wisdom is for younger widows to remarry and give themselves to their husbands and homes (2 Timothy 5:14).
2. General statements about masculine/feminine issues.
 - a. Men and women are saved on the same basis and by the same means (Gal. 3:28).
 - b. By virtue of man's prior creation, he will generally exercise dominion over the woman; in home and church matters, this leadership should be intentional (1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-9, 1 Timothy 2:13).
3. Statements related to husband and wife relations.
 - a. Husband and wife have "equal rights" in regards to sex (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).
 - b. Marriage is the proper and most satisfactory solution to the sexual needs of the person (1 Corinthians 7, Hebrews 10).
 - c. Times of abstention from sex should be by mutual consent, brief, and for spiritual development (1 Corinthians 7:5).
 - d. Husbands are to nurture their wives like Christ nurtures the church (Ephesians 5, 1 Peter 3).
 - e. Wives are to submit to their husbands like the church submits to Christ (Ephesians 5, 1 Peter 3).
 - f. The Christian woman should refrain from instructing her unspiritual husband (1 Peter 3).
4. Statements related to masculine responsibilities.
 - a. Men should disciple their wives by providing for their spiritual development (1 Corinthians 14:35, Ephesians 5:26).
 - b. Men should nurture children so that they honor and obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-4).
 - c. Men should carry the responsibility for the prayer and government of the church (1 Timothy 2).
5. Statements related to feminine responsibilities.
 - a. Women should positively enhance their femininity and resist both the trend toward masculinity and the temptation toward seductive demeanor (1 Corinthians 11, 1 Timothy 2).
 - b. Women should refrain from speaking out during the worship service; this is a symbol of her submission to God and her husband (1 Corinthians 14, 1 Timothy 2).
 - c. Women should develop the art of asking their godly husbands questions about spiritual things (1 Corinthians 14).

- d. In the functioning of the church, women should refrain from formal instruction of men (1 Timothy 2).
 - e. In the functioning of the church, women should defer to men in matters of leadership and government (1 Timothy 2).
 - f. Women should develop significant ministry with the children (1 Timothy 2, 5, Titus 2).
 - g. Women should give themselves to prayer for the ministry of the church (1 Timothy 5).
 - h. Women should give themselves to the meeting of ministry needs, particularly that of hospitality (1 Timothy 5).
 - i. Women should make the home a priority as a topic for study (Titus 2).
 - j. Following the model of 1 Timothy 2:2, older women should accept the responsibility of teaching younger women (Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 2, 5, Titus 2).
6. Statements related to the family.
- a. It is the family's (not the church's) responsibility to provide for the financial needs of relatives in need (1 Timothy 5).