

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Lesson 17

How To Win An Unsaved Husband to Christ

First Peter 3:1-6

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Everyone of us probably knows of at least one family where the wife is a Christian and the husband is not. In many cases the wife is a sincere and dedicated Christian who longs to see her husband become a Christian but he shows no interest at all. It is only natural for the saved wife to want her unsaved husband to love her first love, Christ, and without her husband's love for Christ that family will never be united as it could be or should be. There may be peace and even times of apparent harmony, but there will not be unity because, on the fundamental spiritual issue of Christ, there is disagreement.
- B. It is this issue that is addressed in 1 Peter 3:1-6. The questions is, "How should a saved wife live with an unsaved husband?" or "How can a saved wife lead her unsaved husband to Christ?" or "What should be the response of a saved wife to a cruel and unjust husband?"
- C. It is interesting to note that this context nor any other portion of the Bible says nothing about how a saved husband is to win his unsaved wife to Christ. Why? Usually if the man comes to Christ first, the wife will follow. Yet the action of a saved husband to an unsaved wife is to love her, provide for her, communicate with her and to be gentle, kind and sweet with patience, trusting Christ for her salvation.
- D. First Peter 3:1-6 is divine revelation not secular reasoning, and it sets forth principles which will work to make a spiritually mixed marriage better. However, there is no absolute guarantee, if these principles are applied, a non-Christian partner will be saved, for salvation is ultimately of God. But if an unsaved partner is to be saved, these principles are the human means whereby it will be accomplished. Surely, if a woman applies these truths, it will make her home a better place to live and it may well bring about the salvation of her husband.
- E. While 1 Peter 3:1-6 speaks directly to saved wives as they are related to unsaved husbands, some of these principles can also be applied to Christian wives with Christian husbands.

II. CHRISTIAN WIVES ARE TO BE IN SUBMISSION TO THEIR UNSAVED HUSBANDS (3: 1a)

"Wives, in the same way be submissive"

- A. The words "in the same way" have reference to the previous context which is about Christ who suffered innocently, silently and vicariously. *"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.' When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly" (1 Pet. 2:21-23).*

- B. Christ suffered innocently in that it was all undeserved. He suffered silently in that he spoke nothing to his accusers.
- C. He suffered vicariously in that He sought to bring a people to Himself by suffering in their place. At all times Christ was in submission, first to God, and then to human authority, even though it was wrong, harsh, cruel and vicious. So too Christian wives are to remember how Christ suffered and was under authority even when he did not deserve it for He was treated unjustly and unfairly. Christian wives are to follow the example of Christ in suffering.
- D. We can assume these spiritually mixed marriages did not come about because Christian women married unsaved men, for this is forbidden in the scripture (1 Cor. 7:39). This situation arose because both husband and wife were unsaved pagans and then they heard the gospel. The woman responded to Christ and the man did not. Now these women are to be in submission to their husbands.
- E. In the first century, the worst institution was slavery and the next worse was marriage. Women were ruled by male chauvinists who felt wives should be seen and not heard. Women had very few rights and were thought of as sex objects, child bearers and housekeepers. Even in a good marriage, in those days a woman had a rough time of it, but it could be miserable if a woman had a cruel, vicious and harsh unbelieving husband. The tendency would be to escape from under this man's authority and seek to manipulate a divorce.
- F. It should be pointed out that this is voluntary submission because a Christian wife makes up her mind she will willingly submit to her husband and suffer innocently as Christ suffered, trusting God to right the situation as she commits herself into the hands of a God who judges righteously. The wife submits because she loves God and wants to be obedient to His Word.
- G. This simply says a Christian wife is to be the best wife she can be, not perfect, but trying and progressing her spiritual walk. She is to be a good communicator, a good companion, a good homemaker, a good lover and a good mother. She is to submit to and attempt to please her husband, even if he verbally mistreats her.
- H. A woman is to be submissive to her husband but this does not mean she is to break the moral law of God to please him. If the husband asks her to rob a bank or cheat by co-signing his inaccurate income tax or lie for him, she must refuse, but in all other things she is to be submissive to her husband as long as she does not have to do anything which wounds her conscience morally.
- I. If an unsaved husband wants his saved wife to go night clubbing with him as she used to before conversion to Christ, she cannot do it for it would be a violation of her conscience as she understands the moral law of God. To be placed back into her old worldly environment, would wound her conscience and perhaps cause her to lose her testimony.
- J. Christian women who are being physically abused do not have to live with their husbands. They have the right for a legal separation but should not divorce until every avenue has been searched out to save the marriage.

“To your husbands”

- A. A Christian woman must be in submission to her own husband and no one else. There are only two spheres in which a woman must be in submission to men—to her

husband in a marriage and to the elders in the local church, who are to be men. Outside of these two spheres a woman can exercise authority over a man, whether in politics, education or business. The Old Testament is filled with examples of women who were in positions of leadership such as Deborah, Esther, Jael and others. However, within the home there is to be an order of authority. A Christian wife is to submit to her unsaved husband who is the functional head of the family even if he is not exercising that function.

- B. Perhaps another reason Peter declares wives are to be submissive to their husbands is that a Christian wife might get discouraged with her unsaved husband and begin to be attracted to some other man who displays qualities of leadership and love. How many loved starved women have fallen in love with the doctor, counselor or minister because they gave up their own marriages.

III. CHRISTIAN WIVES ARE NOT TO NAG THEIR UNSAVED HUSBANDS (3:1b)

“So that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words”

- A. When husbands do not believe the written Word or the Living Word, Christ, they can be won to Christ without speaking a word. This is nonverbal witnessing to a husband who not only knows about Christ but also totally rejects Christ. He is an antagonist to Christ.
- B. Most women love to communicate and a saved wife might think she has a responsibility to do a little “sanctified nagging” and say to herself, “My husband is an unbeliever and I’m going to hound him to death until he gets fed up and receives Christ by giving into me.” However, unsaved husbands have a better chance to be won to Christ if their wives stop nagging them and allow them to see Christ in their lives. A life speaks louder than words in this situation.
- C. This does not mean a woman can never share Christ with her husband. She should share whenever her husband wants to talk about it, but if her husband is antagonistic to Christ, there comes a time when communications cease and it becomes nagging or harping. The husband sees this as a threat to his leadership and subtly implies to him that his wife wants to assert her own will in his life.
- D. If the wife continually nags at the way her husband dresses, acts, eats, thinks and talks in these things which are not Christian, the man will clam up or rebel even more because he is alienated by what he thinks is a super-pious attitude in his wife (and it might be).
- E. There are women who are so desirous to see their husband saved they drag them off to church and to every evangelistic or revival meeting. A woman says, “My husband plays golf every Sunday morning, and I want him in church with me.” Let your husband play golf on Sunday morning and win him to Christ by a quiet, godly life. When he gets saved, he will want to be in church with God’s people.
- F. Remember, men hate nagging. When a wife nags, the husband will either give in, smolder with resentment, become stubborn or just blow up, and will be driven further from Christ.
- G. Christian women should never argue with their unsaved husbands about spiritual matters, for this only drives the wedge deeper and makes it that much more difficult to reach them.

I once counseled a woman who was neurotic about her husband becoming a Christian. Every night she put a tract on his pillow. Every morning she left him a note in his cereal about his need for Christ. She would even write on the bathroom mirror with lipstick “God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life.” She drove him away from Christ to the point where he wanted to leave her. Through my counsel and others, she stopped hounding him and began to live for Christ in a very positive manner. After about three years, her husband became a Christian. Today he is an elder in a fine church in Dallas, Texas.

“By the behavior of their wives”

- A. Women are to win their husbands to Christ by good deeds. Their behavior is to make an impact on their husbands because they can see Christ has really changed their lives. These husbands will see their Christian wives really do have a life of trusting God and that Christianity is real to them.
- B. Christian wives, there are times to be silent with your unsaved husbands. Here is where your concept of the sovereignty of God comes into play. If you believe you must do something to save your husband, if his salvation depends on you or your human effort, then you are always going to be scheming and thinking of ways to confront your husband with the gospel. Yet, if you believe God must convict, draw, regenerate and save your husband, then you can rest back in God to move on your husband in His timing. Then you can win your husband without saying a word, by preaching a silent sermon with your life. Women should pray, live godly lives and wait for opportune moments to speak to their unsaved husbands about Christ. There will be those precious moments when he is ready to communicate, and even then, a wife must choose her words carefully so as not to give the husband the feeling that she has arrived and he has not. The Christian wife should concentrate on her own Christian life and not on her husband’s life, for this will ultimately bring a softening to the husband’s heart.

IV. CHRISTIAN WIVES ARE TO BE AN EXAMPLE TO THEIR UNSAVED HUSBANDS (3:2)

“When they see the purity and reverence of your lives”

- A. Non-Christian husbands are going to observe or scrutinize the lives of their saved wives, causing them to sit up and take notice. She will have a pure life in that she lives in such a way to minimize her husband’s criticism of her. She is also to reverence or respect her husband even when he is undeserving of it.
- B. A woman might say, “Well, you don’t know my husband. He sits around the house in his shorts and dirty T-shirt, watches TV, drinks beer and when he speaks he constantly uses the Lord’s name in vain. He never shows me any attention or affection. He is never interested in the kids. He does not give a rip about the family and thinks only of himself. Why should I respect him?”
- C. You are to respect him because God asks you to do it. This is not an easy task, but you as a Christian wife must not deride him, ridicule him, make fun of him, put him down or speak evil of him to his face or behind his back. Why? Because he is the head of the home by God’s appointment, even if he is unsaved and is not functioning

as the head.

- D. Christian women are to live positive, active testimonies before their unsaved husbands. For it is far more profitable to practice than to preach. When a man sees a positive Christian life in his woman, this will hopefully whet his appetite to know something about Christ.

V. CHRISTIAN WIVES ARE NOT TO EMPHASIZE EXTERNALS ALONE IN WINNING THEIR HUSBANDS TO CHRIST (3:3)

“Your beauty should not come from mere outward adornment”

- A. A woman’s physical appearance is very important to her. She wants to be beautiful. She wants to be attractive.
- B. This is not saying that women should not adorn themselves attractively, but that outward apparel should not be their only adornment.

“Such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes”

- A. The issues for these women were in the areas of hairstyle, jewelry and clothing (toga). The first thing we should notice is this is not speaking against hairstyles, jewelry or dresses because a woman would obviously put on outward adornment, a dress or toga. The reference is to excess or abuse in these matters.
- B. Most of these women were saved out of rank heathenism and their lives before conversion to Christ conformed in every detail to the world’s standards. It appears when their husbands did not respond to Christ, the women began to turn to worldly, seductive methods to lure their husbands to Christ. They turned to the worldly clothing they wore before conversion.
- C. In those days women would have sensual hairdos, so much so that Juvenal, a Roman writer said, “The attendants will vote on the dressing of the hair as if a question of reputation or of life were at stake, so great is the trouble she takes in quest of beauty; with so many tiers does she load, with so many continuous stories does she build up on high her hair. She is as tall as Andromache in front, and behind she is shorter. You would think her another person.”
- D. They would also place gold jewelry on certain parts of their bodies so as to sexually attract attention to them. They also would wear very seductive togas. When these Christian women did these things in public to lure their husbands, they became immodest, gaudy and conspicuous. These women made the mistake of thinking that if they would dress as the world dresses this would please their husbands, and they would be influenced, to take the Lord Jesus as their Savior.
- E. Again it must be stressed this is not saying women cannot dress attractively, or wear jewelry or have a fancy hairdo. While the Christian woman is not to nag neither is she to be a hag.
- F. This does not mean a woman cannot wear cosmetics. Women should be attractive and they should use all the curves God has given them. Women should dress in the conservative styles of the day, and yet never be seductive in appearance.
- G. Really only the Holy Spirit can direct a woman in her outward appearance. However, no women should dress in such a way that she looks sloppy or messy. The point is that externals alone should not be used in changing the mind of a husband.

VI. CHRISTIAN WIVES ARE TO EMPHASIZE THE SPIRITUAL, INNER LIFE TO THEIR UNSAVED HUSBANDS (3:4)

“Instead, it should be that of your inner self.”

- A. This is stressing the inward personality of a wife not her outward appearance. The most attractive, winsome adornment of a Christian woman should be the beauty of her life.
- B. A woman should not depend on her outer beauty alone to win her husband to Christ but should concentrate on her inner, spiritual beauty, for this is what is truly attractive to a man.
- C. Hair will gray, wrinkles will come, clothes will wear out, but inner beauty never perishes and is always fashionable to God and men.

“The unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”

- A. The true beauty which delights God and will charm her husband is the loveliness of a gentle and quiet spirit.
- B. A Christian woman is to develop a non-argumentative, non-hostile, non-aggressive, non-domineering spirit. She is to have a spirit of quiet rest, a quietness which comes not from trusting in her husband but in God. This kind of spirit is “precious” or “priceless” in the sight of God. It is this kind of spirit, which will win the heart of the Christian wife’s man. In fact, it will probably totally disarm him.
- C. Again it must be stressed this is not saying women cannot dress attractively, or wear jewelry or have a fancy hairdo. There is no particular spirituality in looking like a warmed-over corpse. A wife is not to ignore these externals, but she is to give more effort to developing the spiritual internals. It is what she is and not what she wears which counts most. The apparel which wears best and never goes “out of style” is a gentle and quiet spirit.

VII. CHRISTIAN WIVES ARE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF OLD TESTAMENT (3:5-6)

“For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands.”

- A. The Christian woman is submissive to her husband, whether saved or unsaved, and who has a gentle and quiet spirit, has joined a very elite group - the holy women of the Old Testament.
- B. The word “holy” is probably speaking of women who had reached a point in their progressive sanctification whereby they were mature enough to truly subject themselves to their husbands. These saved, more mature Christian women were distinguished from the anxious and uptight women around them, even in the ancient world, who were trying to drive their husbands or dominate them.
- C. The Old Testament women were different because they “hoped in God.” That is,

they trusted God in their lives, and because of this they had a different attitude about marriage and the role of the husband in the family.

“Like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master”

- A. This illustration of Sarah refers to a time when she was in unbelief about God’s ability to provide a child for her through Abraham. It was during this period of unbelief that she placed herself under Abraham’s authority and called him “master” or “lord.” If Sarah could call Abraham “master” in a state of unbelief, she could certainly do so when she was in a state of belief.
- B. Sometimes Christian wives fail in their marriages because of unbelief. They become discouraged and want to give up on their unsaved husbands, but, even in unbelief, Christian wives can call their husbands “master.”
- C. A wife with an unsaved husband might protest that being married to Abraham was not nearly as demanding as being married to her husband. After all, Abraham was a godly, wealthy man and obedient to God’s Word. Wait a minute! Sarah had problems with Abraham too. He was not an easy person to obey. Abraham may have been the father of the faithful, but as a husband he was a failure. It took him 125 years to grow up. Twice he lied about his relationship with Sarah, calling her his sister, putting Sarah’s moral reputation and physical life in great jeopardy. He did this once in Egypt and once in Philistia (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-9). On both occasions, Sarah did not enjoy Abraham’s trickery and deceit; yet she was obedient and submissive because she trusted her life to God. She believed God would take care of her and He did.

“You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.”

- A. Women who learn submission to their husbands, whether saved or unsaved, become in a spiritual sense the daughter’s of Sarah.
- B. If Christian women today were committed to the institution of marriage, committed to the family and committed to submission to their husbands, like Sarah, they would make a great impact on their community.
- C. Christian wives are not to “fear.” Sarah had reason to fear when Abraham twice pawned her off as his sister, putting her in a very vulnerable situation, but God took care of her.
- D. Christian wives who have unsaved husbands who treat them unjustly, viciously and cruelly, do not have to be afraid. They can entrust themselves to God who will take care of them. What a wonderful promise to Christian wives trying to cope with the attitudes and actions of rebellious, unsaved husbands.
- E. This does not mean, however, that a woman has to stay with an abusive husband if he repeatedly beats her or threatens her with physical harm.