

b. Instructions to Christian Wives and Husbands (3:1–7)

Because the call to faith in Christ is a call for life-changing, personal realignment, the conversion of either spouse in the Greco-Roman marriage held the potential for serious problems both between the couple and between the couple and society. Depending on how the believing spouse behaved, the situation could also provoke criticism of the Christian religion if its practices were perceived to subvert and disrupt the social order believed to be so necessary for the well-being of the empire. Converted spouses also no doubt experienced confusion about how their new identity in Christ should affect their relationship to their unbelieving spouse and whether new life in Christ necessarily implied a change of one's role within the social hierarchy.

- i. Instructions to Christian wives (3:1–6)
- ii. Instructions to Christian husbands (3:7)
- iii. The significance of Peter's teaching today

Exegesis and Exposition

¹In the same way [i.e., with all respect (2:18)], wives, submit to your own husbands, so that even if some disobey the word, they will be won over without a word through their wives' way of life, ²when they observe your pure and reverent behavior. ³Let your beauty not be from the outward braiding of hair, wearing gold, or dressing in fine clothes, ⁴rather, from the inner person of the heart adorned by the unfading gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in God's sight. ⁵For even in times past this is how the holy women who hoped in God adorned themselves, submitting to their own husbands; ⁶for instance, Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him "lord." You have become her children by doing good and not fearing any intimidation.

⁷Husbands, in the same way [i.e., with all respect (2:18)] live with the female knowing she is a weaker vessel, showing honor to her, even as a fellow heir of the grace of life so that your prayers will not be hindered.

i. Instructions to Christian Wives (3:1–6)

Just as Peter begins his instruction that slaves submit themselves to their masters in all fear of the Lord (2:18), so he begins his instructions to believing wives with the same qualification: "In the same way [with all respect], wives, submit to your own husbands" (3:1; see additional note on 2:18 for a discussion of the imperatival participle). The wife's reverence for God is her motivation

3:1-4

for submitting to her husband, regardless of whether the husband is harsh or kind. The antagonism her faith might produce is to be endured for the sake of Christ and for the possible conversion of her husband. Why would a wife's conversion likely provoke antagonism from her husband? In Greco-Roman society it was expected that the wife would have no friends of her own and would worship the gods of her husband (Plutarch, *Advice* 140.19). If this expectation is applied to a Christian wife, it might result in trouble for several reasons. First, the very fact that a woman would adopt any religion other than her husband's violated the Greco-Roman ideal of an orderly home (Oborn 1939: 133). Because prosperity and well-being were seen as dependent on religious forces, disorder in the home was a threat not only to the family but to society. Christians were frequently blamed as the cause of public calamity because they introduced a new god, upsetting the religious status quo of the empire (Oborn 1939: 137; Colwell 1939; Frensdorff 1967).

Second, the husband and society would perceive the wife's worship of Jesus Christ as rebellion, especially if she worshiped Christ exclusively. If the wife persisted in her new religion to the extent that others outside the household learned of it, the husband would also feel embarrassment and suffer criticism for not properly managing his household. This could seriously damage his social standing, even to the point of disqualifying him for certain honors and offices. Third, the wife's attendance at Christian worship would provide the opportunity for her to have fellowship with other Christians who possibly were not her husband's friends. Depending on the specifics of social expectations, a wife's conversion to Christ could potentially have far-reaching implications for her husband and family (van Rensburg 2011: 7–8).

It is significant that Peter does not directly address any of these particulars. For instance, he neither orders the wife to attend Christian worship nor gives her permission to stay home and worship privately in her heart. He instructs her simply to submit to her own husband's wishes; depending on individual proclivities, the result may or may not have been the same as the expectations of society at large.

It is an important point that Peter leaves the specifics of this matter strictly between husband and wife. The Christian wife is to submit not to the expectations of any and all men in general but to her own husband. Peter opens the door for social transformation by leaving it to husband and wife to work out the specific way her submission is to be expressed. As discussed above, the writings of the Greek moral philosophers do not usually address women (and slaves), but here Peter does so. Moreover, Peter affirms wives' (and slaves') choice to leave their former way of pagan life while at the same time instructing them to remain within their most basic relationship.

The metacommunication of Peter's instructions was probably not lost on the husband, who could see in it two points: (1) This apostle of Jesus Christ instructs the Christian slave and wife, a role that is normally the prerogative of the husband. (2) This direct instruction to slaves and wives implies that both have a measure of moral responsibility and choice unprecedented in Greek thought.

The husband or slave master cannot object, since Peter does indeed affirm the man's authority. On the other hand, he also sees in this affirmation that his wife's or slave's submission is motivated no longer by the expectations of Roman society or the principles of Greek moral philosophy but instead by the authority and example of the crucified and resurrected Christ. In a masterful move, Peter both upholds and subverts the social order.

Peter's concern that Christian wives continue to submit to their own husbands not only shields Christianity from the accusation that it is a social evil but is also clearly motivated by evangelistic intent. The unbelieving husband observes virtues in the wife's good demeanor that are motivated by her relationship with Christ, virtues not inferior to those motivated by Greek moral philosophy. Observing this, the man himself may be won to Christ "without words," for in that culture it is shameful for the wife to presume to instruct her husband (which may also be a concern in 1 Tim. 2:11-12). Here is a situation where silence is the more effective means of communication. As Brown points out, the silent witness of the wife in her home contrasts with Peter's instruction that believers are to be ready "to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (3:15; Brown 2004). Wisdom is needed to discern when to evangelize with words, but the witness of one's life speaks loudly in every circumstance.

Peter further instructs Christian women that their beauty is to be the inner quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in God's sight, and not the costly adornment of elaborate hairstyles, fine clothing, and gold jewelry, which are, of course, of great worth in society's sight. Moreover, the dress and deportment of a woman communicated social status and empowerment that could bring honor or dishonor to her husband and family (Batten 2009). Peter's concern about jewelry and fine clothing implies that at least some among the "foreigners and resident aliens" of Asia Minor actually have enough wealth to make this instruction meaningful (van Rensburg 2011; contra the theory of J. H. Elliott 1981). Peter's view on this point is not distinctively Christian, for it agrees both with the values of the OT (e.g., 1 Sam. 16:7) and with the Greek moral philosophers, who also extolled inner virtues over outer appearance. The OT focuses the exemplary woman's inner virtue on fear of the LORD: "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised" (Prov. 31:30). In contrast, the Greek ideal focused on the virtues. For Xenophon, a woman adorns the world by the daily practice of the virtues (Xenophon, *Oecon.* 7.43). For Aristotle, a woman's self-control in all she does and her inclination toward an honorable and well-ordered life with patience and gentleness are her true beauties (Aristotle, *Oec.* 3.1). Conversely, outward adornments were often perceived as instruments of seduction (Philo, *Virtues* 7.39; Plutarch, *Advice* 142.30), and a woman's use of cosmetics was viewed as an attempt to deceive; both were unnecessary if a woman stayed at home (Xenophon, *Oecon.* 10.2). A similar thought is seen in Plutarch's comment that most women stay indoors if you take from them gold-embroidered shoes, bracelets, anklets, purple, and pearls (*Advice* 142.30). In light of these

common attitudes, Peter's instructions against outward adornment make sense if a Christian wife is attending Christian worship outside her home, and especially if doing so without her husband. Society would perceive that act alone as questionable. By leaving her home unadorned, she presumably would make her intent to attend worship and not a tryst all the clearer.

5-6 Peter's reference to Israel's holy women of the past, and specifically the example of Sarah (3:6), is of particular interest in contrast to the Greek writings, as Sarah becomes the exemplar for Christian women. The reference to Sarah and Abraham in 1 Pet. 3:6 probably does not allude to a particular verse of Genesis but to the interpretive tradition of Sarah's exemplary female role that had developed in Jewish interpretation in the intervening centuries (Sargent 2015: 104).

In Gen. 18:12 LXX Sarah refers to Abraham as her lord (*kyrios*), but she does not address him by that term. This noun is the only connection between Gen. 18:12 and 1 Pet. 3:6, for the OT text does not speak of Sarah obeying. In fact, the Genesis story has Abraham obeying his wife three times (Gen. 16:2, 6; 21:12), which apparently embarrassed both Philo and Josephus, Jewish writers living in Greco-Roman society (Sly 1991). Nevertheless, Sarah's obedience to Abraham had become a long-standing element of Jewish tradition. In keeping with the overall goal to transform readers' self-understanding, apparently Peter wishes his readers to look to Sarah in Israel's religious tradition for the role model of the virtuous woman rather than those found in the Greek writings (e.g., Plutarch, *Advice* 145.48; Xenophon, *Oecon.* 7.1–10.13). Christian women are to redefine themselves as Sarah's daughters and distance themselves from the virtuous woman as defined by Greco-Roman culture.

As Spencer (2000: 113) points out, if the emphasis is to be on Sarah's obedience, Gen. 12:13 is perhaps the passage of greater relevance, for it is a key place where Sarah implicitly obeys Abraham by cooperating with his deceptive ruse in Pharaoh's court (cf. 20:5, 13). Kiley (1987: 692) sees the motifs of Gen. 12 and 20 to be the relevant background. In these episodes, Sarah submits to the albeit questionable wisdom of her husband "*in an unjust and frightening situation in a foreign land/hostile environment*" (emphasis original). In this way Sarah's situation parallels that of the Christian wives Peter addresses, living as foreigners and resident aliens in a hostile society.

T. Martin (1999: 146) argues that the pseudepigraphal book Testament of Abraham is the most likely literary background because it does contain "specific situations where Sarah addresses Abraham as 'lord' and obeys him. This text also contains the idea of Sarah as the mother of the elect and connects good deeds with fearlessness," all of which are also elements of 1 Pet. 3:6. Martin is probably right that the Testament of Abraham preserves some of the traditions about Sarah shared by its author and the author of 1 Peter, though not necessarily through any direct literary dependence.

The apostle Peter is most likely simply drawing on Jewish interpretive tradition and would not have intended a choice of any one passage from Genesis

or any other text in order to understand his reference to Sarah. In Jewish tradition Sarah is a virtuous woman, and virtuous women are understood to be obedient to their husbands.

Peter instructs Christian women, who may have been familiar with the Greek role models, to look instead to the founding “first lady” of God’s covenant people in the tradition that they now embrace as their own. By virtue of being born again into the living hope of the gospel, they now have Sarah as their spiritual ancestor. In Christian thinking that motivates wifely behavior, the Greek moral philosophers are now to be replaced with the writings of Yahweh’s prophets. This is another way Peter subtly subverts Greco-Roman culture.

The Christian women of Asia Minor are “daughters” of Sarah if they do what is right and do not give way to the kind of fear that results in hatred and hostility. Therefore, Christian women married to unbelieving men are not to despise and reject their husbands, making the household climate one of hostility, but to subject themselves even to unjust treatment because of their faith in Christ, and in so doing accomplish God’s better way.

The exhortation for wives to be subject to their own husbands in proximity to the discussion of Jesus as the model for Christian suffering immediately raises the question of whether women should stay in marriages where there is physical abuse (Reeder 2015). There is nothing in this passage of Scripture that would either sanction the abuse of wives or suggest that women should continue to submit themselves to that kind of treatment. The nature of the suffering that Peter is addressing is primarily verbal abuse and loss of social standing. Slaves were commonly beaten, not because they were Christian, but because they were considered property (though their Christian faith may have exacerbated hostility from unbelieving masters; 2:20). Peter wants Christians to conduct their relationships in a way that would be considered a good witness to unbelieving society. Because even Greco-Roman statutes did not sanction spousal abuse—even though it occurred frequently—a woman who endured domestic violence would not necessarily have been considered a virtuous wife (Reeder 2015; deSilva 2000: 39). Peter is speaking specifically of suffering that may come from standing for an unpopular belief and doing what is good and right in the name of Christ. In fact, Peter delicately prohibits domestic violence in the exhortation to husbands that immediately follows.

ii. Instructions to Christian Husbands (3:7)

In his household code, Peter addresses last those who have the most power and authority. He begins his exhortation to husbands with the same qualification as for slaves and wives: “In the same way [with all respect (2:18)], live with your wives knowing that . . .” (3:7). The two near objects, that the woman is a “weaker vessel” and that she is, nevertheless, a coheir are subsumed by the context of a knowledge of God in Christ.

3:7

It is too often and too quickly assumed that Peter here addresses the Christian husband of a believing, Christian wife.¹ Fewer argue that the wives in view are, in fact, not Christian (Gross 1989). Moreover, as some have observed, the Greek word used in the instructions to men here is not the noun usually used to refer to a wife (γυνή, *gynē*), as in 3:1, but is the adjective γυναικεῖος (*gynaikeios*, female) used substantivally. (Compare Paul's choice of *gynē*, wife, in his household code [Eph. 5:22–25], which focuses specifically on the marriage relationship as reflecting Christ's relationship to the church.) The singular article may refer to a class, the female, and not necessarily to one woman. In the context of the household, "the female" would refer primarily to the wife of the man addressed but also suggests a broader reference, possibly to all the women living within the household under the authority of the *pater familias*—daughters, mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and so on (Achtmeier 1996: 217; J. Green 2007: 99; Grudem 1988: 77; Reicke 1964: 102; contra Dubis 2010: 95; Schreiner 2020: 184). For instance, in Homer (which was recited well into NT times), Telemachus reminds his mother of his authority in the household and forbids her to speak to men in public (Keener 2021: 215). This broadening of the women in view in 3:7 is a clue that modern interpreters must not reduce this passage to a modern marriage manual, for that was not its purpose when originally written.

The Christian conversion of a married man would have raised issues within the marriage relationship whether or not the wife also became a true believer, and Peter's exhortation would be applicable in either case. Peter directly addresses the general Greco-Roman attitude of the inferiority of women by pointing out that the female also is a coheir of grace and therefore not excluded from the same privileges of grace enjoyed by the male.

Interpreters perhaps often assume that the female in view is the believing wife of a Christian husband because Greco-Roman mores expected a wife (indeed, all members of the household) to follow the religion of the male head of the household. Because of social conditioning, it may have been true that the wife typically followed the Christian conversion of the husband with at least outward compliance to his new religion, and if she experienced true, heartfelt conversion to Christ, so much the better. Nevertheless, the situation of a Christian husband with a reluctant, unbelieving wife is not outside the purview of this exhortation.

The Christian conversion of a man with a pagan wife would probably not provoke the same social concerns as the conversion of a wife with a pagan husband. However, the extent to which the pagan wife openly resists Christian worship and practices may bring embarrassment on the husband for not properly managing his household. This would be especially acute for men of social standing and power, for, as Plutarch (*Advice* 144.43) writes, "A

1. Beare 1970: 157; Best 1971: 127; Boring 1999: 127; Davids 1990: 122; J. H. Elliott 2000: 582; McKnight 1996: 185; Michaels 1988: 169, though entertaining the possibility that the wife may not be Christian.

man therefore ought to have his household well harmonized who is going to harmonize State, Forum, and friends" (Babbitt 1971: 333). A similar concern likely motivates the apostle Paul when he discusses qualifications for the elders and deacons of the church in 1 Tim. 2-3. Nevertheless, husbands are not encouraged to be despotic tyrants with their wives; rather, as Plutarch (*Advice* 144.47) continues, "The husband ought to show no greater respect for anybody than for his wife" (Babbitt 1971: 337). Peter also recommends respect for the wife, apparently without differentiating between the couple who are both Christians and the Christian husband with a nominally Christian but inwardly pagan wife.

The reference to the wife as coheir of the gracious gift of life may at first glance seem to eliminate the possibility that she is not a Christian (J. Green 2007: 100n90). There was apparently greater nuance in how the spiritual states of family members were perceived, such as, for instance, Paul's teaching: "For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). Furthermore, *hōs kai* (3:7) may be read "as even a coheir." This would then indicate that the husband is to treat his wife as if she were a sister in Christ. The unbelieving wife is to be accorded the same respect as a fellow Christian (since society would assume she shared her husband's religion) with the hope that her husband may win her to authentic faith. The believing wife, on the other hand, deserves to be treated as a fellow believer despite her gender. If she is a Christian, her status as a coheir levels the spiritual ground between the believing husband and believing wife, opening the door wider for social transformation.

Peter's description of the female as the "weaker vessel" reflects similar descriptions in the Greek writings that should perhaps inform our understanding here. (See Keener 2021:247-50 for an extensive list of ancient sources.) Aristotle (*Oec.* 1.3.4) understands that weakness to be both in body and in courage: "For Providence made man stronger and woman weaker, so that he in virtue of his manly prowess may be more ready to defend the home, and she, by reason of her timid nature, more ready to keep watch over it" (Armstrong 1936: 333). Xenophon (*Oecon.* 7.23-28) also discusses the different attributes of men and women:

[God] made the man's body and mind more capable of enduring cold and heat, and journeys and campaigns; and there imposed on him the outdoor tasks. To the woman, since he has made her body less capable of such endurance, I take it that God has assigned the indoor tasks. . . . And since he imposed on the woman the protection of the stores also, knowing that for protection a fearful disposition is no disadvantage, God meted out a larger share of fear to the woman than to the man; and knowing that he who deals with the outdoor tasks will have to be their defender against any wrong-doer, he meted out to him again a larger share of courage. (Marchant 1938: 421)

According to the prevalent understanding of the time, God impartially gave memory, attention, and the power to practice self-control to both man and woman. Gender-differentiated aptitudes make the husband and wife mutually dependent because the one is competent where the other is deficient.

In the context of 1 Peter, “weaker vessel” is primarily understood as indicating physical weakness relative to men’s strength. Therefore, Peter’s exhortation indirectly addresses the issue of physical abuse. However, the immediate context makes it clear that the female is also weaker in the sense of social entitlement and empowerment. Peter teaches that men whose authority runs roughshod over their women, even with society’s full approval, will not be heard by God. As Joseph points out, Peter’s “words to the husbands in the congregations encourage them to demonstrate an attitude that Abraham failed to demonstrate in the face of sufferings. Abraham puts Sarah’s life in jeopardy in order to save his own life” (Joseph 2012: 147).

This concept is certainly consistent with OT teaching. Yet because Peter is engaging the Greco-Roman worldview, he probably alludes here to the thought, common in ancient society, that the prayers of the male head of household to the gods are important for the prosperity and well-being of the household and therefore contribute to the well-being of the city (Xenophon, *Oecon.* 5.19–20). Peter points out that the well-being of the Christian household depends on the man recognizing the female as a coheir in Christ and living with her respectfully, even though he is the physically stronger and socially empowered male. In this way Peter delicately prohibits domestic violence in the Christian household.

iii. The Significance of Peter’s Teaching Today

The reader who does not understand Peter’s intent in his instruction of slaves, wives, and husbands will not understand the message of 1 Peter. Within this passage Peter grounds his ethical teaching on the Christian life rightly lived after the example of Christ’s suffering. How shortsighted it is to use this passage as if it were a marriage manual simply addressing the relationship between husbands and wives! And how ironic it is that the words that first-century slaves and wives would have read as affirming and empowering are criticized by some today as enslaving and oppressive. When read within its original historical setting, these verses become a call to social transformation within the Christian community, allowing it to become an alternate society based on God’s redemptive plan. The Christian’s willingness to suffer unjustly out of reverence for God in order to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ is a radical break with social expectations of that day just as it is in our own day. Peter affirms aspects of the cultural expectations of his day, yet he does so for theological reasons that masterfully subvert traditional social structures. Whereas other Jewish writers, such as Philo and Josephus, accept the household ethic code of Hellenistic society as compatible with Jewish tradition (Balch 1981: 73; Sly 1991), Peter—also a Jewish writer—creatively points to a new way traced out by the footsteps of Christ.

These instructions to slaves, wives, and husbands appear in a unit of discourse that begins with the exhortation for Christians to live such good lives among the pagans that they might ultimately glorify God (2:12). They are to submit to the authority of human institutions so that ignorant talk about Christians will be silenced (2:13). It may be surmised, therefore, that one of Peter's primary concerns is that Christian behavior should not give Christ a bad name among unbelievers. Peter encourages his readers to conduct themselves in a way that would be both recognized and respected by Roman rulers and society as good, silencing the criticism, slander, and persecution of unbelievers.

Peter emphasizes the evangelistic and apologetic value of submission within the household. Paul, in contrast, roots the submission of the wife to the husband in the relationship between Christ and the church and in the creation of marriage as a one-flesh union (Eph. 5:21-33). The Christian man must love his wife as Christ loved the church (5:25) and as he loves himself (5:33). The Christian wife must submit to her own husband (5:22) and must respect her husband (5:33). While we must not simply conflate Peter's thought with Paul's, we also must not conclude that Peter's teaching on submission is simply posturing to win favor for Christianity in the eyes of pagan society.

Although both the Greek moral philosophers and the NT speak of "submission," the apostolic definition of it and foundation for it are completely different. The Greco-Roman worldview was concerned with the pragmatic benefits of social stability; the Christian view of submission is concerned with honoring transcendent theological values that ought to capture the heart of believers and transform them within all of their relationships.

Paul's household code in Eph. 5:21-6:9 provides a model of mutual submission and love in marriage that is theologically, rather than apologetically, grounded. In contrast to Peter's one-verse instruction to husbands, Paul develops the theological basis for the husband's relationship to his wife that defines the character of the wife's submission (5:25-33). Christian marriage is understood as a lifelong commitment in an exclusive one-flesh union that mirrors the profound mystery of Christ and the church (5:32). On this model of Christ's love for his church and the church's submission to Christ, marital love is understood as the resolve to live one's entire life totally committed to the well-being of one's spouse in every decision. When "submission" of the wife becomes the central issue, the image of Christian marriage has already been distorted. A well-known evangelical leader is quoted as saying, "I believe in a wife submitting to her husband, but I don't believe the husband ever has the right to demand it. . . . In fact, I know when I am unworthy of it, she does not. My responsibility as a husband is to be worthy" (quoted in McKnight 1996: 192). Peter, unlike Paul, is addressing the situation where the husband is not a Christian and does not love his wife as Christ loved the church. His demands are not necessarily worthy of submission. Yet Peter instructs the Christian wife to submit to her unbelieving husband and to respect him, yet without renouncing her faith, even though she may suffer for her Christian principles. Peter's instruction is almost certainly based on the same theological understanding

of marriage as Paul's, but it also happens to formally correspond with what would be expected of the wife by her society, which has no such theological grounding for its expectation. Peter's point is that Christians must be ready to suffer unjustly because of their relationship to God in Christ.

While the foundation for Christian submission in marriage is deeply rooted in theology, the specific expressions of submission relate to the times in which we live. What counts as submission today may be quite different from what counted as submission in the first century, because social expectations differ over time and from place to place. But this does not mean that Peter's instructions are no longer relevant to Christians today since our society generally does not uphold the hierarchical model of marriage as it was practiced in the first century.

How should Peter's instructions for order in the household be applied today? As Keener asks, "Does this submission to authorities legitimize those *particular* authority structures permanently? In other words, does Peter's letter prescribe monarchy, slavery, and patriarchal marriage structures? Or does he counsel those within such situations? Considering the characters of ancient social structures may help readers today who respect Peter's counsel decide whether they should consider such structures universals or merely culturally conditioned" (Keener 2021: 210, emphasis original). According to Crouch (1972: 158), the significance of a NT household code "derives from its original situation and at the same time transcends the historically conditioned form of its exhortations," calling believers to live out the gospel in the givenness of the historical moment into which they have been placed. This allows the modern believer to reject slavery where the NT does not *explicitly* do so, because the given social order within which most of today's believers are called to live and witness rightly disallows the practice of slavery. Moreover, many Christians today live under governments where there is a mechanism for change—unlike the dictatorial regime of the Roman emperors—and Christians can work to change their social order for justice and equity in accord with biblical principles. And so the NT household codes that instruct slaves to submit to that institution in the first century do not warrant Christians supporting slavery today or being indifferent to it in those parts of the world where it is yet practiced.

Similarly, the society in which we live accords different status and privileges to women than the first century did. Accordingly, Christian men and women are called by the household codes to live out their marriages in a way that honors the gospel in today's social order. Peter wanted the first-century wife and husband to relate to each other in a manner that reflected the biblical view of marriage. It would still be wrong for a Christian husband or wife to misrepresent the character of the gospel by living in a way that is inconsistent with the biblical character of marriage. For instance, spousal abuse, infidelity, or malicious neglect violates both biblical standards and the higher ideals of social expectations. And the apologetic value of Christian behavior emphasized by Peter is still a concern. Churches must consider how their position on the role of women within the Christian community speaks to the larger social order.

Therefore, the specific expressions of appropriate submission *must* be culturally defined. A woman who is active outside the home or a married woman appearing in public without the escort of her husband or other male relative does not scandalize our society as it did in the first century. Peter wisely did not spell out in specific terms what it means for a Christian wife to submit to her husband or for a Christian husband to live considerately with his wife. The apostle laid down the principles and then left the details to be worked out between the spouses. The church today is right to uphold a biblical order within marriage that mirrors the relationship of Christ and his church, but it should also follow Peter's wisdom and refrain from trying to specify what that must look like in every case.