

1 Peter 3:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands;
that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word
be won by the conversation of the wives;

Analysis

Peter addresses Christian wives married to unbelieving husbands. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands" (homoiōs gynaikes hypotassomenai tois idiois andrasin)—voluntary submission (same word used for citizen's submission to government, 2:13). The challenging situation: "that, if any obey not the word" (hina kai ei tines apeithous in tō logō)—pagan husbands disobedient to gospel. The evangelistic strategy: "they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives" (dia tēs tōn gynaikōn anastrophēs aneu logou kerdēthēsontai). Christian witness through conduct, not preaching, may win husbands to Christ. Silent godly living speaks louder than words.

Historical Context

In Roman household structure, husbands had absolute authority (patria potestas). Wives converting to Christianity without husbands' consent risked severe consequences—divorce, violence, loss of children. Peter offers realistic counsel: maintain submission and godly conduct; let lifestyle witness speak. This strategy proved effective—Tertullian notes many pagans converted by observing Christian spouses' character. The phrase 'without the word' doesn't prohibit verbal witness but emphasizes conduct's priority when words are rejected or unwelcome.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How can Christian wives (or any believers in difficult relationships) maintain godly witness when verbal gospel sharing is rejected or prohibited?
2. What does submission 'to your own husband' mean in context of ultimate submission to Christ?

Interlinear Text

Ὅμοίως αἱ γυναῖκων ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις
Likewise G3588 **of the wives** **be in subjection** G3588 **to your own**
G3668 G1135 G5293 G2398

ἀνδράσιν ἵνα καὶ εἴ τις ἀπειθοῦσιν τῷ λόγῳ διὰ
husbands **that** **also** G1487 G5100 **obey not** G3588 **the word** **by**
G435 G2443 G2532 G544 G3056 G1223

τῆς τῶν γυναῖκων ἀναστροφῆς ἄνευ λόγου
G3588 G3588 **of the wives** **the conversation** **without** **the word**
G1135 G391 G427 G3056

κερδηθήσονται
be won
G2770

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:18 (Parallel theme): Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Ephesians 5:33 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

1 Corinthians 11:3 (Parallel theme): But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

1 Corinthians 7:16 (Parallel theme): For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

Genesis 3:16 (Parallel theme): Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

1 Peter 3:7 (Parallel theme): Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Romans 7:2 (Word): For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

1 Corinthians 14:34 (Word): Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

Matthew 18:15 (Parallel theme): Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.