

Live Together Wisely  
Sixth Sunday of Easter

Liturgical Year A

Seeds of Faith

May 14, 2023

1 Peter 3:1-9

Having read three of the four suggested scriptures left me empty handed. I was hoping the fourth scripture was going to inspire me. As I was paging through the Bible looking for 1 Peter 3:13-22 I first came across 1 Peter 3:1-9 BINGO this was it. I continued reading the fourth text but that left me going back to the Big Bang that got my heart pumping.

Why 1 Peter 3:1-9 gets so many people all worked up has always bothered me. When the text is thoroughly studied historically and exegetically it all makes sense. I thought it might be fun to share with you what my four different commentaries have to say and let you cool your own jets. The text has to do with “women being submissive.” DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION NOW?

1 Interpreters Dictionary ID was printed in 1957. I refer this era as “Father Knows Best.” The ID takes only five pages to cover this text.

The ID informs us that women outnumbered the men in the church. That remains true today, women outnumber the men. Since women belong to the “weaker” sex, please wait till I finish all four interpretations, the women were supposed to follow the husband. In the Old Testament Sarah followed her husband Abraham as they traveled from the Fertile Crescent Valley to Egypt.

In being submissive, the women were to win their husbands over to Christianity.

The husband was to be the head of the house but not the dictator. Being the head of the house, the husband was to meet the needs of the wife. The wife was to be given the lighter chores. The husband was also reminded that his wife was to be his best neighbor.

PLEASE BARE WITH ME I HAVE THREE MORE COMMENTARIES TO SHARE!

2. The Daily Study Bible written 1957-59 by William Barclay, sold over 1.5 million copies. Barclay is my favorite New Testament scholar who unravels the way it was. Barclay lived from December 5, 1907, to January 24, 1978. He believes in universal salvation, sees war as “mass murder” and believes in evolution. His commentary on the New Testament was a scholarly interpretation of the Bible for the average reader. Barclay refers to himself as an Evangelical Liberal.

Barclay reminds us here that the author of 1 Peter now directs us to domestic problems. The author’s speech to the wives was six times as long as it was for the husbands. Why do you ask? **According to Barclay the wife had a much more difficult task than that of the husband.**

Back during the time of the writing of 1 Peter woman was just a “thing.” According to Roman law the husband owned the wife. Egnatues found his wife drinking wine and legally beat her to death. Some of this same kind of thinking still exists today. The woman was to remain indoors and be obedient. She spent the rest of her life as if she were still a child.

It was the wife’s job to covert her husband to Christianity. She was not to argue nor to preach at her husband but to conduct “silent preaching.” Through the loveliness of her life the man was to be converted. Barclay calls this “voluntary selfishness.”

The husband was also asked to reciprocate with voluntary selfishness. At all times the husband is to be sensitive to her feelings and understanding.

3. Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching by Pheme Perkins, 1995. Pheme gives six pages to 1 Peter 3:1-9

The stress here is women's behavior will convert unbelieving husbands. When the wife replaces her jewels with virtues beautiful changes can take place. Stress is made on women giving their extra clothes away to the needy.

Men are called to be a "vessel" use honorable conduct and use restraint in sexual behavior.

4. Smyth and Helwys written 2010 and still in the process of being completed. This commentary gives 20 pages to 1 Peter 3:1-9

Our author, Richard B. Wilson, stresses that we need to understand the text in its own terms. In the first century man was the head of the household, and he had authority over females' slaves and unmarried daughters.

Wilson is fast to point out that there are three examples in 1 Peter about subordination. In one example, 2:13-17 we are called to be subordinated to everyone. In another example we are all slaves to God.

Back in the early church there were many mysterious religions. It was a very confusing time. The Roman government laid down some pretty strict rules for women. Wilson candidly pointed out in the Old Testament Rebecca tricked the old blind man, Abraham.

Not every early Christian text for women begins with obedience and submission.

SIEBERTS COMMENTARY: This is why I get paid the big money.

I write these commentaries not to sell books nor to impress anyone. I WRITE TO MEDITATE. Commentaries are my guide, but the Bible is still my main resource. The Bible is all about getting along with the neighborhood and loving God.

I love learning about the historical background for every text yet at the same time I treat the Bible as a book that is alive, and interpretation and imagination goes along with understanding the text.

I am saddened when I see this text about women and men being used by men to control their woman and woman who use this text as if this is a mandate to be treated poorly by men.

1 Peter 3:1-9 is a great step up from how women were being treated. Please remember, women had no voice, no future, no place in society. The author of Peter was lifting the role of women like it had never been done before.

Books like Colossians and Ephesians implores us to “love our wives the same as Christ love others.” We are to love our wife with no bitterness towards her.

We are invited to move the text from the first century to 2023. The text loudly tells me that we are to live together wisely and to respect one another. I like Barclays thing about not preaching, lecturing, or arguing with one another but just to sit there in the stillness of one another. Silent preaching might be a good lesson for us all, married or not.

I like the idea that we are all called to be submissive to the rules of the road, to artists and poets who see more than we do, to our parents, to anyone who is placed in a high position.

I liken this to a football team. Every player has a different role to play. When the team works together, appreciating the talents of the others, harmony takes place. We submit to the other and the common good takes place. When one player thinks he or she is the whole team, then disharmony and jealousy arise.

When couples enhance one another, submit, we can cover up one another's deficiencies. This does not make one inferior to the other or less important, it just makes the team, the marriage, the relationship more viable, more neighborly.

May we all take the time to be more understanding and sensitive to each other's feelings. LIVE TOGETHER WISELY. This text is not just about marriage, it is about every kind of relationship we find ourselves in.

The Bible also belongs to you, what is your take?

Dennis Siebert