

Date : 23 March 2025
Topic : Resolving conflicts
Key Passage : 1 Peter 3: 7 - 9
Key Verse : *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. 1 Peter 3: 7 NIV*

The Tension in 1 Peter

The context in Peter's passage is that the wives and husbands whom he addresses are experiencing huge tensions in their marriages.

The tensions are created because one spouse (mainly wives) have been converted to Christianity and the other doesn't.

- Poor status of woman
Women were classed with slaves in Peter's day.
Wives were expected to follow their husband's religions (whatever they were).
- Patriarchal society
The fact that a wife would be adopting another religion (other than her husband's) would be considered open rebellion and cause him embarrassment.
A wife's devotion to Christ led to huge problems in the home.

(When couples prepare for marriage, most are confident that things will go smoothly for them; the married ones know that marriages go through periods of tensions and worse).
- Persecuted sect and harassment (in Peter's time AD60's).
AD64 Roman Emperor Nero began to persecute Christians. July of that year a huge fire destroyed much of Rome and the Emperor accused Christians of starting the fire.
This led to heightened persecutions; Peter was martyred AD65.

In light of the above circumstances, Peter is writing to marriages that are under emotional strain and societal stress caused by a faith that is under state scrutiny. He is writing to wives whose husbands (and society) do not understand their commitment to Christ. He is addressing marriages with hostile husbands and anxious wives. What are wives to do? What about husbands?

1. Wives to submit to your own husbands.

This is not what we like to hear when we are the victims of injustice, experiencing strain and suspense and are even the victim of ridicule and unfair treatment.

- Inner courage
Peter is not advising these wives to be merely doormats. They have already stepped out and become different by believing in Christ. Now, how will the wives' new identity in Christ show their astuteness in a ever-deepening respect for their non-believing husbands? Will their belonging to the church unleash the fragrance of that inner strength and beauty so that the loveliness of Christian character speaks more powerfully than any word spoken?

- The wife's submission is modelled after Jesus' submission. *1 Peter 2:21-25*.
The call to submit is not based on sexism, the call is to live out her identity in a wider Christian virtue which we all pursue in various relationships:
 - All to be subject to authorities *1 Peter 2:13-17*
 - Household servants to be subject to masters *1 Peter 2:18-25*
 - Wives to be submissive to husbands (including unbelieving husbands) *1 Peter 3:1-6*
 - Church to be tender hearted, to submit to and serve each other.
- i) Wife's submission has deep roots
- Faith in God *...put their hope in God...* (= the sovereign goodness of God) *1 Peter 3:5*
 - Fearlessness = triumph over fear *1 Peter 3:6*
 - Focus *...sight of God.*
God sees great value in her gentle and quiet spirit 1 Peter 3:4, 15
The purpose is to win her husband to her and the Lord's side *1 Peter 3:1*
- (What submission is not...)
- Not agreeing with everything her husband says
 - Not avoiding to rock the boat.
Instead the whole point is *...they (husbands) may be won... by the conduct of their wives... 1 Peter 3:1*
 - Not acting out of fear but *...to do good and without fear... 1 Peter 3:6*.
- ii) Wife's submission is
- Freely offered, never demanded
Totally committed to well-being of husband.
 - Surrender of ego, laying aside your rights, imitate Christ's example so as to serve others.
- iii) Which identity am I feeding in times of anxiety and stress?
My identity in Christ or my identity in my rights?
The identity I feed more will always be my dominant identity.

2. Husbands to regard wives as spiritual coheirs. *1 Peter 3:7*

Peter does not let husbands off the hook either. He is writing to husbands who felt their wives have let them down. He says the best way is to lay aside your rights and put the well-being of your spouse as your priority, even when they don't deserve it. The best way to respond to stress in marriage is to allow God to change you and your spouse.

It is not for you to change her.

- *...to be considerate* to her
The husband to treat his wife as an equal partner of God's grace.
- *...live with them* (make time for her)
Take time to understand your wife – get to know her needs, desires, wants.
- *...treat them with respect* (make her feel safe)
Women then were in a weaker position; men had all the power in the relationship.

3. When conflicts arise

Fights and arguments are an inevitable part of the marriage relationship. (video)
(Dr John Gottman, marriage and relationship therapist, after studying 3,000 couples for more than 40 years concluded that close to 70% of marriage conflicts are never resolved. He calls these unresolved issues “gridlocks” which are mostly unfulfilled dreams, fears from childhood traumas. He advised moving from gridlocks to dialogues in these issues).

Most common everyday conflicts involve...

- Money
- Housework
- Free time
- Extended family
- Parenting styles

a) To contain conflicts...

- Listen between the lines

Wife : (Home after severe stress at workplace).
Tough day! It's draining me physically and emotionally.
Husband : (Answers, without looking at her).
Why don't you quit this job? Take a few days off.
Wife : (Silence. Felt hurt by his thoughtless remarks).

All that she needed to hear was her husband say how well she was managing even in such a stressful time, perhaps responding with a tap on her back.

- Identify the problem, do not globalize the issue.

The husband has forgotten to bring home the grocery items on your list.
○ Do not globalize ...*you never remember, ...never listen to me...*
○ Do not call up past offenses. ...*you are always like this...*

- Be the first to apologise the moment you realise you have been ungracious.
Do not expect the other person to apologise first.

b) To turn conflicts into an advantage

- Change our attitude that all differences are bad.
If marriage is a matching of two incomplete halves, then each half only needs to interlock like an engine with a gear box; both halves do not have to be identical.
- Identify the hidden wisdom in the other person's point of view.
- Often it is from another person's perspective that we acquire wisdom.
Because life's future is not easily foreseeable, we should listen to our spouse, instead of holding on stubbornly to our own pet ideas.

In many areas our spouse may have more wisdom and insight.
Recognise the areas in which they have consistently shown better judgement.

Wife : better in planning holidays, hotel.
Husband : in finding directions in new places, planning new routes.

c) To resolve conflicts, develop effective communication habits

Identify your communication style and that of your spouse.

Key considerations to develop two-way communication. **L.I.S.T.E.N.**

Learn each other's views (try N. Anderson's questions, below).

Invest in your relationship with your wife above pleasures, plans, purchases.

Seek each other's sense of personal security

Insecure people feel they must win every argument.

- Husband should just latch on to his wife's strength. Acknowledge that she may be smarter. So, the Word of God tells us *...dwell with her according to knowledge...* not ignorance.
- Forging ahead in ignorance without a detail knowledge of your wife's background could have disastrous results.
- Every husband should leverage on his strength to always show love and care. The wife, being weaker, needs help. This will contribute to open lines of communication.

Terms unpacking by eliciting information.

Explore by persuading, negotiating

Navigate through doubts, differences

A husband felt he was put to shame publicly during his childhood years when his parents, to discipline him, had beaten him in front of his friends. His wife, who knew about this, but had forgotten it, one day made a fool of him in front of her friends. He felt so humiliated that he divorced her.

- Note hot button issues and avoid them out of respect for your spouse. These are issues that precipitate arguments. Because of past hurts, thoughtless comments could ignite fear or insecurity.

(*The Christ Centered Marriage* by Neil Anderson and Charles Mylander pages 138, 139)

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
1. Some things are better left unsaid even if your spouse insists on knowing.	_____	_____
2. Speaking the truth in love doesn't mean you always have to tell the truth.	_____	_____
3. If you become very angry, the best thing to do is to walk away or stay and fight.	_____	_____
4. The husband should have control of the finance in the home.	_____	_____
5. You don't have to forgive each other if the other person won't admit to being wrong.	_____	_____
6. Wives are actually in a better position to make decisions concerning the family.	_____	_____
7. Husband and wife should always sleep in the same bed.	_____	_____
8. There should be no secret between husband and the wife.	_____	_____
9. The father should lead the family devotions.	_____	_____
10. A husband should tell his wife where he is going and for how long.	_____	_____