



# Sermon Growth Guide

**February 7, 2021**

## **Here We Go! – Deploy Generosity**

### **1 Peter 3:1–9**

**Key Verse:** 1 Peter 3:8–9 “Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

**Big Idea:** Value #6 Deploy Generosity: Invest who you are and what you have in what God wants to do.

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## **Foundations**

A generous giver in Scripture is one who gives more than expected, who gives out of a place of abundance, who understands that God supplies all that is needed.

A generous God makes us generous. Our passage today, that addresses wives and husbands directly, is undergirded by what Peter said just before the opening of chapter 3, “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” There is no better example of generosity than Christ at the cross, and we remember this generosity, our premier example for our own lives, as we celebrate the Lord’s Table today.

“We remember this week,” writes Pastor Jennifer, “that we are called to pour out our own lives for Christ, to give ourselves away generously and without reserve ... that our lives might bear witness to the amazing grace of Jesus.”

Gathered together with your circle, open your time of study in prayer. Ask the Spirit to guide and guard your spiritual formation, your growth in Christ.

## **Understanding God’s Word**

In the back half of verse 1, what goal is stated for the wife to voluntarily submit (Greek, *hypotásso*, here, “to willingly arrange under for the sake of Christ”) to her husband?

Peter turns to husbands in verse 7 and defends his call for a husband to care for and respect his wife on the grounds that she is a co-heir to the glory of Christ, and so what in the husband’s life is not hindered?

Peter sums up his instruction to wives and husbands in verses 8 and 9. What catches your attention in this summation?

## **Applying God’s Word**

Our sixth value challenges us to “invest who you are and what you have in what God wants to do.” Can you identify something you are investing in purely for your own sake? With your circle, discern how you can even more bring God’s will into your decision-making around your resources (time, finances, etc).

## **Witnessing God’s Word**

To whom can you generously pour out your resources to this week that they might come to know and love Jesus? Pray with your circle that the lost around you would be found.

Today we come to this table of love. This table of radical generosity where we remember that Christ gave everything to bring us salvation. Even His own life. We eat and drink at this table and we are nourished by Jesus himself. Open your Bibles to 1 Peter 3:1-9.

*Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.*

*7 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.*

*8 Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*

Our sixth value in pursuit of Jesus, is **Deploy Generosity**. Invest who you are and what you have in what God wants to do. Where are you giving?

Last week outside the Sanctuary during one of the morning services, I ran into one of our dads with his 13-month-old, Bruce. Bruce needed some wiggle time. I had baptized little Bruce last June, but hadn't really seen him since. He saw me and reached out from his dad's firm and familiar hold toward me—wanting to be held by me. I was taken aback, surprised—

this little guy was fully secure in his dad's protection and love that he could reach out to a stranger and give me a big hug. I can't tell you how good that felt in this time of COVID where we've all held back from touching each other. This little guy came straight at me with an abundance of generous love and blessing. The last time I held him I dumped a bunch of lukewarm water on his head! And still he reached out to me. It was a wonderful and life-giving moment—so good! I walked away thinking, I want to be more like Bruce! The main point of our passage today could be summed up like this: Be like Bruce. Run toward others giving away love and joy and blessing without reserve. **Deploy generosity.**

A generous giver, according to Scripture, is one who gives more than expected. It is one who gives out of a place of abundance, who understands that God supplies all that is needed and so the giver doesn't worry or fear that he or she will be left empty after being generous, but in faith lives from a posture of giving knowing that God is the provider of all things he or she will ever need. *A generous God makes us generous.*

That's why Peter can write with confidence such an unexpected and surprising command to his fellow believers: "Repay evil and insult with blessing." To those who speak poorly of you, who insult you, and wish evil on you, those who intend you harm—literally, speak well of them. Bless them. Give them a blessing. In a world where evil and insult rule the day, deploy generosity. Send out the unexpected blessing of the Lord, and watch how God supplies for all your needs and uses your witness to change lives. *Because to this, writes Peter, you were called.*

Peter sums up this whole section of his letter with the call to be remarkably different than the surrounding culture: *Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*



### The Surrounding Culture

As Pastor Tim said last week, it's hard to get our heads around what it must have been like to live in the Roman Empire at this time. The culture was organized into a brutal hierarchy. For women, slaves, foreigners and the lower class, the system was set. You submitted to those above you or you faced the consequences. For those in places of power, the weak were to be lorded over, exploited and ruled. Submission to the powers over you was a given. And it is into this established and harsh culture that the work of God is planted. The young churches that Peter is writing to have been set in place by the Holy Spirit to be a witness for Christ. Men and women, slave and free, Jew and Gentile. The Spirit breaks down the barriers, brings people together who shouldn't be associating with one another, and stands them next to each other—eye to eye, shoulder to shoulder, side by side, brothers and sisters in Christ. Slowly and patiently the generous work of the Kingdom goes forth and people normally divided by class, gender and race are being built together as living stones. Love, compassion, sympathy, unity and humility are the building blocks of this temple. Last week, we looked at Peter's instructions to slaves and to those who lived under Nero, one of the cruelest leaders of all time. Today we hear his words to wives and husbands.

### Instructions to Wives

Our passage opens with Peter speaking directly to the wives in the congregations (more specifically, he speaks to wives of unbelieving husbands who have not yet received Jesus as Lord and Savior, who do not believe the Word).

*Wives, in the same way... (taken from the past few paragraphs, "out of reverence for the Lord")... submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.*

In that time, wives were considered the property of their husbands. They didn't have a choice in who they married. Marriages were strategic—put together for the man and his well-being. Wives

could be dismissed for any reason at any time—their husband doesn't like how they looked? Gone. Infertile? Divorced. They contract a disease? Done. There was no recourse, no protection, no justice for a dismissed wife. Wives had to follow the husband's line in all things, including religion. Stay in line, don't rock the boat. If you got kicked out, there's nowhere to go. That's how it was. It's hard to understand what a marriage like this was like. It's not where we live.

This courageous group of wives who Peter is writing to had met Jesus and joined these little congregations of believers. They were taking enormous risk. A wife was not supposed to have a different religion than her husband. She could be dismissed simply for this act.

But the word of God comes to them, specifically—right here. Literally, the words mean—*Wives, place yourselves underneath your own husbands*. But it causes pause doesn't it. Why these words? Of all the words Peter could have written in these moments to encourage, why does he write "submit?" Wives already had to submit to their husbands, that's what the societal code demanded. Is Peter just rubbing salt in an open wound? Do they really have a choice? The answer is yes—there is a choice. You can submit because the code demands it and pushes you into it, or you can submit from a place of complete freedom in Christ out of love and the beauty of serving another—a spirit that chooses to place myself underneath another and trust God with what happens next. To be a disciple of Jesus is to serve.

This whole moment is quite amazing. God sees wives. He sees women. He knows their situation and He calls them to follow in the way of Christ. These women are given spiritual training. That in itself is unheard of. Peter's instructions are to equip them to be effective evangelists in their own homes. The goal is not to separate from an ungodly husband, but to win him for Christ. In this litany of submission, we reach the next group—all citizens to the emperor, all believers to one another, all slaves to master, all wives to husbands. Why? With an eye to showing the world who Jesus is.



So, how does a wife with an unbelieving husband bear witness to Jesus in her marriage? Peter says, not with words but in quiet and godly submission (coming underneath her husband)—that he might see her works and glorify God (1 Peter 2:12).

Not with words; also not with fancy hair or really cool jewelry or foreign perfume! Not that these things are evil. Peter says not to stress so much about all that. There's another way into a more lasting beauty. The one way in this culture that women had power over men was with their external beauty. So, should a wife use that kind of power to get her husband to know Christ? No. It is not your looks that change a man ... it is the Spirit of God who transforms a life. Our lives become a holy witness to others of the saving grace of God. Trust Jesus and be a blessing to your husband.

I need to add here that this is a Scripture that has been quoted way too many times to keep wives in abusive relationships. Let me be really clear: this is a terrible misuse of this passage. There is no call for wives to endure abuse, physical harm or gross manipulation from their husbands. And if that's the situation you are in as wives, please let someone know—a pastor or a trusted brother or sister. The body of Christ is called to protect the weaker ones, not push them back into suffering.

### Instructions to Husbands

And then Peter writes to husbands in the room:

*"Husbands, in the same way (out of reverence for Christ) be considerate as you live with your wives"—or "consider your wives." Be kind, thoughtful, generous, consider them—be in tune with what's going on with them. Treat them with respect (with honor) as the weaker partner. And this is in reference to a woman's physical frame, physical strength. For the most part men can physically overpower women.*

Adam and I sometimes try to figure out who the "weaker partner" is between us—and it's usually in the form of who can get this impossible salsa jar open. I can outswim my husband, but when it comes

to core strength, Adam is stronger.

But here's the thing—what is the norm in the culture is that anyone who is considered weak (see previous list of who is lowest in the hierarchy), they are to be lorded over and they are to stay in their place of weakness. But, in the Kingdom of God, the weak are to be lifted up, honored, given the best seat at the table, given respect. Peter turns the paradigm on its head. The weak are given the greatest honor. And, then he ties this to the husband's prayer lives. If you don't honor and respect who is weak in your house, your prayers will be hindered. I'll let you all discuss that part over lunch. It's what Peter writes. I'll just say this: *A Generous God makes us generous*. Get generous like Jesus, and you'll get closer to Jesus.

Husbands, Peter writes that your wives are heirs with you, co-heirs, of the gracious gift of life. Again, let's get in context. This was probably the first and only time these husbands heard a speaker up front directly talking to their wives—they had to stop and look at their wives while the main teaching was all for them. Do you see that? Shoulder to shoulder, side by side. A wife's spiritual life with the Lord is not granted through her husband—but she stands strong and robust next to him as a full receiver of the grace of God. This is a radical gospel for a cultural context that has no category for this truth. Peter is setting a frame for marriage that elevates wives and hearkens back to Genesis. The two (different yet equally bearing the image of God) shall become one (Genesis . I had a mentor once tell me that Christian marriage is two people out of love for one another and for Christ working to out-serve the other. Pouring out blessing and generously giving themselves for the sake of the other. As Paul writes in Ephesians 5:21: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Mutual submission is a radical departure from how our world works, and a transforming commitment that changes hearts.

So, the question remains: Do I have to submit in marriage? Absolutely not. You don't *have* to do anything. Rather, do I have the privilege of submitting myself to my husband, coming underneath him to bless and lift and be part of the work





have the privilege of submitting myself to my husband, coming underneath him to bless and lift and be part of the work God is doing in his life to make him more like Christ? Yes! Why wouldn't I want to be a part of this? In marriage, we have the joyful and loving opportunity to practice submission with the one we love most in this world.

And I want to add this for my sisters: our salvation does not come in climbing the ladder of brutal hierarchy—striving to acquire position where people must now serve and submit to us. That's the way of the world. In the world, Jesus says, greatness is measured by how many people serve you. In the Kingdom, greatness is measured by how many people you serve. That's Mark 10. And hear me: as women step into more places of leadership, that is so good, give it your all, lead with all your gifts—and let's all remember who we are in Christ. We don't lord over anyone, we serve and we lift and we love. The way of Jesus is the path of humble submission ... freely chosen for the sake of Christ that others might know Jesus. This is true power.

The other night, Adam and I had a tense moment over an empty ketchup bottle. There are lots of things we can do without in our home, but ketchup is not one of them. After a few moments back and forth, Adam offered to go get some. I won't go into the details, but it was a move of self-sacrifice and servanthood. (I know ketchup is silly.) But he blessed me enormously in that moment.

It's not about ketchup or toothpaste or toilet paper, but each of these is an opportunity to practice servanthood and generosity, giving up my preferences for the sake of someone else—so when the bigger things come along, there is a grid for how we bring our lives before God together to discern the way forward. I want to say that Adam is an incredible servant to our family. He'll tell you that his call in our marriage and our family is to be the head servant, to model servanthood for all of us—because, ultimately, we are all called to bless and serve. He'll also tell you he's not very good at it. But I'm going to tell you that he is awesome at it because

he's close. It's not easy to serve others. Ever. To deploy generosity at this level is impossible without Jesus.

So, some of you are saying, I'm not married. What's this whole thing got to do with me? I'm 12. Listen, **a generous God makes us generous**. Marriage is just one example. But it's an intense one. If you're not married, this helps you think about a future marriage, or a past marriage, or a friend's marriage, and that's perfect. But more important, here is the bigger theme.

*How do you live generously? How do you deploy generosity? Of course, it also touches finances, our giving. How hard is it for you to open your wallet and give away what you have?* There's another arena of life. Same challenge. **A generous God makes us generous**. If you can start to work that out in your most intense and intimate relationships, you can start to feel that transformation.

How do we start? We have been saved and reached and loved and restored by a generous God. Look at Jesus. This whole thing, this whole litany of submission with all its challenging context and applications—it's all under the umbrella of Peter's words in chapter 2: "to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." Jesus! Look to Jesus! He gave Himself away. He calls us to the same.

You see the image behind me for this value—hands holding a plate. Extending a plate—giving what is on that plate away. At this table we are reminded that what we have to give comes from God—who gives abundantly more than we could ask or imagine. Today we come to this table, and the plate of bread and the cup of salvation are given generously by the Lord to you. And then He sends us out to live generously in a world that needs to know Jesus.

Amen.

