

## HOPE AGAIN: When Life Hurts and Dreams Fade

## STUDY SEVEN

**Hope Beyond “I Do”:  
The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony***1 Peter 3:1–7*

*Peter is on target when it comes to marriage. You will never read stuff like this in the Times or in Newsweek or in any periodical you'll ever receive in this generation. You'll only get it from the Scriptures. And this works! The truth of it works. It works, men and women!*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**F**ROM the very beginning, marriage has been a central component of the song of God's creation. The harmony between husband and wife echoes the unity, intimacy, partnership, and love between God and humanity. Everything about marriage sings of God's glory . . . at least it *should*.

Yet in any marriage, pressures from within and without constantly threaten to drown out unity—financial troubles, parenting challenges, unforeseen illnesses, communication breakdowns, difficulties with in-laws. Almost half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce, and many who decide to stay together are barely hanging on. Sadly, the tune of marriage often sounds more discordant than harmonious.

How can a Christian couple live out their marriage according to God's beautiful design? To answer this question, the apostle Peter acted as an orchestra conductor, guiding Christian couples to play along in God's symphony for domestic harmony. Those who follow his instruction will cultivate a harmonious marriage that will both glorify God and demonstrate the love of Christ.



## Hope Beyond “I Do”: The Give-and-Take of Domestic Harmony

1 Peter 3:1–7



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, you will discover the importance of prayer in marriage. Yet prayer is essential for any follower of Jesus Christ—married or not. Say this prayer before you open God’s Word today:

*Father, teach me through Your Word what it means to be a loving spouse. I want to glorify You and reflect Christ’s character in all my relationships. Equip me to do so right now. In Jesus’ loving name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

According to the apostle Peter, a key behavior characterizes the Christian life: willing and active submission. Because Christ willingly and actively submitted to His accusers and allowed Himself to be unjustly executed (1 Peter 2:21–25), Peter wanted his readers to adopt this same attitude as they endured a season of unjust persecution at the hands of a corrupt government (2:13–17).

Peter took this same principle and applied it to specific relationships. Slaves are to follow Christ’s example in their relationships with their masters (2:18–20). Then in 3:1–7, Peter turned to the subject of marriage to exhort Christian husbands and wives to adopt Christ’s posture of self-sacrifice and love in the home. Such instruction is always vital, but especially in Peter’s readers’ context—away from home in a hostile land.



### Observation: Exhortations for Husbands and Wives

Read 1 Peter 3:1–7 and keep track of your observations as you read.<sup>1</sup> Pay careful attention to *what* Peter wants wives and husbands to do and *why* he wants them to do those things.



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*1 Peter 3:1–7*

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### Wives—1 Peter 3:1–6

What exhortation did Peter offer to Christian wives in *1 Peter 3:1*? Note how Peter starts this verse saying, “In the same way.” In the same way as whom are wives to carry out this action?

According to *3:1–2*, what did Peter expect would happen to unbelieving husbands if their believing wives were to act in this manner?

How did Peter describe the world’s standards of beauty in *3:3–4*? How does this contrast with how “the holy women of old” demonstrated their *true* beauty (*3:5*)?



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To whom did Peter point as a prime example of this kind of true beauty in *1 Peter 3:6*? What kind of behavior did she demonstrate?

### Husbands—1 Peter 3:7

What two exhortations did Peter offer to Christian husbands in *1 Peter 3:7*? Note how Peter starts this verse saying, “In the same way,” just as he did in *3:1*. In the same way as whom are husbands to carry out this action?

According to *3:7*, what is the result of Peter’s vision for Christian marriage?



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*This paragraph is written precisely to people who live with disobedient mates, mates who are going their own way, mates who care little about the things of God, mates who would even mock the things of Christ. It's easy to say, “Sure, I'll be that kind of spouse I should be as long as my spouse does the same.” Yet Peter calls us to something much greater.*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Interpretation: Timeless Principles for Harmonious Marriage

When we interpret a passage of Scripture, we consider what the text *means* in light of our observations. Then, we develop timeless principles based on our understanding of the passage. For some help working through the more difficult details of the passage, consider using a commentary like Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter* or *Constable's Notes*, available for free at [netbible.com](http://netbible.com).

Use the following prompts to develop timeless principles for Christian husbands and wives:

**Principle #1:** *Christian wives are called to . . . by . . .*

**Principle #2:** *Christian husbands are called to . . . by . . .*



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How would a Christian husband and wife who follow these principles cultivate marital harmony?

According to the world’s standards, what are the ultimate goals for marriage? In what ways is Peter’s vision for Christian marriage different from this worldly framework? How is Peter’s approach ultimately more dignifying to women, men, and the institution of marriage?

*Wives, how you view your actions, your adornment, your attitudes, your attention couldn’t be more important. Husbands, how you approach living with your wife, getting to know your wife, honoring the woman God gave you couldn’t be more important.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Correlation: God’s Design for Marriage

From the earliest days of creation, marriage was on God’s mind. After creating the man, God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him” (*Genesis 2:18*). When God realized that none of the animals would make a suitable companion for the man, God created the woman.



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*1 Peter 3:1–7*

Read *Genesis 2:23–25*. What principles do these verses teach about God’s intended design for marriage? Remember, these events occurred before the fall.

Many millennia later, the apostle Paul would turn to these very verses in his own discussion on the importance of Christian marriage. According to *Ephesians 5:31–32*, what mysterious reality did God design marriage to represent?

How do these readings from Genesis and Ephesians help round out your understanding of Peter’s exhortations in *1 Peter 3:1–7*?

When a Christian couple heeds Scripture’s exhortations for a healthy marriage, their very relationship acts as a beacon for the gospel—shining the light of Christ’s love and God’s unity with humanity.



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### Application: Growing in Domestic Harmony

There are many ways a couple can apply the principles of *1 Peter 3:1–7*, and Pastor Chuck provides some starting steps:

1. Spend some time thinking about what you appreciate most about your spouse. Write down three or four things and share them with him or her.
2. Admit to your spouse one thing you'd like to change about yourself. Ask him or her to join you in your journey of personal sanctification.

Write down one step that you and your spouse can take this week to cultivate harmony, not discord, in your marriage.

If you are single and want to be married, how does this passage provide you with guidance as you consider a potential future spouse? How can you apply Peter's principles to make yourself a more marriage-ready person?



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According to Peter, when a marriage is strong, the couple’s “prayers will not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). Prayer is essential to a healthy marriage. Would you say prayer is a common practice that you and your spouse share? What steps can you take this week to cultivate a culture of prayer in your home?

Every couple will admit that carrying the tune of marriage in perfect harmony is just plain difficult. When two sinners live under the same roof, discord is unavoidable. Yet Peter offers a path toward unity—a relationship characterized by Christlike love and self-denial. Cultivating these qualities within your home doesn’t guarantee a perfect marriage, but doing so will cause you and your spouse to live in closer harmony than you ever thought possible.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, I want to lead a life that glorifies You and reflects the self-sacrificial character of Christ. Today, start with my marriage. Work in me to be a person of harmony, not discord. Remind me of the great sacrifice He made so You and I might have a harmonious relationship. Give me the strength to follow His example. It’s in His name I pray. Amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, “*How to Study the Bible for Yourself.*”

