**Read These Bible Passages**:

**1 Peter 3:1-4**

**1 Peter 3:5-6**

**1 Peter 3:7**

**INTRODUCTION / REVIEW**:

 Now that we are six weeks deep into our fantastic voyage through Peter’s first epistle, I am curious to know if you are beginning to delight in the delicious aroma of his pastoral heart? Thus far, Peter has lavished our palettes with truth that tastes like honey and wisdom that is rich like chocolate cake. How refreshing to come each weekend to extract all the nutrients out of this book for our essential growth, and then we get to savor the lingering flavors so we may share with others. This divine recipe is simply scrumptious and down-right heavenly!

As we crack open our bibles and hear the pages fall open to first Peter chapter three, we are reminded of the pearls-of-wisdom that Peter had passionately spoken to us about in the beginning of this series. In chapter one, we learned the importance of hope, faith, and salvation. Peter told us that “*In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade*” (**1Peter1: 3-4**). Push the fast forward button into the second week of this disciple briefing us on how to live a holier lifestyle. I love how Peter quoted God’s reason for being holy… “*Be holy because I AM holy*” (**1Peter 1:15**). Plain and simple! Peter then compares believers to a living stone and reminds us that “*we are chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation belonging to God*” (**1Peter 2:9**).

Before we get started on today’s lesson about the submissive approach of a wife to her husband, I think it is important to continue our review with the four roles Peter began teaching us about last week that God requires a submissive attitude towards. Pay close attention to the fact below that the targeted gender for submission is not only directed towards females, but to males as well. As we embark on a tour about wives (females) submitting to their husbands (males), I want to clarify that Peter is not enforcing any form of gender-discrimination. You will clearly see that men are also called to be submissive in appropriate relationships as well. The four roles where submission is required by God are below:

1. Citizens *(male or female)* are to submit to any form of government/authority *(male or female)* (**2:13**).
2. Slaves / employees *(male or female)* are to submit to their masters / boss *(male or female)* (**2:18**).
3. Wives *(female)* are to submit to their husbands *(males)* **(3:1**)
4. Younger believers *(male or female)* are to submit to the elders *(male or female)* (**5:5**)

Order is better than chaos, government is better than no government at all. Believers should submit to every human institution for the Lord’s sake (**2:13**). Yet, for some reason the word “submission” has a bad stench associated with its meaning. Although we are called by God to submit in certain relationships throughout our lives, it is difficult for the human to understand and even more challenging to obey. It is our weak flesh that does not want to live under any form of authority. Yet it is the Spirit of Truth that calls us into right-standing and appropriate behavior. In doing so, we are fulfilling His will and doing the very thing that pleases our heavenly Father.

**Focus on This Theme**:

 Today’s lesson is about fireproofing your marriage. At a time where the divorce rate is higher than ever before, we desperately need to seek God’s truth about the essentials of making our marriages not only work but survive. In **1 Peter 3:1-7** the apostle narrows his focus by scaling down his listeners to a niche group. Please get out your highlighters and pay close attention to Peter’s instructions if you happen to be a woman, who is married or going to get married, and believes in the word of God. If you do not fall into these categories, you do not have my approval (gentlemen) to take a brief siesta during class today. Instead familiarize yourself with God’s plan for marriage and be open to hear how you can play a more helpful role, whether in your own marriage or in the advice you give to your friends who are married. At the end of this lesson Peter will address all the husbands with one powerful verse that will feed the soul and livelihood of your marriage if you are up for the challenge?

Be prepared to look at the multi-facets of marriage and receive clarity on how God fashioned it to appear like a brilliant gem that is made to be priceless. The beauty of Gemology, where you carefully study every angle and cut of the sought-after diamond, is closely related to how we will accomplish our class together as we observe a small portion of the many layers of marriage. Get ready to compare

**1 Peter 3:1-7** with one of the first marriages ever recorded. We will learn from the covenant of Sarah and Abraham as husband and wife.

**BIBLE Passage #1**

**1 Peter 3:1-4**

*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, 2when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4Rather, 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.*

**ILLUSTRATION:**

 My husband and I have been married for nine years and the beginning of our marriage was all but easy. Jason and I both came to the table with enough baggage to fill a Boeing 747. I might have claimed at the time that my baggage was fine leather Gucci while his was only a brown paper sack, yet baggage is baggage no matter how fine or fancy the leather and it all needed to be sifted through.

You see, I had simply married myself a maverick and I thought that I could be the one to change him. I walked into this marriage thinking, what I believe a lot of women think, and that is I can be the “conviction” he needs to experience in order to get his life straight. I could lend the Holy Spirit a hand and POOF… just like that he would be changed forever. Before I go any further, how do you think that theory worked out for me? Yea, just like you would imagine… it didn’t.

Very quickly into the marriage my plan started to backfire and my husband began to naturally rebel against my controlling behavior. It took me two years with this child-like conduct until I forfeited and turned to God for His approach. Of course God led me to this oldie but goodie verse in first Peter chapter three and He kept gently reminding me of it until it seeped into the marrow of my own bones.

Only when I gave the Holy Spirit His job back and allowed Him to be in control of my husband, is when I saw my precious man falling at the foot of Christ, by his own choice. My prince was “*won over without words by the behavior of his princess* “(**vs. 2**).

My husband dedicated a song to me and I believe it perfectly speaks from my man’s heart about the genuine gratitude he has for me loving him unconditionally the way God has designed it, even when he was hard to love at times. I had not always loved him the way God desired but now I do and I marvel at Jason’s ability to express how he sees me love him. Here is a video clip of the song and I believe you can hear every man’s cry to his wife as he pours out his heart to his princess, who is steadfast to love him just like Jesus! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0liNLHmvKY>

**TEACHING POINTS**:

 OH, did you ladies hear that last point in my illustration? If we could all get on board with allowing the Holy Spirit to be the one to convict our husbands and we lay aside our own need to control them, I believe many marriages would be saved throughout the world. I went to a ladies bible study this week filled with darling outfits, great snacks and lots of laughter. We had the chance to sit at a large, circular table with several married women and I heard the same thing confessed out of each vulnerable mouth. We all greatly desired to control our men and our own circumstances.

**Proverbs 14:1** says “*a wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down*.” I believe that God had in mind for this verse, the wife who uses her beauty, emotions, words, manipulation, power, sex, affection, children, position, or who could leave out the silent treatment, to gain what she wants from her husband. This is extremely dangerous behavior and is a platform used by the enemy to tear down marriages by using one woman’s hand at a time.

According to Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family, the divorce rate is still twice as high as it was in 1960. It is estimated that for couples marrying today, the lifetime probability of divorce or separation remains between 40 and 50 percent before one partner dies, although this percentage is significantly lower for those who marry after age twenty-one, graduate college and are committed to God.

Hold onto your lower jaw as I report to you that one out of every two children in the United States will live in a single-parent family at some time before they reach the age of eighteen. In 2002 about twenty million American children lived in a household with only their mother or father. These sobering statistics bring great pain to my soul and grievance to the Spirit, as I am sure it does the same for you too. That is why it is essential to get on God’s program on how to behave in our marriages.

Peter reminds all wives to “*submit themselves to their 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, 2when they see the purity and reverence of your lives”* (**vs. 1-2**). If the wife is a believer in Christ and her husband is not, then this marriage is what the bible calls “*unequally yoked”* (**2 Corinthians 6:14**). Your household will experience *strife* and *disagreement* with *no fellowship*, there will be *little harmony* and *commonality* between the both of you (**2 Corinthians 6:14-16**). Are you interested to know what God instructs the wife to do in this case? Does this give the wife the one opportunity to divorce her husband? God’s answer is, NO! Listen carefully to what Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 7:13-14**, “*If a woman has a husband who is NOT a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife… otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy*.” If a woman finds herself in this situation, God is advising you to stay in the marriage and submit to your husband. God will use your Christ-like behavior (grace, forgiveness, unconditional love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) to win over your husband and draw him to his knees. Another thing to consider are your children, the scripture tells us that if you divorce your unbelieving husband then your children are no longer clean and holy. OUCH! That is a huge point that must not be overlooked! I encourage the women who are in this season to *fight the good fight and to finish the race*. Don’t give up beloved and take the easy road, *there will be a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to you on that day* (**2 Timothy 4:7**).

**LIFE APPLICATION**:

 Are you like one of the women I mentioned earlier, who sat around the table and confessed their great desire to control their husbands? Do you use something to control him like manipulation, sex, anger, or deceiving words? Did you know that in **Proverbs 6:16** we are given a warning of the six things that the Lord HATES. One of the six is “*a heart that devises wicked schemes*.” Ladies, if we are not careful, we are camping out in a territory that can crush us like a tennis shoe will crush an ant.

**BIBLE PASSAGE # 2**

**1 Peter 3:5-6**

*5For 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, 6like 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.*

**TEACHING POINTS**:

I love how out of all the holy matrimonies mentioned in the bible, Peter chose to mention the poster child(ren) so we could learn from and apply their truths to our own marriages. Abram, which means exalted father, was renamed by God in **Genesis 17:5** to Abraham (father of many). While his wife Sarai, which means princess, was renamed by God in **Genesis 17:15**, to Sarah (mother of nations). One of the many things I enjoy studying about Abraham and Sarah’s love life, is they were nowhere near perfect. In fact, some of the mistakes they make against each other are downright offensive, disgusting, and sinful. Yet they are still considered to be one of the most highly esteemed marriages in the bible, because they were steadfast in keeping God at the center of their union and He was their strong tower, a fortress when they were weak! Currently people are still borrowing from their story to teach from the pulpit and Christian leaders like Dr. James Dobson and Gary Smalley pull from Abraham and Sarah’s biography so they can counsel couples today.

 God said to Eve, “*Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you*” (**Genesis 3:16**). That was part of the burden which sin brought to the woman, and it is interesting that the next major husband and wife relationship in Scripture illustrates a wife’s submission to her husband’s rule. Sarah is commended twice by New Testament writers, once for her *faith* (**Hebrews 11:11**) and once for her *submission* to her husband (**1 Peter 3:5-6**). The Apostle Peter went so far as to say she “*obeyed Abraham, calling him lord*.” Interestingly enough, faith and submission go together like hugs and kisses or like Sonny and Cher. I do not believe that you can have one without the other. Submission for a wife is basically faith that God is working through her husband to accomplish what is best for her. And that is the story of Sarah’s life with Abraham.

**EXAMPLES OF SARAH’S FAITH AND SUBMISSION**:

1. Sarah left behind all of her family, friends, and familiar surroundings in the land of UR so she could travel by camel northward around the fertile crescent to the city of Haran. The reason she left was because her father-in-law (Terah) wanted to move, so she acted in faith and responded by submission to her husband’s request.
2. After settling her roots into the city of Haran, Sarah, for the second time is asked by her husband to move again because this time Abraham had received a promise from God, “*Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (**Genesis 12:1-3**). By faith, that God spoke this to Abraham, Sarah acted by submitting to her husband’s request.
3. For the third time Sarah packs her bags after making a home in the place God called them to live, the land of Canaan, and she moves with her husband to Egypt. Abraham decided to act on his own will and move to Egypt because he began to operate out of fear and doubt. The land of Canaan was experiencing severe famine, so Abraham moved without God’s approval to Egypt (mistake #1).
4. Sarah submits to her husband’s ridiculous request and manipulated the truth by telling the Egyptians that she was Abraham’s sister, not his wife, in fear that they might kill Abraham because of her beauty (mistake #2). This lie was birthed from a fear and doubt that Abraham nursed to life and the result bought Sarah a one way ticket to Pharaoh’s palace to become his wife. Oh the tangled webs we weave when we practice to deceive. Why did Sarah go along with his sinful scheme? Is not this a case where obedience to God would supersede obedience to one’s husband? I think it is. A wife has no obligation to obey her husband when obedience compromises the clearly revealed will of God (**Acts 5:29**). Sarah could have justly refused. But it does show how deep her faith and submission really were. Sarah believed God’s promise that Abraham would become the father of a great nation. Since there were no children as yet, she was expendable, but Abraham had to live and have children even if it should be by another woman.

Little did this couple know that this scene of Sarah being captured and enslaved by Pharaoh because of Abraham’s disobedience, was foreshadowing Abraham’s descendants, the great nation of Israel, and their future they will have with Pharaoh. Was a seed of captivity and disobedience for generations to come, planted here?

Just like the story of when God attacked Pharaoh with ten different plagues so Moses could deliver the Israelites from captivity (**Exodus 10:1-20**), God also inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household so the king would let Sarah go. Unlike with Moses and the hardened heart of Pharaoh, it only took this one plague to convince Pharaoh to let Sarah go. Phew!

It is hard to imagine a man sinking much lower than Abraham did on this occasion. Even the pagan king rebuked him for what he did (**Genesis 12:18-20**). He failed Sarah sadly, but God was faithful to her. He honored her faith and delivered her. He never forsakes those who trust Him.

**LIFE APPLICATION**:

 Have you ever allowed fear and doubt to creep in to your own life and the end result had moved you away from God’s promise and straight into a heap of trouble? Don’t ever forget that fear and doubt to your soul is like what a foreclosure is to your home, or what cancer is to your body, or how Ken Lay was to Enron.

**BIBLE PASSAGE # 3**

**1 Peter 3:7**

*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*.

**TEACHING POINTS**:

 Now the apostle turns to husbands and shows the corresponding duties they must fill. They should live considerately with their wives, showing love, courtesy, and understanding. When your wife is calling you in the middle of your work day, do you just ignore her or do you show her courtesy by picking up the phone and loving her through a conversation, even if it means an interruption?

Husbands should respond to their wives with a tender regard that is appropriate for the member of the weaker sex.

With people like Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, the women’s liberation movement makes no room for this comparison from the bible. God’s word may seem old fashioned to some, when comparing a woman to the weaker sex. Yet it is a simple fact of life that the average woman is weaker than the man physically. While we are at it, if I may be so bold to speak the truth, we also do not have the same power to control our emotions and we are often led by reactions than by logical thought. I am not ashamed to admit that my man is stronger in that area than I am.

 Something that I also find interesting about this instruction to men is the warning that Peter gives about when there is discord, prayers are hindered. If we had the opportunity to ask each person in the class if they would want their prayers to be blocked from God, unanimously everyone would agree that we would not want our prayers hindered. Who would want that? So listen up if you are disrespecting your wife, treating her poorly, and discord is among the two of you. Gentlemen, your prayers are not being heard by God! If you’re asking God to help you make the right decision on what job to take but you are going home and telling your wife she is nag and you can’t put up with her, guess what? You are not going to hear from God about what job position to take. If you are asking God to help you with a financial decision for your household and you are looking at sexual content on your computer (which is disrespecting your wife), guess what? Not real likely that you are going to be hearing from God.

**FIREPROOF HOME RULES**:

 For there to be peace and welfare in the home it is important for the husband and wife to observe a few basic rules so their marriage will remain fireproofed:

1. Maintain absolute honesty in order to have a basis of mutual confidence.
2. Keep lines of communication open. There must be a constant readiness to talk things out. When steam is allowed to build up in the boiler, an explosion is inevitable. Talking things out includes the willingness for each to say, “I am sorry” and to forgive.
3. Overlook minor faults and idiosyncrasies. Don’t demand perfection in others when you are unable to produce it yourself.
4. Strive for unity in finances. Avoid overspending, installment buying, and the lust to keep up with the Joneses.
5. Remember that love is a commandment, not an uncontrollable emotion. Love means all that is included in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is courteous: for instance, it will keep you from criticizing or contradicting your partner in front of others. Love will keep you from quarreling in front of your children, and undermine their security. Love creates a happy atmosphere in the home and rules out strife, discord, and division.

**CONCLUSION:**

The definition of *fireproof* is the resistance to destruction by fire or totally unburnable. This is why FIREPROOF was the name for this lesson about marriage. We need to begin seeing all covenants between husband, wife, and God as resistant to destruction and totally unburnable. No matter what season your marriage is currently in. Wives can decide to submit to their husbands and stop trying to control them and husbands can choose to show love, courtesy, and understanding to their wives. Both spouses can work towards applying the five Fireproof Home Rules into their daily routines and then watch at how the Spirit of God moves freely in that kind of unity.

How far would you go to keep your promise? How much would you sacrifice to save your marriage?

Before you dismiss your class, please use the below link and church equipment to play this clip for your audience. This is a beautiful illustration of a couple who are working towards fireproofing their marriage.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84q0SXW781c>