

# EXALTING CHRIST IN ALL WE DO

BY DR. JERRY VINES

*By the Book*™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study  
Series from Jerry Vines Ministries  
2295 Towne Lake Parkway  
Suite 116 #249  
Woodstock, GA 30189

## Let's Begin

*The great hymn writer, Charles Wesley (1707–1788), composed over 6500 inspiring songs, many of which are still used in the church today. One hymn, so often sung in Baptist churches, is entitled “Jesus, Lover of my Soul,” and, in many estimations, has been dubbed the greatest hymn in the English tongue. In the hymn, Wesley exalts Christ in every way, using numerous images like “lover of my soul,” “healer of the sick,” “fountain of healing streams,” and “refuge under His wing.” Jesus Christ is lifted up as Scripture rightly lifts Him up—very God of very God.*

*In chapter two, we discovered secrets of the Christian life. Chapter three will add the overarching motivation for everything we do in life—the exaltation of Jesus Christ. Peter teases out this theme in two directions. On the one hand, Peter shows how heaven’s institution of marriage must exalt Christ in the Christian’s home life. On the other hand, he demonstrates how every aspect of ministry must exalt Christ. Whereas initially he explores marital relationships and how Christ is exalted, he follows with ministry relationships and how Christ is exalted.*

*Therefore, as we make our way through chapter three, let’s turn attention to the outline below as our guide:*

### I. The Exaltation of Christ in Marital Relationships (vv. 1-7)

### II. The Exaltation of Christ in Ministry Relationships (vv. 8-22)

## I. The Exaltation of Christ in Marital Relationships (vv. 1-7)

Peter first shows how Christ must be exalted in our home life by expounding on the proper relationship between husbands and wives. He writes beginning with wives, “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands...Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart... For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord...” (vv. 1-6). First, note the contextual example Peter describes. He describes a *partially* Christian home. In other words the wife has been saved but the husband remains an unbeliever (v. 1b). What are his instructions to the wife who finds herself in

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this “mixed” relationship? On the other hand, what if the circumstances were reversed? In other words, what if the husband were saved but his wife remained unconverted? How may Christ best be exalted?

The Apostle reveals *two strategies* to lift up the Lord Jesus in marriage. One strategy focuses on the wife and winning her husband, and the other focuses on the husband and his winning his wife. The wife’s strategy centers around her *testimony* to her husband (vv. 1-6); the husband’s strategy to exalt Christ centers around his *treatment* of his wife (v. 7). What she says and how he treats her determines whether Christ is exalted in the marriage. Understand: it is not that the wife’s treatment of her husband is insignificant any more than the husband’s words to his wife are insignificant. The important point is that the *focus* of each strategy is a bit different.

*First, Peter explains the wife’s godly testimony to her husband (vv. 1-7). As we noted earlier, the contextual example Peter gives is between a husband and wife who were both*



### Reflection Connection

*Why is it important for Christians to marry Christians? Be cautious in open discussion not allowing a judgmental spirit to take hold.*

unbelievers when they entered a marriage covenant. The New Testament offers no support for believers marrying unbelievers. In fact, Christians are counseled not to seek marriage partners among the unbelieving world. Christians should marry Christians (cp. 2 Cor. 6:14). Even so, the same counsel could apply to a husband who is out of fellowship with God and the church, what we normally call a “hypocrite” or someone “backslidden.” While he may be a professing believer, he nevertheless lives a carnal life (cp. 1 Cor. 3:1-4).

To the wife, Peter mentions *three qualities* her testimony must bear. First, her testimony must be *submissive*. He speaks of wives remaining “in subjection to your own husbands” (v. 1a). The Greek word translated “in subjection” is *hupotasso*, the same word used in chapter two denoting a person’s submission to the government (2:13) and a slave’s submission to his master (2:18). Used widely in military communities, submission carries the idea of respect and honor and does not imply an inequality among people. Rather both Peter and Paul (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18) employ the term to demonstrate the distinctive *roles* within both home and church. No thought of submission implying a “door-mat” treatment of husbands toward their wives is in the Biblical text.

Second, her testimony must not only be *submissive*, it must also be *redemptive*. Peter counsels women to carefully testify so that husbands “may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives” (v. 1b; note: though the KJV says “a word” it is best translated “without the Word” which refers to Scripture). What Peter is driving at is simple: Christian women cannot nag their husbands into heaven! In other words, the absence of their words will be completely offset by the beauty of their lives. The purpose of their testimony is to win their husbands to Christ. It is redemptive toward their unsaved husband and exalting toward the Lord Jesus.

Third, the wife’s testimony must be *attractive*. Peter again observes, “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart...” (vv. 3-4a). The term translated “adorning” is the word from which we get the English word “cosmetic.” It is a way to decorate ourselves making ourselves as attractive as possible. Note Peter is not against “style” when he mentions avoiding the “plaiting of hair”; instead he is concerned that women understand the most magnificent beauty imaginable is a groomed spirit, a decorated heart and soul, what he calls “the hidden man” (i.e. person). In addition one’s appearance should never be taken for granted. Poor dress can actually harm one’s testimony. From Peter’s standpoint, Sarah is the natural and best example to cite (v. 6). Not giving into hysterical fears, she stood faithfully by her husband through thick and thin.

Second, Peter explains the husband’s godly treatment of his wife. Peter writes, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the

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grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (v. 7). Peter zeros in on three aspects of the way a wife is treated by her husband. The first aspect is how he treats her *emotionally*: *he must be considerate*. Peter tells husbands to "dwell" with their wives "according to knowledge." Here he references the entire marital relationship. Husbands must base their treatment upon accurate information as well as wise understanding. In short, he needs to know what makes her "tick." He develops his knowledge of her emotions, her fears, her likes and dislikes, her dreams, and her goals in all of life. No wife will ever resent a man who wants to know her deeply and authentically.

The next aspect is how a husband treats his wife *physically*—*he must be courteous*. Peter says he is to give her honor as "the weaker vessel" (cp. 1 Thess. 4:4). While some individual women may be stronger than some individual men, the biological reality is, women on the whole are physically weaker than men on the whole. Hence, giving "honor" means to treat her with courtesy and kindness. In fact, it calls for treating her with gentleness. Greater care is called for as she is like a select piece of fine china, delicate, beautiful, and always to be handled with the utmost caution. This does not mean women are weak either in spirit or soul strength or resolve. Nonetheless, she is never to be degraded as a mere "plaything" or house servant.

Finally, Peter deals with how a husband treats his wife *spiritually*—*he is to be consistent*. He cannot be right with God and wrong with his wife. Since they both are "heirs together" if the relationship is not exalting Christ or edifying each other, prayers will be "hindered."

## II. The Exaltation of Christ in Ministry Relationships (vv. 8-22)

Peter switches contexts in this section showing how exalting Christ must consume our lives in every sphere. Not only in marriage and family but also in everyday life and service. In doing so, Peter speaks in two different directions in our ministry relationships—one is personal (vv. 8-17) while the other is public (vv. 18-22). One direction focuses on *communication*, and the other deals with *proclamation*.

*First, we are to exalt Christ in our personal communications with others.* Peter first explains how we are to relate to others who share our faith. He begins, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (vv. 8-12). Several qualities mark the believer's relationship with other believers.

For example, the Apostle counsels believers to be *Christ-like in their attitudes* toward other believers, those who *share* our faith (vv. 8-9). He piles one positive attitude upon another (six in all) in these two verses. Christians exalt Christ in their ministry relationships with one another when they are "of one mind"



while displaying “compassion” toward one another. Unity of the family of faith has roots in the birth of God’s church at Pentecost when they were all in “one accord” (Acts 2:1-4). And, loving one another bears resemblance to the Lord’s command to His disciples (John 13:35). The compassion Peter expresses is not a lifeless, vacuous gesture. Instead, it is genuine love of the brethren. In addition, we must treat those who love the same Lord as “pitiful” which basically means tenderhearted, with a measure of Christian politeness (“courteous”). Nor must brothers and sisters seek vengeance or return “evil for evil” but must seek blessings for each other.

Moreover, not only should believers be Christ-like in *attitude* toward others who share their faith, but also Christ-like in their *actions* as well. Hence, we are to “refrain” from all manner of evil, being particularly careful what we say or do. Indeed we must even be cautious what we allow our minds to dwell upon. Our thoughts can very well be transformed into acts and deeds. Rather “let him seek peace, and ensue it” (v. 11).

*We are to “refrain” from all manner of evil, being particularly careful what we say or do.*

Even so, while we have a responsibility to exalt Christ in our relationship to those who share our faith, we also have a responsibility to exalt Christ in our relationship with those who *scrutinize* our faith. Peter again writes, “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? ...be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you... whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better... that ye suffer for well doing...” (vv. 13-17). We are witnesses to lost souls. There is no getting around that responsibility. The only question is, are we good witnesses or bad ones?

To be a good witness to those who *scrutinize* our faith, we must be careful to focus on the *Lord Jesus* in all we do (v. 15). We must “sanctify the Lord God” in our hearts. Only then are we able to give “an answer” to those who search for hope. In short, *the key to effective witnessing to lost souls is a prepared heart*. Next, we must also focus on authentic *life* (vv. 13-14, 16-17). Who can “harm” those whose life is surrendered to Christ? The fact remains, no trouble or trial can deter the believer whose eyes are staid on life in Christ.

Finally, a good witness to those who *scrutinize* our faith demands carefulness to focus on our *lips* (v. 15). Words are necessary to an acceptable witness; however, as we indicated earlier, answers come from a prepared heart. We “think through” issues by solid Bible study, prayer, and consistent discipleship.

*Second, we are to exalt Christ in our public proclamation to others.* Peter ends the chapter with a focus on the only message a Christian may legitimately proclaim as a means for others to be saved—the *Gospel* (vv. 18-22). The Apostle breaks

### Reflection Connection

*Are you confident you are able to offer reasons for your faith? Explain. Do you think the church does an adequate job equipping believers to defend their faith in a world without faith? Why or why not?*



### Golden Greek Nugget

Peter counsels believers to be prepared to always have an “answer” for the hope we have in Christ (v. 15). The Greek term translated “answer” is *apologia*, and is the root word from which we get our English term “apology.” However, our English term has evolved over time and now mostly means being sorrowful about an action and extending the offended person an “apology.” Such a meaning is not to be read into Peter’s intention in using the term. *Apologia* actually means a “verbal defense” or a “speech in defense of” some notion or action. Hence, it became an “answer” to a question or objection someone raised toward an idea presented. Peter insists Christians must be armed with answers to those who put questions to their faith!

apart into three parts the answer the Christian evangelist is to offer the inquiring soul (v. 15).

First, the answer in the *cross*. Peter writes, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (v. 18). Christ’s cross was both unique and effective. He “once” suffered on the cross “bringing” us to God. There the Lord conquered sin, separation, eternal hell!

Second, the answer of the *coffin* (vv. 18c-21). Christ was “put to death” in the “flesh” but made alive “by the spirit.” Here Peter refers to the dual parts of the Lord’s human nature, a nature shared by all people (not *sinful* nature is shared; only *human* nature). In these verses, Peter tells us what happened between the crucifixion and the resurrection. Understandably, these verses cause some confusion since no other place in Scripture deals with the subject. Nonetheless, Peter mentions two particular events which took place. First, Christ *descended*—“in which state He went...” Where did He go and what happened? According to Peter, Christ descended into hell and preached to “spirits in prison” (note: Scripture records Jesus’ also visited the righteous dead in paradise and took them to heaven Luke 23:43; Eph. 4:8-9). And who are the “spirits” to whom Christ *preached*, the second event between His cross on Friday and His resurrection on Sunday? Fallen angels (cp. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6-7; Gen. 6:1-6). The message was not the Gospel of redemption; rather the message was an announcement of victory!

Third, the answer of the *clouds* (v. 22). Christ Jesus wins not only on earth and under earth, but also in heaven! His victory is on full display in His ascension to the right hand of the Father. In all we do, Christ must be exalted as the King of kings and Lord of Lords He is and remains forevermore.

### Wrap Up

*Chapter three expounds upon the significance of relationships and their bearing on Gospel witness. Peter explains how we relate at home in our family as well as in our dealing with Christian and non-Christian alike. No believer may survive as a hermit in this world. Christ called us to go into the world but to never become part of it. We remain true to Him, exalting Him in all we do and are.*

