

1 Peter 2:11-3:7 home group questions

By Phil Bailey

Theme/aim: *Submit to human authorities and honour people to win them over. Do it even when that means suffering unjustly, because this is how Christ won you.*

Summary:

2:12-3:7 are applications of who we are (2:9-10) and how we're commanded to live (2:11-12). We submit to human authorities in order to win people over. Submission should be our default, unless commanded to sin.

We *must* submit because we are citizens of a better kingdom (2:9-10) and we follow the example of a better king (2:21-35). So we represent this king and country to the unbelieving world around us, a bit like ambassadors. The world needs to see that we come holding out the offer of peace, not a declaration of war. Therefore, we should be the best of citizens, employees and spouses in every matter that is not sin.

Moreover, we are accountable first and foremost to God (2:17), not human authorities. So we should fear displeasing him by being bad representatives of his kingdom, just as much as we should fear becoming complicit in the sin of the world around us.

Equally important, we *can* submit because our hope does not rest on building a utopia in this world, or the perfect career or the perfect marriage. Rather, our hope is in our heavenly inheritance, that can never perish, spoil or fade (1:4). Also, submission does not demean us by making us less valuable than those in authority, as 2:17 (emperor on same level as 'everyone' – see ESV) and 3:7 (woman as co-heirs) both show. Our identity is secure in Christ – and it is an enormously privileged identity (2:9-10)! So we don't lose anything important by submitting.

Moreover, we can submit, even when it means suffering injustice, because this is how Christ won us (2:21-25). In the same way, we can entrust ourselves to God who judges justly, knowing that he will bring justice for us. And in the same way, God intends that we will win over others through mercy instead of retaliation.

None of this prevents us from using legally sanctioned means to prevent/escape injustice, e.g. peaceful protest, voting in elections, company grievance procedures or legal protections for victims of domestic abuse. But we are to work peacefully within the system, not break it.

Finally, honour is as much commanded as submission. To honour someone is to value them highly and we should show this in the way we treat all people, including those in authority (2:17). If that is how we honour unbelievers, Christian husbands should honour their believing wives all the more, because these wives are chosen, royal priestesses and holy citizens in God's kingdom and co-heirs of eternal life. As fellow believers, they also deserve love, not just honour (2:17). 3:7 therefore rules out all kinds of domestic abuse.

Questions:

- 1) What did you find helpful/encouraging in this passage/sermon?
- 2) What did you find hard?
- 3) How does the passage provide motivation to submit where we're struggling?
- 4) How does the passage provide reassurance where we're badly treated by those in authority?
- 5) Where do you most need to see submission as a way for *you* to win people over for Christ?