

The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript
Episode 36
Women, Submission, and Household Codes
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Episode Summary:

In this episode, we visit some interesting (and, indeed, controversial) texts. What does Paul mean when he says wives should "submit" to their husbands (Ephesians 5)? When he writes a letter to Corinth, Paul also says that women are to be "silent" in the church (1 Corinthians 14). How should we interpret that passage? And why does Peter call women weaker vessels (1 Peter 3)? I address these questions and more by taking a look at not just the textual context, but also the Hellenistic/cultural context. To do this, I bring attention to an important ancient text, namely, Aristotle's Politics. This provides relevant background material that will help us to see what life was like for women in ancient Greek culture and how it compares to what the New Testament says about the roles of women in ministry, marriage, and society.

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Transcript:

0:00 Hey friends! Welcome back to another edition of The Bible Unmuted. I'm so glad to be back with you for another episode. Today, you're in for a special treat. This episode you're about to listen to was actually published late last month and was originally only available to my Patreon members with their membership. They receive a special bonus episode each month. but after the episode was released, I received an email from a Patreon member who really felt like it needed to be available to the whole Bible Unmuted community. So today we're diving into the topic of women submission and household codes. So let's jump in.

0:40 So when it comes to this question of women submitting to their husbands a lot of people run to Ephesians chapter five. So Ephesians, chapter five, starting around verse 22 down to about 27. You get this sort of language Paul talking about how wives should submit to their husband. So let's just read that passage starting at verse 22 down to 27. It says,

22 Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. 24 Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 27 so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without

blemish. [Let me just keep reading. It says, verse 28] **28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 because we are members of his body.**

So, that's sort of the meat of the passage. And that's from the New Revised Standard Version. So what do you do with that? Especially verse 22, "**wives be subject to your husband's as to the Lord.**" Well, there's a lot of things to say about this. And also, I guess I'll just begin with maybe some textual remarks. A lot of translations will put headers in the text. And I know the ESV, New Revised Standard Version; most modern-day translations are of course, going to do that. And these little headers are inserted by the editors, the translators. They are not necessarily at all part of the text itself. They are just meant to help us, help to guide the reader to show the reader what's coming up and so forth. And so, for example, if you go to the ESV (English Standard Version) for Ephesians 5:22, there's a header right above verse 22 and it says *Wives and Husbands*. So that's just to clue you in that underneath that title *Wives and Husbands* starting in verse 22 Paul's going to talk about the relationship between wives and husbands. Pretty simple stuff. The difficulty though is that these editorials are not inspired. They are inserted by the editors and sometimes that can get us off on the wrong foot. Because in the ESV, in that case, gives the impression that the passage starts at verse 22 because that's where the header is. The header starts right before 22. So it separates verse 21 from verse 22 with that header. And again, just pull out an English Standard Version, go on the web, and you can find how this header works here and what it what it shows. But the problem with that (and this is a big problem I have with the English Standard Version on this passage) is that again it divides verse 21 from 22. It divorces them. And again that header is not inspired. I don't want it there. The reason is for a textual reason. Because in many ancient manuscripts (not all I believe, but in many of them) the word *submit* in verse 22 is not even there. It just says, "*wives to your own husbands as to the Lord*". It doesn't say, "*wives submit to your husband's us to the Lord*". And so where did we get the word *submit* there then? Well, again, some manuscripts do have the *submit*, but many early ones don't. Okay, but so where do we get that *submit* from? Well, the answer is, it comes from verse 21. In verse 21 the word *submit* is used there. And that verse says, **21 be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.** And then verse 22 comes along, **22 wives to your own husbands as to the Lord.** Now, the reason this is important, is because what Paul is doing here is he wants you to take the word *submit* from 21 and insert it into verse 22.

4:55 Now as some New Testament scholars such as Craig Keener have mentioned, whatever verse 22 means, wives submitting to their husbands, whatever that means, it can't mean something contradictory from verse 21. Why? Well, because, again, in many manuscripts, there's no word *submit* in verse 22. So it assumes the reader's gonna pull *submit*, the word *submit*, from 21 and it would be ridiculous to think that they mean two separate things. Because in 21 you have mutual submissions, *submit to one another*, and then in verse 22 you have wives are called to submit to their husbands. Now, so the reason the ESV kind of messes it up here, I believe, is because it makes the reader think that 21 and 22 should be divorced from each other. When you put that header there that's the implication. But in fact I don't think that's helpful at all. I think we need 21 and 22 to go together. I think that's how the earliest readers of this text would have understood that. So don't put a header there. In the New Revised Standard Version there is a header but it's right above verse 21. So there you have the flow between 21 and 22. The flow comes naturally. **21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord.** So you kind of have a better flow there. And I like the NRSV better in this instance.

So the question becomes, how should we interpret wifely submission? Well, I would say we should interpret it in light of 21. Mutual submission. Okay, so I'm going to throw out what I think, and then

I'll reinforce it with some reasons why I think this. But just to kind of give you an idea where I'm coming from, I believe in mutual submission. In other words, I do not think that only wives should submit to their husbands. I do think wives should submit to their husbands, but I also think husbands should submit to their wives. Its mutual submission.

"Well, Matt, where do you get that?"

"Oh, I get that from verse 21 because it says, submit to one another. Mutual submission. And so I interpret wifely submission in light of that verse."

Again, I have good textual reason for that, because in verse 22 and many manuscripts, like I said, the word submit is not there. So it's intending for me to draw from 21. And as Craig Keener once said in one of his articles, he says, "look, verse 22 cannot mean something contradictory from verse 21 because they share the same word." That's what I think. Now somebody could come back to me and say, "Oh, OK, Matt, but the text only says for wives to submit to their husbands. It doesn't say for husbands to submit to their wives. It doesn't say that." And I would agree it doesn't say that, but I still believe in mutual submission. Well, why is that? Well, because I assume that's what Paul is assuming Well, how can I assume that? It's pretty obvious, right? And this is something else that actually Craig Keener brought up, but it's so genius in a sense. Because if somebody said only wives are supposed to submit their husbands, because only wives are told to submit their husbands; the husbands aren't told to do that to their wives. You know, you could turn it around the other way, because it says in this text, in verse 25 it says only husbands are to love their wives. It doesn't tell women to love their husbands, right? So if I think or if as some would say, only *wives* are called to submit to their husbands because it's only in this text that wives are told to submit to husbands, then, to be *consistent* with that, you have to say, wives shouldn't have to *love* their husbands because *only husbands* are told to love their wives. I hope I explained that well. My brain's not working that well, this afternoon. So I think you get my point, though. If not, just shoot me an email. I can explain further.

9:05 So that's the idea, I think this language of submission and love essentially mean the same thing. Let me back this up a little bit more because I don't think I've made my case completely yet. I think I've gone far enough a little bit, but there's more to be said. How can I legitimately think that when Paul says husbands love your wives, that he really means to submit to your wives? How can I think that? Well, it's pretty simple because he says, love your wife's husbands just as Christ love the church and gave himself up for her. *Gave himself up for her*. Let's think about what that means for a moment. That is an act of service. It's putting aside your own desires for the good of someone else. You're serving them. And in fact, to make this point even more clear, Jesus himself describes how he came to give himself to give himself up for the church. He says in Matthew's gospel, for example. He says, "*the son of man has not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" So how has Jesus given himself up for the church? Through service. That's how he interprets what he's doing. He interprets it as a servant. So I think it's totally appropriate for me to interpret this verse, "*husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church*" as an act of servanthood. It's a laying oneself down. It's serving. It's a putting aside what we want, and submitting to what is good for our wives. This is an act of service; it's mutual service. It's mutual submission, you might say.

Now, I think can look at the life of Christ and think, "man, how selfless was he? He's constantly selfless." And so when it comes to these debates of husbands, and the wife submitting to the husband, it's weird to me how the debate typically, in some circles at least, always comes down to this; who gets to be more powerful in the relationship? You know, who gets to make the ultimate decision? You know, when push comes to shove and there's genuine disagreement, who gets the final say? Well, some circles would say, "Ohh, it's the husband. He gets the final say." Why? "Well, because women are supposed to submit to me and husbands." But wait a second, shouldn't, in that moment, shouldn't the husband love his wife enough to say, "you know what? I

don't want my way on this, in this argument. I just defer to you. What do you think? I want to follow your desires. I want to prop up your desires as more important than myself." That's an act of love, is it not?

It's weird to me how this debate becomes all about who gets the most authority, who gets the most power. That's the wrong way to be thinking. I think when it comes to a male-female relations our husband-wife relations, it should be about who gets to be the servant. We should argue about that. We should argue about who doesn't get their way. That's the Jesus way.

And I think that I think that we need to re envision how we read this text. We need to think deeper about how this works. It should be about an argument of who gets to be servant not who gets to be the boss. Now somebody can come back and say, "Okay, but when it comes to moral issues right and wrong, and if there's a genuine disagreement between husband and wife; the husband gets to decide that." Well, who says that? What if the husband is the one making the immoral decision? See, what matters most in these debates or in that type of situation where husband and wife are arguing or having a genuine debate, the only thing that matters is what's right. If it's a moral issue, like if it's the guy who's right, then the woman should go with that. If it's the lady who's right, then the guy should go with that. It's about what's right or wrong. It has nothing to do with gender. I mean, that would be ridiculous. And sadly, I have heard of situations, marriages that were very unhealthy, such that even when the husband was doing something wrong or unwise, immoral or whatever, that the wife would just submit and go with it because that what God told her to do in Ephesians 5. That's terrible, right? I don't think that's healthy. That's not healthy for the wife, of course. And it's not healthy for the husband. I mean, to empower anybody to do what's evil is just not good for them.

So, that's how I see Ephesians chapter 5. And just to back up and to rehash. I don't think verse 21 and 22 need to be separated like the ESV wants it to be separated. And by the way, if you might ask why does the ESV do that? Well go back and look at the translators of the ESV. They definitely fall on a certain spectrum of this issue, as the majority of them have a certain stance on this issue. And so once you learn more a little bit about their own theology, it would make sense why they done what they've done. And as I've said, textually, I don't think it's warranted at all. So, don't separate 21 from verse 22. You need to also secondly interpret verse 22 in light of verse 21 because 22 as I said, draws from the word submit from verse 21. And also we need to re envision how we think of love here. If it's christological love as Paul says that husbands are to have, then it's a love of a servant that we become servants as love. And so really I think that gender wars need to be about who gets to be the servant not who gets to be the boss. You know it reminds me really of that debate that the disciples were having, They were arguing about who gets to be the greatest one. And Jesus rebukes them and says, "Look that's what the world debates but this cannot be what you guys debate. Look, I am a servant. I've come as a servant. You guys need to be servants too." This is the kingdom is upside down. We are all about the service and when we get into this question of wifely submission, we need to make sure that we contextualize it in light of the person of Christ. The work of Christ in light of the words of Christ. It's not about authority or power it's about service.

15:40 The other quick thing I would say is we need to keep this in its cultural context. So in Ephesians 5:21 down into chapter 6, you have what is known as the household codes. So in the New Revised Standard Version, they have a header right above chapter 5, verse 21. It says, *The Christian Household*. And in the ancient world, people talked a lot about how should you manage your household? What is a household? A household was more than just the nuclear family, you know, mom, dad, brothers, sisters, kids. It included a larger amount of people. It wasn't like what we think of as a nuclear family. But anyway, philosophers and cultural leaders back then would talk about household management. And they would prescribe household codes. So in in that culture, there were certain things that were acceptable and other things which were not acceptable in a

household. Typically in this culture, the man ruled everything. Like he was a *paterfamilias*. He was the head honcho. He was sort of like his own emperor. He got to be his own emperor in a sense. And fathers, patriarchs, they had they had significant power. And so you didn't want to buck that system. Wives were expected to follow suit. Husbands were expected to act as the *paterfamilias*, and the servants were expected to obey, and children were expected obey as well. And we actually get a hint of this in Aristotle's work. In his book, *Politics*, he talks about household codes. And he goes through the whole thing that's very similar to what we have here. You know, what's the relationship between a husband and his wife. What the relation to between husband and children and husband and slaves and everything like that. And if you read in Aristotle's *Politics*, particularly in book 1 (just read book 1. It's not long), you'll find quickly that there were some interesting things that he says. So I'll just read you a few details on this. I'm just going to read you some quotes. I'm not going to spend a lot of time contextualizing this. You can go back and read it if you want to. These are quotes that I think capture what's going on in the ancient world with respect to the household. So this comes from *Politics*, book 1, chapter 5. It kind of gives you an insight into Aristotle's assumption about things. So he says this,

“But is there anyone thus intended by nature to be a slave and for whom such a condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature. There is no difficulty in answering this question on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary but expedient. From the hour of their birth some are marked out for subjection others are marked out for rule.”

So you kind of see his basic assumption here. He thinks that it's just according to nature that some are designated as rulers in society and others are designated as the those who are ruled in society. This is by nature, by virtue of a person's nature. Now, I'll just be honest with you this is pretty gross. This is really, really gross to me. But this is how the ancient world, many of them at least, not all, but many of them thought about humanity and human relations with one another. So this was standard household code procedure in this ancient world.

There are other little texts here that I could read... In that same section. He says, “one is by nature the ruler and the other the subject.” He says again “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior and the one rules and the other is ruled. This principle of necessity extends to all mankind, again according to nature.” There is definitely a hierarchy within the genders. Males come out on the top end of the hierarchy and women are of course part of the subjected; the part of those who are ruled.

20:10 So let's look at a few more sections here that I've marked up. Here's a section here. This is chapter 12 of book 1. He says, of household management.

“We have seen that there are three parts. One is the rule of a master over slaves, which has been discussed already. Another of a father and the third of a husband. A husband and father rules over wife and children, both free, but the rule differs, the rule over his children being a royal, over his wife, a constitutional rule. For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full grown is superior to the younger and the more immature. But in most constitutional states, the citizens rule and are ruled by turns. For the idea of a constitutional state implies that the nature of the citizens are equal and do not differ at all. Nevertheless, when one rules and the other is ruled, we endeavor to create a difference of outward forms and modes of address and titles of respect, which may be illustrated by the saying of Amasis about his foot pan. The relation of the male to the female is of this kind, but there the inequality is permanent.”

Wow, that's pretty bold and daring. That's again, pretty gross. Another part here he says, "*For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all. The woman has. But it is without authority. And the child has. But it is immature.*" [So like cognitive faculties, you know, the ability to use one's reason in a ruling leadership sort of way.] "*The slave has no deliberative faculty at all. The woman has. But it is without authority. And the child has. But it is immature.*" He goes on, he says, "*Clearly then moral virtue belongs to all of them. But the temperance of a man and of a woman, or the courage and justice of a man and of a woman are not as Socrates maintained the same. The courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying.*"

Lots of things here. So this is about household management and how people should treat one another within the family. There's a ton of things to say about this, but let me just bring it back into dialog with our topic about male/female relations. You don't see that attitude in Paul. You just don't. Paul is extremely progressive when it comes to this issue compared to what I've just read you in Aristotle. Aristotle, mind you, was a very influential figure. It's not unreasonable to think that this mindset that I've just read to you out of Aristotle, it's not unreasonable to think that this was a prevalent mindset. So if you see that as the Graeco-Roman background, part of the Hellenistic background of the New Testament world, then you can come back to Ephesians chapter 5 and you will see how Paul is extremely progressive. And I hate that word progressive because it harkens up all sorts of partisan politics. And I don't....yeah, just forget about all that. I just mean progressive in the sense of liberating women in a way that was unheard of in some parts of that Hellenistic culture and Graeco-Roman culture.

I mean, think of what we just read in Ephesians 5. Husbands are supposed to what their wives? Rule over them. Right? No, no, no. To love them as Christ loved the church. And we already know what Paul is assuming there. As I said earlier that Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many. And he did so not to be served, but to serve. So there should be no husband who insists on being served. There should only be husbands who insist on serving their wives. And it works the other way, right? Wives should not insist on being the focus of exclusive service. They should focus on serving and submitting to their husbands. And hopefully husbands will come back and do the same. And then hopefully wives will come back in the same. Again, the arguments should be who gets to serve the most. That's what a true Christian maturity is all about. It's an upside-down way of thinking about the Greco-Roman world because Aristotle would flip his can if he read Paul. And the truth is if Aristotle and those like him did read Paul, one would hope that that they would come to their senses and think that no, actually, husbands are not meant to rule. They're meant to give up their selves and to serve their wives.

25:15 I'm not advocating, by the way, feminism in maybe the sense that some would use that word. I'm not saying that women should take over the house and be the dominant person. I'm not saying that at all because in the minute that happens then...well go back and read Ephesians 5. You know you're supposed to submit to your husbands. "Oh, so you're saying husbands should be the one who rules and is the dominant in the house?" No, no, not at all! That husband, if he thinks that then he should go back to Ephesians 5 and see how he's supposed to actually lay down his wants and his desires and his very self for the sake of the wife. It's a mutual submission. And it turns out that's how Paul starts off the subject. "*Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.*" See, you got to have verse 21 there. Mutual submission, to help you interpret the rest of the passage.

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27:25 OK, so let's move on to another passage that was brought up in the original question. It was about 1 Corinthians 14:34. So this is a fun little verse. And it's a controversial one. And it's the subject of

much heated debate. It says, **“Women should be silent in the churches, but they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate as the law also says.”** So what do you do with that passage? Is Paul saying that women should be silent, like all the time? Is this a universal role that women are not permitted to speak at all?

You know, I have never met anybody who actually takes that seriously. Even the ones who insist that women have no role in ministry, no leadership role. I’ve never seen a church take this literally. So nobody that I know of takes this literally. I mean, if somebody ever took this literally, that would be terrible, right? And I say that as a father of daughters. I just could not imagine anyone treating my daughter like that.

Take the most conservative church that you know of. Are women allowed to talk in church? Again, it kind of gets ridiculous because even women at conservative churches presumably sing. Maybe even sing in choirs, or whatever. Some conservative churches even have women choir leaders. So anyway, what do you do with this passage? Well, as I said, it is the subject of much debate. One thing I will say just off the cuff here is that this cannot be a universal rule that Paul is prescribing. It just simply cannot be. He doesn’t think that women should be silent in a ministry role, or just generally speaking at all. He’s not saying that. How can I know that? Well, because just three chapters earlier he has women prophesying. So let’s go back to 1 Corinthians 11. And 1 Corinthians 11:5 says, **“Any woman who praise or prophecies with her head unveiled disgraces her head. It is one in the same thing as having her head shaved.”** So here you get this idea of a woman prophesying. Now, prophetic ministry was a very important ministry in the early church. It could even be ranked higher than teaching. You could see it as ranked higher than teaching. It was an authoritative role.

29:55 Now we can get into debates about what’s going on with her having to have her head covered. There’s lots of questions about that. One, I think that’s definitely a cultural issue. I don’t know any evangelical conservative church except outside maybe the Amish or some Mennonite traditions who make the women wear headgear in church when they pray or when they prophecy. So even they would admit that this is a cultural accommodation that Paul’s making.

There’s just been lots of debates. Some scholars have mentioned, as I recall, [I had not studied much on this part], but some scholars have mentioned that there was a spiritual element here. This was perhaps to keep angels from lusting after women. You know, the Genesis 6 thing. And so maybe that’s what was going on. There’s not really an indication here that’s what’s going on, but it could be, I don’t know.

But the point that I want to make here is that if Paul means that all women should be silent in the church then he’s contradicted himself in 1 Corinthians 11. I don’t think that’s what’s going on. I mean, clearly he acknowledges that women are not silent because they’re prophesying and praying. Prophesying is not a silent ministry. It’s a ministry. So here Paul thinks women can have that ministry. So that’s something to talk about, to think about.

The other thing I would say is that this is not, this cannot be, an example of hierarchy in the church at all. In fact when you look at 1 Corinthians 11, Paul talks about your mutual dependence upon each other. So in verse 7 he says,

7 For a man ought not to have his head veiled since he is the image in reflection of God. But woman is the reflection of man. 8 Indeed man was not made from woman but woman from man. [Now that sounds very hierarchical, right? Woman comes from man and therefore what? She’s second class, I guess? well that’s not what Paul is thinking here. He says], **“8 indeed man was not made from woman but from man. 9 Neither was man created for the sake of woman,**

but woman for the sake of man. 10 For this reason, a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the Angels. [Now that might be a reference to the whole Genesis 6 thing, or something like it . Perhaps so. But there may be something else even going on there. But anyway, he says.]
11“Nevertheless, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man, or man independent of woman, for just as woman came from a man. So man comes through woman. But all things come from God.”

So he's even saying that men are dependent on women for their existence. Now, women, as a whole, of course, are dependent upon man. According to the Genesis story, a woman was made from Adam's side. I think, to show equality. But ever since then, every man has come from a woman, right? And so even men are dependent on women. So I think that there's definitely a strong sense of mutuality here. Now, it does say that *“the man was not made for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.”* What does that mean? I think this is a clue back to the Genesis story. Adam was trying to find a helper for himself and he couldn't find one among any animals that existed. So God made someone comparable to him out of his side; part of his body to be a wife for Adam. And this, of course, is Eve and she is his helper, a help meet, someone who's made just for him. But that word helper is *ezer* [עֵזֶר]. That's a very important Hebrew term. And it doesn't mean helper like in the sense of a maid, or an assistant or anything like that. Like not some low-level servant, or whatever. Not in that sense. Actually the word *helper*, that same term, can be applied to God as a mighty warrior. *“If God is my helper.”* You know those texts in the Old Testament that say that. That's the sense of a woman. A woman was made to be this co-equal. Someone that would complete the man in a sense. The man was incomplete without her strength, without her help, without her being the *ezer* there.

So again, don't read into this sort of hierarchal notions. This is pure mutual submission, innocence and that sort of thing. Again, this is a far cry from what we read in Aristotle. Aristotle is flipping his can because he... well, actually the other way around, really. Paul is the one who is subverting the culture of the day. What Paul is saying here and in Ephesians would have been controversial and would have made people scratch their heads a little bit because it's pretty progressive in that sense.

35:05 There's an article and I was going to read a little bit of this. It comes from Craig Keener. He has an article he had written. It's on his website, but it's also found in the *Enrichment Journal*. You can go to his website, [Women in Ministry – Bible Background \(craigkeener.com\)](http://craigkeener.com) and he has a cool article in women in mystery. But he's commenting here on this 1 Corinthians 14 passage about women being silent. I'll just read maybe a couple paragraphs here. He says,

“Here knowing ancient Greek culture helps us understand the passage better. Not all explanations scholars have proposed have proved satisfying. Some hold that a later scribe accidentally inserted these lines into Paul's writings, but the hard evidence for this interpretation seems slender.” [So the idea about women being silent, all that. That was one view says that that was inserted later by a scribe. Craig rejects that idea. So he says he goes on. He says,] *“Some suggest that Paul here quotes a Corinthian position (1 Cor. 14:34-35), which he then refutes (1 Cor. 14:36);”* [OK, so verses 34 and 35. That's like a quotation of what the Corinthians are saying. But Paul refutes that in verse 36. Craig goes on to say,] *“unfortunately 14:36 does not read naturally as a refutation. Others think that churches, like synagogues, were segregated by gender, somehow making women's talk disruptive. This view falters on two counts: first, gender segregation in synagogues may begin centuries after Paul, and second, the Corinthian Christians met in homes, whose architecture would have rendered such segregation impossible. Some also suggest that Paul addresses women abusing the gifts of the Spirit, or*

a problem with judging prophecies. But while the context does address these issues, ancient writers commonly used digressions, and the theme of church order is sufficient to unite the context."

OK, so basically what Craig's doing there is just rejecting these other viewpoints. Next he gives his own understanding of the text. 1st Corinthians 14. He says,

"Another explanation seems more likely. Paul elsewhere affirms women's role in prayer and prophecy (11:5), and the only kind of speech he directly addresses in 14:34-36 is wives asking questions. In ancient Greek and Jewish lecture settings advanced students or educated people frequently interrupted public speakers with reasonable questions. Yet the culture had deprived most women of education, and considered it rude for uneducated persons to slow down lectures with questions that betrayed their lack of training. So Paul provides a long-range solution: the husbands should take a personal interest in their wives' learning and catch them up privately. Most ancient husbands doubted their wives' intellectual potential, but Paul was among the most progressive of ancient writers on the subject. By ancient standards, far from repressing these women, Paul was liberating them!"

I think this is a very helpful understanding, because if you go back to 1 Corinthians 14:34 down to down to the rest of that, Paul says, ***"women should be silent churches for they're not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate. As the law says, if there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home for the shameful for a woman to speak at church. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached."***

So again, we have to reject the idea that this is a universal prohibition. Why? Because 1 Corinthians 11 has women prophesying, which is a public preaching sort of role. So we reject that view. So it seems to be a specific instance here; a problem. And Craig Keener might have... I think he's right on here. I think that what's at issue here is because women were deprived of the education experience and what not. Perhaps the questions they were asking were more disruptive than they were helpful during the lecture or during the sermon. So he says, go home and learn that from your husband's. Not because that's where they should stay, but just go and catch them up. Go get them educated. Presumably so that later on they can come back and be part of these conversations. Because otherwise it's just shameful to speak out of turn in these situations.

I like what Keener says here too. He says, *"Most ancient husbands doubted their wives' intellectual potential."* Man, that's really true. Just again, consider the text that we read in Aristotle. There's no doubt that women were considered *less than* intellectually speaking. So, again, I want to maintain my view here as I think Paul is pretty liberating for women. I think in this culture, in that time period, this would have been a really good news for women in the church.

40:10 Now let's turn to first Peter, Chapter 3 verse 7. This says, ***"husbands in the same way show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing may hinder your prayers."***

So a couple of things may be said here. First, we need to ask a question. Does Peter here have a low view of women? I mean, he calls them the weaker sex, right? Well, I don't think that's a good interpretation. First of all, in the Greek it's not weaker sex. It's weaker vessel. It's not like he's saying weaker gender. He's saying the weaker vessel. **Skeuos [σκεῦος]** That's the word for vessel, or for a jar. It's just a weaker vessel. Some translations have that. So we have to ask

ourselves what's going on here? So we're gonna come back to that little phrase, weaker vessel in just a moment.

But first, let me jump to the rest of verse 7 here. We need to keep this in mind. You know, Peter doesn't think that women are less than. If you're getting that interpretation, then I think it's wrong. Because he says that, **"they are also heirs of the gracious gift of life."** In other words, they are co-heirs with husbands. They are joint heirs, meaning they are equal. They get equal inheritance. That's the point. So he could not be saying that they are *less than* at the same time of him saying they're equal. That just that won't work. That's not an interpretation that has the best explanatory power.

The second thing I would say is we have to keep this first in context. You have to look at verse 8. It says, **"Finally all of you have unity of spirits, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart and a humble mind"**. That's verse 8, comes right after that verse 7. And what's the point there? Well, again, I think this is the idea of again, mutual service to one another. Just like Paul has said in Ephesians chapter 5. Just like Paul has said in 1 Corinthians 11. This here is Peter's way of also acknowledging a mutual service toward one another. Love for one another. And again this is christological love. This is a love that seeks to serve the other, not dominate the other. And so what's interesting to me in these passages and these household code passages in the Bible is that often they're accompanied by these mutual submission text, or these mutual love and service texts right there by it. And we cannot ignore it.

Interestingly in the New Revised Standard Version there's a heading between verse 7 and 8. Those darn headings. I wish we would get rid of them. Here especially because 7 and 8 need to go together, I think. It just flows into that.

And the third thing here is that Peter is saying *honor* the woman. Show them honor. And that's a very important word here. He wants to elevate women in this sense. Now, why would he want to do that? Why would he need to say pay honor to the woman? Pay honor to them? Well, he says, because as the weaker vessel pay honor to them. We have to ask ourselves, why would Peter need to say this? Why would he need to tell people to honor their wife? Because, again, in that culture, they were shamed, they were *less than*. They were Aristotle's version of them. And so we need to ask ourselves, what does Peter mean by weaker vessel? Okay, is he saying that they *are* weaker vessel by virtue of their ontology? By virtue of their nature, like by nature, they are that? That's what Aristotle would say. Or is he meaning something else? Is he just acknowledging that they're the weaker vessel in this crazy culture that we live in? This crazy Aristotelian culture is such that women don't get the privileges that men do. They don't get the honor. They get the shame, they get the accusations, they get the jokes, they get the brunt end of everything. They don't get the honor. So men honor your wife, lift them up, elevate them, You know, show them off. They are wonderfully made in God's image. They are, as Peter says here, **"heirs of the gracious gift with husbands."** So I think that's a better context for how to understand this. I don't take the Aristotle interpretation. I take the cultural interpretation, meaning that Peter is just acknowledging that woman don't have it very well in this culture.

45:00 I think that's a very important point to make. Um, let's see how much time.... Ohh, we're a little over the time. Yeah, you know, I have this knack for making things long on the podcast, so I apologize for these long episodes these days. But hey, when people ask questions, I always say "I can give you a quick answer, or I can give you a good answer." So hopefully these have been helpful and good.

But I do want to wrap this up with a quote again from Craig Keener. He makes a comment about 1 Peter 3:7. This can be found on his website as well. It's an article that he wrote called, *Should Christian Wives Submit to Their Husbands - 1 Peter 3:1-7*. It's a very short article. Just go and

look it up: [Should Christian wives submit to their husbands? — 1 Peter 3:1-7 – Bible Background \(craigkeener.com\)](#). But in that article, the last two paragraphs are what I want to read. I think they're pretty helpful. And actually it looks like this article is an adaptation from the *IVP Bible Background Commentary: The New Testament*. Which Craig, of course, is the go-to guy for the Bible Background stuff. He knows this stuff. He's classically trained so he knows this stuff like the back of his hand. Anyway, the last two paragraphs here are helpful. So I'd like to read them. Let's see he says... he's commenting on chapter 3 verse 7 with the women are the weaker vessel text. Here's what he says,

“Although his [Peter’s] point is to address the many converted wives with unconverted husbands (3:1-6), he includes a brief word for converted husbands as well. Many philosophers, moralists and Jewish’ teachers complained about the moral and intellectual weakness of women; some referred to the weakness of their bodies. Women’s delicacy was considered an object of desire, but also of distrust; even the traditional Roman legal system simply assumed their weakness and inability to make sound decisions on their own. Much of this was due to the influence of Aristotle, who argued that women were by nature inferior to men in every way except sexually.

Yet this weakness (Peter may apply it only to social position) was often cited as a reason to show them more consideration, and Peter attaches no significance to this common term except that requirement; the rest of the verse declares women to be equal before God, which ruined any arguments of their inferiority “by nature”. A husband who failed to recognize his wife’s spiritual equality jeopardized his own prayers, for the reason Peter gives in 3:12”

So did you catch that part? He says 1 Peter 3:7 at the end, “*honor your wife so that nothing may hinder your prayers.*” God takes this so seriously. So anything that would dishonor our wives just makes God upset. So that's a good warning here.

And then Keener, there quotes, verse 12. Verse 12 says, “*for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*” So again we should elevate and honor our wives as a way to honor their equality with us. I like what Keener says here. I'll read this part again. He says, “*This weakness*” [you know, the weaker vessel thing]. “*This weakness*”, and he says “*Peter may apply it only to social position.*” I like that. I think that's what Peter is doing. And that's what I was saying earlier is that Peter was acknowledging their unfortunate social position in society. But he says, “*this was often cited as a reason to show them more consideration.*” So because of their social position we need to show them even more consideration. And the word he uses there is honor. Honor our wives.

48:56 Well, that's a wrap for today. And we'll be exploring this topic further in a few weeks when I interview Dr. Sandra Glahn about her new book, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament*. And today is actually the release date for her book, October 10th. So if you want a preview, be sure to check out her book. Thanks for listening. Have a wonderful week.

49:20 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode.