

WHEN THE BIBLE IS CHALLENGING

Part 29 of Foundations 260. 1 Peter 3:1-2.

Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. September 14, 2025.

THE BIBLE CAN FEEL CHALLENGING

Today's teaching is about wrestling with tough biblical passages.

- There were several such passages in last week's Foundations 260 reading.
- I want to walk you through the process I use to understand and apply challenging passages. Then you will have confidence to study the Bible.

WHY THE BIBLE CAN FEEL CHALLENGING

There are at least four reasons we can find Bible passages challenging:

- The Bible is old.
- The Bible is deep.
- The Bible calls on us to change.
- The Bible is spiritual.

A passage many find challenging is 1 Peter 3:1-2.

1 Peter 3:1-2 (CSB) In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live 2 when they observe your pure, reverent lives.

HOW TO DEAL WITH CHALLENGING PASSAGES: SEVEN STEPS

Step one: Pray and ask the Lord for his help.

Step two: Be humble.

- The Bible is God's inerrant Word, so it's not our place to decide which teachings we'll receive.

Step three: Explore the context.

- Level one: The general context. 1 Peter is a letter to first-century Jewish Christians in the Roman Empire, etc.
- Level two: The surrounding context. Christians should submit to authority in situations where they have no power and resistance is futile.
- Level three: The specific context. Christian wives living with unbelieving husbands in first-century Jewish households.

Step four: Carefully read the passage several times.

- Read in several ways: in the mind, out loud, using various translations, write it out, paraphrase it, etc.

Step five: Make observations.

- Ask the five W's: who, what, where, when, why, and how?
 - Who? Christian wives. Unbelieving husbands.
 - What? How to relate to unbelieving husbands.
 - Where? At home, in their hearts, and in their lifestyle.
 - Why? To win over unbelieving husbands.
 - How? By cultivating godly inner qualities.
- Identify the main verbs because they usually make the message clear.

- “Submit yourselves”
- “Be won over”
- “The way their wives live”
- Research the meaning of key words or phrases.
 - “Submit” emphasizes respect and cooperation.
 - “Even if they disobey the word” refers to unbelieving husbands.
 - “Pure, reverent lives” means God-fearing lives.

Step six: Interpret the passage.

- What did the apostle say to the first-century recipients?
- Christian wives should respect and cooperate with their husbands as much as possible because rocking the boat at home would get in the way of leading their unbelieving husbands to Jesus.

Step seven: Apply the passage.

- Note, this is the final step, not the first. Don’t rush to the application.
- Christian wives should respect and cooperate with their husbands.
 - This is not a license for husbands to be selfish, unkind, or bossy.
 - It does not imply subservient, inferior, stupid, or silent.
- The main application is: If you want to lead your husband to Jesus, develop a godly life. Don’t agitate, manipulate, or berate.

GO AND DO LIKEWISE

Keep on track with the Foundations 260 readings.

Use the practical tools I showed you to study and apply what you read.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Review

- Review Peter's September 14th teaching and study guide.
- What were the main insights of Peter's teaching?
- What questions do you have about the passage or Peter's teaching?
- What were the main applications or takeaways for your life?

Discuss

- Which Bible passages have you personally found confusing, challenging, or unsettling? What are some examples, and what made them difficult to understand?
- How has exploring the historical and literary context of a Bible passage helped you overcome misunderstandings or clarify its meaning?
- When have you encountered a verse that called you to change something in your life? What was your response—resistance, confusion, or transformation?
- What challenges or hesitations arise when considering the idea of "submission" in light of modern relationships and cultural values?
- How might cultivating a godly lifestyle—a pure, reverent life—win people to faith in Jesus?

Prayer Focus

- Pray for the Lord to help us cultivate healthy marriages and families.
- Ask for more people to hear the gospel and respond in faith through the people and ministries of the Cornerstone Church.