

Week 15 - A Word to Husbands - 1Peter 3:7

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5:25-29

Introduction

This morning we are returning to the topic that Peter started back in chapter 2 verse 13 where he began talking about Christ-followers being subject to every human institution

We have looked at how we should be subject to governing authorities; how slaves should be subject to their masters; and how wives should be subject to their own husbands

And Peter has given those instructions under the overarching umbrella of how Christ-followers should be living as sojourners and exiles while they are in a place that is not their true home

As we saw two weeks ago, when we looked at 1Peter 3:1-6, wives are to willingly and voluntarily place themselves under their husband's authority in the marriage

Peter commanded wives to show proper respect to their husbands and to keep their conduct pure as they concerned themselves more with their inner qualities than their external beauty

And we tackled some of the "what abouts" that come up whenever the subject of wives being subject comes up, not the least of which is "What about if my husband isn't living as God would have him live?"

In the end, we concluded that the bottom line is that wives are to be subject to their husband's God-given authority even when their husbands are wrong as long as it doesn't result in sin and your goal as a wife should be to be so winsome that your husband is won over to follow the Savior

Unfortunately, there is a great deal of discomfort felt among many Christian wives over that passage and its parallels in the New Testament largely because many husbands have abused those passages by taking them to mean that they can be a tyrant and their wife simply has to put up with being bossed around

But, as we are going to see today, that's hardly an accurate interpretation and a husband has to willfully ignore what Peter writes in 1Peter 3:7 to come to that conclusion

You might wonder why Peter wrote six verses to wives and only one to husbands but the one verse he wrote to husbands is packed full and, when fully understood, serves to keep things in balance

If you haven't done so already, I encourage you to open your Bible to 1Peter chapter 3 so you can follow along as I read verses 1-7 [**1Peter 3:1-7**]

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

The first thing I want you to notice about verse 7 is that it begins with the word "likewise" just as verse 1 did when Peter wrote to the wives in his original audience

It's the same word but it means something a bit different in verse 7 than it did in verse 1 because the idea of submission is excluded except for as it impacts husbands being subject to what God commands

What Peter means in verse 7 is that the same discussion is continuing and Peter is commanding husbands to submit to God and be considerate in their use of their God-given authority

And he gives two commands as to what that will look like and he finishes with a reason for doing so

First, Peter says that a husband must understand their wife

I. Understand your wife

At least that's the sense of what he has written although it's not precisely what the original Greek says

The Greek word Peter uses means "to possess information" or "to have knowledge"

So what Peter wrote in a literal translation is: "Husbands, likewise live with your wives according to knowledge"

And we should rightly ask, "According to what knowledge"

One aspect has to be according to knowledge about God's Word

If we are to have successful, God-honoring marriages, we must first know God's purposes and principles for marriage and those purposes and principles are found in the pages of the Bible

So a husband must spend time in God's Word and know what it says

Look at the additional information we find about how a husband should relate to his wife from our Scripture reading from Ephesians 5 this morning - love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her and love your wife as your own body

Paul also includes the admonition of not being harsh when he speaks of loving one's wife in Colossians 3:19

And there are numerous other passages we could turn to in order to be informed - and a husband must know all that God says in his written Word on the subject if he is going to dwell with his wife according to knowledge

But I don't believe that is Peter's primary intention here as I believe he means a husband must understand his wife

And that puts me in mind of a story

A man was walking on a beach one day and he noticed something shiny sticking up out of the sand.

He reached down and pulled it out to find it was an ornate gold lamp.

As he began to brush the sand off of it so he could admire it better, smoke started coming out of its spout and a genie appeared.

"Since you have set me free," said the genie, "you may have one wish."

The man gazed out over the ocean and said, "I don't like flying so I'd like a bridge from here to Hawaii so I could drive there"

Well, the genie frowned and asked if there wasn't something else the guy might want because that was a pretty big ask

So the man thought for another moment and said, "I'd like to understand women."

To which the genie replied, "Would you like a two or four-lane bridge?"

Without a doubt, men and women are wired differently and most men find women to be a mystery wrapped in a riddle

Men and women are so different in so many ways other than the obvious physiological differences including what they perceive, what they value, how they process information, how they handle conflict, and the list goes on

It used to be that women appreciated having a door opened for them but now doing so might just earn a man a tongue lashing about how women are every bit as capable as men and how dare you patronize me

There are so many ways that men and women are different that Peter's command might well seem impossible

But I want you to read it again - Peter doesn't say "husbands understand women" he says "husbands understand one woman, your wife"

And you come to a better understanding of your wife by spending time with her, observing her, studying her, getting to know her likes and dislikes, her hopes and fears, her struggles and her victories, her strengths and weaknesses, her gifts and her needs, her motivations, her insecurities, and so forth

The point is that the knowledge or understanding that Peter is referring to is experiential in nature

It's knowledge that goes beyond factual and speaks of a special relationship between the person that knows and the one who is known

Notice also that Peter tells husbands something that may seem a little peculiar until you think about it

He says that the husband should *"live with"* their wife

This is the only time the word Peter uses appears in the New Testament but it appears five times in the Old Testament and in all of those cases it has to do with marital relations and fundamentally means to "share the same bed" in modern vernacular

And Peter puts the responsibility for togetherness on the husband

One of the primary ways we men are guilty of harming our marriages is by being absent

Work and personal pleasure keeps many a husband away from home far too much but even when they are home they are too often distant because of stress or fatigue

Without a doubt, we have to go to work but how often do we give an unnatural priority to our work and take time from our wives - your job may need you but so does your wife and your wife should come first

Paul wrote to his protégé, Timothy, in **1 Timothy 5:8** –

...if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever

Far too many couples live what amounts to separate lives and only happen to cohabit the same dwelling with the average couple spending only 4-5 minutes a day actually talking with one another in a focused way

Peter's command is husbands, spend quality time with your wives and seek to know all you can about them so that you can live with them as God has ordained

And then he says to honor your wife and he gives two reasons for the honor

II. Honor your wife

"Honor" is a term used to describe the value of a precious stone so that wives are to be treasured like a jewel

It's likely how every husband acted toward their wife before she was their wife and they were still dating

Marriage is the best relationship this earthly life has to offer but it takes work to be successful and Peter lays the responsibility for cultivating that relationship on the one with authority in it - the husband

I know some of us have been married a whole lot longer than others but, think back

As husbands, can we truly say we esteem our wives with the same intensity as we did when we were trying to win them?

Do we even continue on with the little courtesies of life?

Or have we allowed time and familiarity to dull our enthusiasm and devotion toward her?

Do we even concern ourselves with the thought that we are offending or even neglecting her in some way?

Perhaps considering the opposite of honoring someone would help

To dishonor someone is to show them disdain, contempt, scorn, disregard, neglect, or just plain thoughtlessness

Far too often we allow what once attracted us - the mystery and differences we saw in our wives - to become familiar
 One of the blessings of marriage is the comfortable familiarity the years together bring - but we dare not allow comfort to lapse into complacency and so become more akin to roommates than spouses

Honoring one's wife includes respect and esteem and showing her that you value her

We all want to be valued

To feel valued requires a demonstration of some kind that assures a person of their worth over time

This can include such things as giving them words of praise and celebrating their strengths and victories or their unique character traits

It can be as simple as making eye contact when they talk - which might mean putting your phone down or turning the TV off - and really taking time to communicate with them and not just talk at them letting them know you value their opinions and insights

It can be discovering their Love Language and seeking to express your appreciation for them in that way

Taking someone for granted and failing to appreciate them may well be the unkindest cut of all

Chivalry may well be dead as regards opening a door for a stranger but it should never die in a marriage and a husband must always recognize the precious jewel who condescended to marry him

And the first reason Peter gives for such honor is because the wife, as the female, is the weaker vessel

The word Peter uses speaks of a limited capacity to do or to be something

Peter doesn't specify exactly the way he understands the woman to be the weaker vessel but the context makes it appropriate for him to have in mind any kind of weakness that a husband could take advantage of

Naturally, in most cases, that would include the recognition that women are physically weaker than men - that's the way many scholars take his meaning

But within the context of the verse, I don't think we would be out of line to also acknowledge the disparity in authority within the marriage between husband and wife

In that aspect, the wife certainly is weaker and Peter says that the husband shouldn't misuse their God-given authority for ungodly, selfish ends

Rather, they should recognize the weakness of their wife and use their authority to bestow honor upon her because it's the role of the strong to support the weak and compensate for their weaknesses

It's a form of servant leadership in the home that guards against the husband using his strength and authority in the marriage for selfish purposes

We would be remiss if we didn't also acknowledge that emotional sensitivity is typically also greater among women than men and that wives are often hurt by conflicts in marriage that men perceive as small or minor matters

Husbands should recognize that fact and treat their wives with gentleness and sensitivity

A husband needs to be sensitive to his wife's concerns so as to recognize them and respond appropriately

Many women take umbrage at the idea of being a weaker vessel but there is nothing derogatory or demeaning intended by the description

After all, the term "weaker" is a term of comparison and, therefore, the husband is also a vessel meaning that both are instruments for God's purposes although those purposes are different

And wives, merely by the fact of their femaleness are worthy of honor from their husbands because God is often pleased to give honor to those who are weaker or less honored in the eyes of the world

Paul makes that point quite powerfully in **1Corinthians 1:26-29** where he writes –

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

And we see this lack of a demeaning intent in Peter's second reason for the husband to honor his wife –

"They are heirs with you of the grace of life"

Even though husbands have been given greater authority within marriage, their wives are still equal to them in spiritual privilege and eternal importance - they are joint heirs with their husbands and both are joint heirs with Christ

Look with me at **Galatians 3:27-28** where Paul writes about this truth –

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

As we have seen, Peter has been talking throughout his letter thus far about how the perspective of the Christ-follower is affected by the knowledge that they are a stranger and sojourner on this earth for a time

And we have seen how our suffering here is temporary and light when compared to the eternal reward God is guarding for us in heaven

With that perspective, Peter has shown how we can submit to authorities of all kinds and how the wife is subject to her husband

We have the tendency, along with some of the religious rulers in Jesus' day, to think that things will continue in heaven as they are here

But, in Matthew 22:29-30, Jesus set them straight concerning husband and wife relations in heaven and he said there would be no marriage in heaven

And in our passage Peter shows how the husband must recognize the temporal nature of the wife's submission and how it will not be this way in eternity where the wife will be fully recognized as a fellow heir along with her husband

The roles that we are to fulfill in this life will be no more and everyone will be equal

The plain truth is that we must see a thing, truly see a thing for what it is, before we can honor it

And we are prone to allow time and familiarity and mistaken ideas to dull our sight and begin to take our wives for granted

To truly honor one's wife requires looking at her the way God sees her as a joint heir of the grace of life

Unique in her creation as an individual image-bearer of God, valuable and precious and worthy of all honor

Then, in the final phrase of the verse, Peter reveals why understanding and honoring your wife is necessary

III. In order to protect your prayer life

He writes: *so that your prayers may not be hindered*

Husbands, pay attention to what Peter says here and don't lightly brush it off because it's a strong warning

What he is saying is that God is so concerned that husbands live in an understanding and loving way with their wives, that he interrupts his relationship with husbands when they are not doing so

"Hindered" means "to cut off" and it's a military metaphor that means to dig a trench or throw up a barrier in the way so that normal troop movement is impossible

It indicates the use of strong measures to prevent something from happening

And here Peter uses it in the present tense indicating the action is continuous and failing to honor one's wife will result in a cutting of the lines of communication with God

So that we can say in no uncertain terms that how a husband treats his wife has a profound impact on his own fellowship with God

We know that broken relationships in other areas are a concern to God

We read in Matthew 5:23-24 how we aren't even to present our offering until we have reconciled with a fellow believer should we have difficulty between us

So why would we be surprised to know that God is concerned about the relationship between a husband and wife

No Christ-following husband should presume to think that any spiritual good will be accomplished in his life without an effective relationship with God of which prayer is a vital component

And no Christ-following husband should expect to have an effective prayer life unless he lives appropriately with his wife and that means getting to know her and living with her according to knowledge and showing her appropriate honor

Taking the time and making the effort to develop and maintain a good marriage is God's will

It's a spiritual activity that is pleasing in God's sight and understanding and honoring your wife is a necessary part of serving God

And let's call the failure to do what Peter commands what it is: disobedience

When we recognize how failing to live with our wives as we should for the disobedience to God that it is, we readily see that the hindering of our prayers is a form of God's fatherly discipline that **Hebrews 12:11** reminds us is for our own good

God takes how a husband relates to his wife seriously and so must we

Conclusion

We can get ourselves in a real mess whenever we discuss the topics of authority and submission - especially when those subjects touch on marital and male/female relationships

Husbands are prone to misuse their God-given authority and try to rule with an iron fist while wives are prone to rebel against their husbands and demand their "rights"

And both of those attitudes are unbiblical

We should rather be guided by Paul's words we find in **Philippians 2:4-8** where he writes:

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

When we follow the example of Christ we will see husbands using their authority in marriage to serve their wives and wives submitting to their husbands as God would have us do

I think we can all agree there is a lot packed into this one verse from Peter's letter and that the husbands didn't get off lightly in spite of only having one verse addressed to them in contrast with the six addressed to wives

Speaking directly to the husbands now, I'm sure you'll agree we have our work cut out for us if we want to be obedient and have God-honoring marriages where our prayers rise to God unhindered

And our role as husbands would be fulfilled as God would like until we know and honor our wives and love her as Christ loved the church

But, as the old saying goes, there's nothing to it but to do it - so let's seek God's help and get to it

Let's pray

Ephesians 5:25-29 (page 979)

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church...