

Instruction for Husbands

Last month we unpacked 1 Peter 3:1-6, which addresses the responsibilities of wives in relation to their husbands. Wives are to be subject to their own husbands, even to those who are disobedient to the word of God. Wives are to be respectful, and pure in their conduct. Wives are to be modest, and they are to adorn themselves with the imperishable quality of a quiet and gentle spirit. Wives are to hope in the LORD God and to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord. This morning we are going to continue this theme by looking at 1 Peter 3:7, which addresses the responsibilities of husbands in relation to their wives.

1 Peter 3:7, 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.

Here in this passage Peter gives husbands two commands to follow in relation to their wives, and then he gives a very stern warning to those who disobey these commands. The first command: husbands are to live with their wives in an understanding way. The second command: husbands are to show honor to their wives. The warning: if you fail to obey these commands, then your prayers will be hindered.

Command #1, live with your wives in an understanding way.

1 Peter 3:7, Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.

First things first, notice the first word in v1, which is the term “likewise.” The term likewise, is a strategic term of conclusion, which introduces a logical result or inference from what immediately precedes. Likewise means in response to, or as a result of, or in accordance with, or in light of the truth previously mentioned.

In other words, in the same way that citizens (1 Peter 2:13) are to be subject to every human institution, in the same way that servants (1 Peter 2:18) are to be subject to their masters, in the same that the LORD Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21-23) was subject to the will of his Father and entrusted himself to him, in the same way that wives (1 Peter 3:1-6) are to be subject to their own husbands, likewise, in the same way, husbands are to live with their wives in an understanding way, showing them honor (1 Peter 3:7). This is the first command, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.

The term *live* refers to domestic association. It literally means *to reside together*, or *to dwell together with*. This term is a present active participle, which means to be continually dwelling with, or to be continually residing with. In other words, the way in which husbands are to live with their wives is to be continual, it is to be ongoing, it is to be constant. The manner in which husbands are to live with their wives is not something that is done once in a while, once a week, once a month, or once a year, but all the time. Husbands are to continually live with their wives in an understanding way. Husbands are to continually live with their wives in an understanding way till death do you part.

The Greek translation of the phrase *in an understanding way* is *kata gnosis*, which means according to knowledge. Husbands, the LORD God is commanding you to live with your wives in an understanding way, in an understanding way that is according to knowledge. To what knowledge is Peter referring? In this context, the term knowledge can refer to anything from the knowledge of one’s wife to the knowledge of the word of God. I think the idea here is that a husband is to live with his wife in accordance with his personal knowledge of her, and he is to live with her in accordance with his knowledge of the word of God. Husbands

you need to know and understand your wife, and you need to know and understand God's plan and design for your relationship with your wife. In other words, every husband is responsible to know his own wife well enough to apply the principles of Scripture to living with her.

This is my fifteenth year in pastoral ministry. I have had the privilege of meeting with many believers, and coming alongside them during some of their most difficult and trying times, and ministering the word of God to them. And do you know what is consistently the most common problem among the brethren? In my experience, the most common, the most recurring, the most heated, and difficult issues are always the issues that surround relationships –the issues surrounding husbands and wives. And in every one of these situations, the problem stemmed from either an inadequate knowledge of the word of God, or from an inadequate personal knowledge of their spouse. They either did not know and understand the word of God, or they did not know and understand their spouse. More common than not, in the church today, Christian men do not have the foggiest notion of what it means to be a biblical husband, nor do Christian women rightly understand their role and their responsibility of being a biblical wife.

The basic pillars of a biblical marriage, attitudes such as humility, sacrifice, love, dying to self, forgiveness, patience, perseverance –these are foreign to so many Christian marriages. These attitudes have been replaced with pride, apathy, indifference, selfishness, bitterness, impatience, and a lack of perseverance. It is clear that the influence of the world has crept into the church. There are many churches today, who practice and embrace unbiblical views regarding marriage, promoting individualism, male chauvinism, feminism, pragmatism, and psychological error. For many, these unbiblical ideals have greatly influenced our marriages and the result has been disastrous. Marriages within the church, are often just as likely to fail as those outside of the church, the statistics are horrendous. And the reason why so many Christian marriages fail is a lack of knowledge.

So, as a husband, what do I need to know in order to fulfill God's purpose in my marriage? If I am commanded to live with my wife in an understanding way, if I am commanded to live with my wife according to knowledge, what is it that I need to know? What specific instruction does the word of God provide?

Husbands, this is very important, so please take note. The relationship that you have with your bride, should reflect and mirror the relationship of the LORD Jesus Christ and his bride, the church. Again, the relationship that you have with your bride, should reflect and mirror the relationship of the LORD Jesus Christ and his bride, the church. This is the key to a biblical marriage, and this picture (Christ and the church) is to be your primary focus. Everything you need to know about marriage, everything you need to know about your role as a husband, everything you need to know about how you must interact with your wife, and how you must treat your wife, can be learned by observing the relationship between the LORD Jesus Christ and the church.

For example, turn with me to the book of Ephesians, Ephesians 5:25-33. This passage is a sermon series in itself, but I want to briefly point out three ways in which the LORD Jesus Christ interacts with the church, and thus there are three ways in which husbands are to interact with their wives. All husbands are commanded to live with their wives according to knowledge, and here we see precisely what is meant.

Ephesians 5:25-33, Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 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. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the

church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The first way in which husbands are to live with their wives according to knowledge, is to love their wives sacrificially –with sacrificial love.

Ephesians 5:25, Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

The LORD Jesus Christ gave himself up for the church. The LORD Jesus Christ sacrificially gave himself up for the church. The LORD Jesus Christ made the greatest and highest sacrifice for the church –he gave up his life, upon the cross, for the church.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

Galatians 5:13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

The LORD Jesus Christ, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. He willingly gave up his high and exalted position and emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, he was born in the likeness of men. Then he further humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. The LORD Jesus Christ willingly took upon himself our guilt, and our shame, and our sin, so that we might be redeemed and reconciled to our Heavenly Father. The LORD Jesus Christ made the greatest and the highest sacrifice for those who were the least and the lowest. He made this sacrifice for those who did not seek him. He made this sacrifice for those who were his enemies. He made this sacrifice for those who were openly hostile and rebellious against him.

Romans 5:8, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The LORD Jesus Christ sacrificially loved the church, and he made the ultimate sacrifice not for the lovely, or the worthy, or for the godly, but for the unlovely, for the unworthy, and for the ungodly. The LORD Jesus Christ recognized our greatest need, and delivered the highest good for us, at the most infinitely high cost.

Husbands, your wives will never be as ugly, and as sinful, as you were prior to your salvation. Husbands, your wives will never be as foul and offensive, as you were to the LORD God. If the LORD Jesus Christ was able to sacrificially love you, and sacrificially give himself up for you, then you should be able to sacrificially do the same.

Husband, the LORD God commands you to love your wife, you are able, you are equipped, and you must sacrificially give up yourself for your wife. You must love your wife in a sacrificial manner. You must put the needs of your wife in front of your own needs. You must put the desires of your wife in front of your own desires. Husbands, you must give preference to your wife. You must have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. The pattern and example of the LORD Jesus Christ and his sacrificial love for you demands it.

The second way in which husbands are to love their wives is with a purifying love. Why did the LORD Jesus Christ give himself up for the church? So that he might sanctify her, so that he might cleanse her, so that he might purify her, so that he might present her to himself, in holiness, without spot and without blemish. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, 1 Peter 2:24, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. Purifying love wants only the best for the ones it loves. Purifying love can have no hint of

corruption. It can have no hint of anything evil or impure. The goal of purifying love is a purified life, and for husbands, the goal is a purified wife.

Husbands, just as the LORD Jesus Christ is not content with your sin and your impurity, just as the LORD Jesus Christ seeks to cleanse you, and sanctify you, by washing you with his word, so also must you seek the moral purity of your wife. Husbands, you must seek to cleanse your wives, by the purifying agent of the word of God. You must prayerfully and thoughtfully minister the word of God to her, in any and every circumstance. Husbands, you must seek to purify your wives, and to protect them from the influence of the world, or from any other sort of defilement. This means you will always seek out her best, her spiritual best. This means you will never encourage her to do what is wrong, or for her to do what is contrary to the word of God. You will not return evil for evil, but you will do everything in your power to present her to the LORD Jesus Christ in holiness –without spot and without blemish.

This has been tough one for me. I have struggled with loving my wife in a purifying manner. I tend to provoke, and to stir things up, often in an ungodly manner. I have to work very hard at loving my wife in a way that grows her in godliness because, quite frankly, many times it is my behavior that is the cause of her sin. It is my lack of leadership, my lack of consideration, my lack of selflessness, my lack of sacrificial love that often results in a sinful response on her part.

The act of loving your wife in a purifying manner, requires that you walk in a purifying manner. It requires that you walk closely with the LORD God. Husbands, you must lead by example, you must live by example, and do not give your wives any cause to doubt, to stumble, or to fall into sin. And if you do see sin, or some other spiritual shortcoming in your wife, you need to come alongside of her and humbly and graciously wash her with the word of God. You need to gently and lovingly point out what the word of God says, and then help her to walk in its truth. If you lose your temper at her sin, if you get angry with her, or frustrated, or sarcastic with her, then you run the risk of pushing her farther into her own sin, and farther into her rebellion against the LORD God, which is the opposite of what the LORD God is commanding you to do. You must seek out the purity of your wife. You must love her with a cleansing and purifying love, a love that seeks after her holiness.

The third way in which husbands are to love their wives is with a gentle and caring love, a love that recognizes that you are one flesh with her.

Ephesians 5:28-31, In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

The LORD Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and the church is the body of the LORD Jesus Christ. The reason why the LORD God provides and cares for the church, is because the church is his body. In the same way, husbands are the head of their wives, husbands and wives are one flesh. It is the responsibility of the husband to provide and to care for his wife. Husbands must nourish and cherish their wives because they are no longer two but one flesh. John MacArthur remarked, “To nourish a wife is to provide for her needs, to give that which helps her grow and mature in favor with God and man. To cherish her is to use tender love and physical affection to give her warmth, comfort, protection, and security.”

Husbands, do you love your wives in this manner? Do you nourish her? Do you provide for her? Do you provide for her needs? Not just the needs that you perceive as important, but for her needs and those needs, which she deems to be important? Do you help in her walk with God? Do you encourage her to grow in her walk with God? Is your wife growing in her walk with God?

Do you cherish your wife? Are you warm and gentle to her? Are you a comfort to her? Are you sensitive to her in your speech? Are you tender to her in your actions? Are you affectionate and compassionate towards your wife? There are far too many husbands who fail in this area. Rather than warmth, and gentleness, and affection, many wives live with the exact opposite, with husbands who are distant, cold, and harsh.

Brothers, you need to pay attention to your wives. You have to pay close attention to her needs, all of her needs, her physical needs, her emotional needs, and her spiritual needs. You must care for her, you must nourish her, you must cherish her, just as you would your own body. Husbands, what do you do when you get tired? You go to bed; you take a nap. What do you do when you get sick? You go to the doctor; you take some medicine. What do you do when you are thirsty? You get a drink of water. What do you do when your stomach is growling and you start to feel faint? You eat. What do you do when your tooth starts to ache? You go to the dentist. Husbands, do you have any problems or hesitations in fulfilling any one of these needs? No. Why is that? It is because you love your body, because you do not like to be in pain, because you do not like to be in discomfort. What happens if you fail to listen to your physical body? What happens if you ignore all of these requests? Well, you are going to be tired, sick, thirsty, hungry, and have a real bad tooth ache. If you ignore your body, if you do not listen to your physical body, then there will be serious consequences that will incur. And it is exactly the same with your wives.

Husbands, do not ignore your wives, and do not turn a deaf ear to their needs. It does not matter how insignificant or ridiculous you think they may be, you must listen to your wife and you must strive to fulfill her needs. Persevere, and look to the LORD Jesus Christ. Be diligent, impart maximum effort, to love your wife as Christ loved the church. In doing this you will be living with your wife according to knowledge, according to the knowledge of the Scriptures.

A lack of biblical knowledge is a real handicap in marriage, but so also is a lack of personal knowledge about your wife. The only way to carry out these biblical commands is to have an in depth knowledge of not only the Scriptures, but also of your wife.

1 Peter 3:7, 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.

Sometimes you just do not know enough facts about your wife to be a good husband, and because you do not know enough about your wife, you fail in your application of loving her as Christ loved the church. If this is the case, you simply need to get to know your wife better. You need to take the time, and effort, and energy to study her and find out what it is that makes her tick.

For example, I have been married for almost 25 years, this is our 25th year of marriage, but it was not until our 20th year that I learned that the only gifts that my wife really appreciates are jewelry and clothes. For 20 years I had been giving her very practical, but very lousy gifts, because I did not know what my wife really liked, but as her husband I should have known.

Let me give you some practical tips on getting to know your wife better. Take time and observe her. Look, listen, and learn from her. Ask her questions. Purposely try to draw information out of her, what are her likes, her dislikes, what are her capabilities, her limitations, her joys, her challenges, her sorrows, her fears, her temptations, her physical needs, her spiritual needs, what communicates love to her, what communicates indifference to her, what encourages her, what discourages her, what does she like, what does she dislike, what makes her happy, what makes her mad. Try to experience her world. Try to walk a mile in her shoes. Try to do some of her responsibilities for a day (maybe you take care of the kids, or clean up the house, or make a meal). This can be a very enlightening experience. It will probably help you better appreciate your wife, and it will help you understand what she goes through on a daily basis.

Brothers, the more you know about your wife the better equipped you will be to love her as your own body, as your own flesh. If you want to live with your wife in an understanding way, if you want to live with your wife according to knowledge, then get to know your wife better, and get to know the Scriptures better. If you crash and burn, or you get tripped up, or confused, or lose your way entirely, which you will probably do, then look to the example of the LORD Jesus Christ and mimic his love for the church. Live with your wives according to biblical knowledge and live with your wives according to your personal knowledge of her.

Command #2, Husbands are to honor their wives.

1 Peter 3:7, 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,

As you strive to live with your wife in an understanding way, as you strive to live with your wife according to the knowledge of God, you must also strive to respect your wife by giving her honor. The term honor refers to the worth or merit of an object. It is the amount at which something is valued. This term carries with it the idea of showing esteem, and admiration, and thankfulness to the highest degree. This high degree of honor was bestowed upon the excellent wife in Proverbs 31, by her husband and her children.

Proverbs 31:28-30, Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 29 “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” 30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

On this subject Matthew Henry remarked, “A husband’s duty to this wife consists in giving due respect to her, and maintaining her authority, protecting her person, supporting her credit, delighting in her conversation, affording her a handsome maintenance, and placing a due trust and confidence in her.” Peter illustrates this idea of honoring your wife by using a very helpful and practical analogy. Husbands are to show honor to their wives, as the weaker vessel. Well, what does that mean? Let me tell you what it does not mean. It does not mean that women are spiritually weaker, or that women are emotionally weaker, nor does it mean that women are inferior to men in any way, shape, or form. In the Greek the word *vessel* refers to a useful container, or a useful instrument. And the word *weaker* refers to something that is very delicate and fragile. This particular word was often used to describe the sacred vessels that were used in the temple for the worship of LORD God. In calling wives, the *weaker vessel*, Peter is not referring to their moral character, or to their intellectual ability, nor is he referring to their spiritual perception. Peter is primarily referring to the difference in physical strength between men and women. Generally speaking, women possess less physical strength than men. I do not want to beleaguer this point, but in my house, an unopened pickle jar will attest to this truth.

So, how should husbands honor their wives? Husbands are to treat their wives in the same that they would treat a very delicate and useful instrument, or a very delicate and useful vessel. In other words, husbands are to esteem their wives as extremely valuable and handle them with special care and concern. As a kid, I used to love to watch cartoons. I had an old television set up in our basement, but in order for it to work it needed an elaborate antenna set up. So I had tin foil attached to it, it had wire coat hangers protruding every which way, and if you stood in the wrong place, or interfered with the antenna in any way, you would lose all reception. It was very frustrating. The antenna was a very delicate instrument, it was very fragile. It needed to be handled with special care and extreme precaution. Even though it was a weaker vessel, it was extremely valuable and important to me because without the antenna, the television was useless.

In the very same way, every husband must honor his wife by treating her as a very delicate and precious possession. So, how do I do it? How do I treat my wife as a delicate precious possession? Tell your wife what she means to you, and how thankful to the LORD God you are for her. Tell her the specific things

that you appreciate about her. Tell her the specific things that you appreciate about what she does. Husbands, do not belittle your wife. Do not treat her as a lowly servant, but rather shower your wife with love and appreciation. Speak kindly and respectfully to her, even when you disagree. Only say things that will build her up. Do not respond to her in arrogance, or with an overbearing attitude, with superiority, or intimidation. Rather, grant her honor, praise her in private, and praise her in public –the reason being, she is your wife, she is your flesh, and she is a fellow heir with you.

1 Peter 3:7, 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.

One of the reasons that husbands are to show honor to their wives is because wives are fellow heirs of the grace of life. What does this mean? What is the grace of life? There are some differing views on this particular phrase, grace of life. There are some who say the grace of life is referring to marriage itself, which is God's most blessed gift in this life. There are others who would view the grace of life as the gift of new life in children. Still others, view this phrase as reminder to husbands that even though they have been given greater authority within marriage, their wives are still equal to them in spiritual privilege and eternal importance.

Given the context of 1 Peter, which emphasizes our future salvation and our protected inheritance, my take is that the grace of life is the gift that both believing men and women will receive on the last day. The grace of life is that both men and women are equal recipients of the matchless grace of God. Husbands must show honor to their wives, because both husband and wife will partake of the same eternal treasure, the same eternal inheritance, and the same eternal destiny. The grace of life refers to the life that will be ours in the coming age –eternity.

Command #1, Husbands, live with your wife in an understanding way. Command #2, Husbands, show honor to your wives as a weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life. Failure to keep these two commands, failure to live with your wife in an understanding way, and failure in showing your wife honor, will result in a very serious and detrimental consequence. Failure will result in a hindered prayer life.

1 Peter 3:7, 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.

Failure to keep these two commands will hinder your relationship with the LORD God. Specifically, your prayers to the LORD God will be hindered. The Greek word *hindered* means *to be cut into* or *to be impeded*. Husbands, there is a direct correlation between you and your wife and you and your God. Think about that for a moment. There is a direct correlation between you and your wife and you and your God. The LORD God is so concerned that you live with your wives in loving and understanding way that your relationship with him will be interrupted, it will be cut into, it will be impeded and hindered, if you do not treat your wives in a manner worthy of the LORD God.

Do you ever feel like your prayers fall upon deaf ears? Do you ever feel alone in your prayer life? Do you ever feel that the LORD God is cold and distant? Do you ever feel that he does not care about you or your prayers? Might I suggest that the reason you are struggling in your prayers is because you are struggling in your marriage. It may very well be that your marriage, specifically how you are treating your wife, is the sole reason why your relationship with the LORD God and your prayer life has grown cold.

Husbands, no spiritual good will be accomplished in your life, unless you are living with your wife in a loving and understanding way. No spiritual good will be accomplished in your life unless you are living with your wife according to knowledge, unless you living with your wife in an understanding way, unless

you are giving her honor as a fellow heir of life. If you are failing your wife in your marriage, then you are failing in your relationship with the LORD God.

Years ago, I knew a man, who over the course of a couple years, took a very serious nose dive in his walk with the LORD God. He left the church, he separated from his wife. He left his family, he committed adultery, and he moved in with another women. I ran into him years later and he looked just terrible. He had lost a lot of weight, he was aged well beyond his years, and he looked utterly miserable and unhappy. It was clear that he was not doing well. I was able to speak to him about his sin, and about his standing before the LORD God. He said he did not want to hear it, he felt abandoned by God, and that God did not care about him. He said when he prayed he felt nothing, and that God never answered any of his prayers. I did not realize it then, but I did later on. The LORD God was not answering his prayers, because he was not living with his wife in an understanding way. He was not giving her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life. And the result of his failure to obey these two commands, was a hindered prayer life, which resulted in a shipwrecked faith. If you refuse to hear and heed the command of the LORD God, then he will surely refuse to hear your prayers.

Husbands, do not deceive yourself into thinking that you can be right with the LORD God, if you are failing to live with your wife in an understanding way. Do not deceive yourself into thinking that you can be right with the LORD God, while you disrespect and dishonor your wife. Brothers, you cannot. It does not matter how difficult your wife may be. It does not matter how annoying your wife may be. It does not matter how cruel, or how distant your wife may be. The command of the LORD supersedes all of these things.

Husband, love your wife. Love her sacrificially. Love her with a purifying love. Love her with a gentle and caring love –nourish and cherish your wife. Love her as Christ loved the church. Live with your wife in an understanding way, show honor to your wife, as the weaker vessel, since she is an heir with you of the grace of life, otherwise, your prayers and your relationship with the LORD God will be hindered. Resolve today, to live with your wives in this manner. If you are struggling in this area of life, if you are struggling in your marriage, come and talk to one of the elders, or come and talk to me. Do not let another day go by, get right with your wife, and in doing so you be getting right with the LORD God.
