

Dear Friends,

In today's culture, as well as in churches, the strain between men and women ranks high and intense. Ah, but doesn't this also describe the growing state of interpersonal relationships across the board? If a person disagrees with you, in almost any area of thought, they feel entitled to hate you, to speak evil against you, and often to speak evil to you. My heart breaks that sincere professing Christians join this cultural habit rather than rising above it and being the "Light of the world" that Jesus taught us to be. Where there is hate and anger in this world, believers in Jesus are instructed in Scripture to live the height of gracious love and kindness. I am persuaded that the more we who believe in Jesus have a golden opportunity to be that light. However, we must resolve to stand apart--to rise above, not join--this broken sinful culture.

When Paul taught husbands to love their wives even as Christ loved His church and gave Himself for her, God raised the bar for all married couples high above the twisted broken habits we see

around us daily. Think about your marriage. Husbands, have you so loved your wife, both in words and in conduct, that she knows you love her as Christ loved His people? Wives, have you so loved your husband that he knows you live out in your life the noble example of a godly faithful church to the Lord? To live up to this New Testament teaching, we all have much to learn and more to grow. Can we use this moment and this study to resolve to work at growing closer to that holy spiritual image?

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

Biblical Respect—Husbands

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. (1 Peter 3:7 KJV 1900)

By his beginning this admonition with “**Likewise**” in a list that teaches believers to submit to civil government, for servants (Or employees) to submit to their master (Or employer), and for wives to submit to their husbands, Peter includes husbands in his list of life-rolls that believers should approach with “Submission.” Scripture does not teach husbands to rule their wives or family like a despot, but with love and grace to lead by example. It might help our understanding of the New Testament’s “Submission” passages to think of “Submit” primarily as submitting to God who gave us His order of harmonious and gracious Christian conduct. If the Lord teaches me to “Submit” to someone or to one of His institutions, I am obligated to Him to submit, not because that person or institution deserves my submission, but because my God deserves my obedience.

The next lesson Peter will teach links directly to his extended teaching on submission. “**Finally**” reminds us of the logical—and spiritual—connection. Whenever husbands and wives struggle with “Rule vs. submission” in either member of the marriage, this

lesson reminds us that they have lost the Biblical example of mutual love, respect, and submission. When believers in any relationship fail the “Submission” test, they also fail the “...**be ye all of one mind**” lesson that Peter teaches. The Lord’s design for relationships, husbands and wives included, is that we dwell in unity and supportive harmony, not in competition or domineering over others. In marriage, in church, or in any collection of people, when one person thinks himself/herself entitled to rule over others, the model of Christian grace suffers, and harmony is strained or lost. In short, Scripture’s model of Christian grace and striving for supremacy cannot live together. Impossible.

...**according to knowledge.** A man and woman beginning their life together should spend much time talking and listening. Learn how your partner thinks, how their mind “Works,” (We are not robots. Each person is unique) seeking a path of relationship that respects the other person. As you learn about the other person, strive to avoid those “Hot buttons” that we all have. Rather than pushing those buttons, use your knowledge of that person to avoid the hot button. Instead of competing, look for ways to work in harmony. Our amazing opportunity

in marriage is to emulate Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:22-32 KJV) Peter's (Scripture's) teaching here requires that a husband (And by his example, the wife is also obligated to study her husband) study his wife. Learn "Her."

Let me give you a personal experience. When Sandra and I were married, she was 19 and I 21 (3 days later). We were both the youngest of our siblings. You can readily see a list of potential problems. And we encountered many of them. Whatever you think of your family of origin, this world is populated only with flawed people, so there are not perfect families. Her family's dynamics and my family's were quite different. No matter how much you think you'll do things differently when you get married, that history is a powerful habit to break. We struggled more in those first years than since. But we had something in common. When we took that "Till death do you part" vow, we took it seriously. Through our immature struggles, we learned more about each other. We chose to grow together, not apart. We just celebrated our sixty-first anniversary. Our life together today is more mutually supportive and caring than ever. Peter's "...**according to knowledge**" requirement forms a practical

foundation for a godly marriage. And, like knowledge in any field, never stop learning more about your spouse. Strive daily to understand him/her better than yesterday. Only by a compelling—and mutual—labor to “...**be ye all of one mind,**” and the other admonitions that Peter named in the next lesson can we fulfill the highest spiritual objective of a believer’s marriage, to grow our marriage more into the image of Christ and the church.

...**giving honour unto the wife.** Husbands, our Biblical goal is to honor our wives, not debate with them or put them down. The Greek word translated “honour” (Old spelling for honor), according to one of my favorite New Testament Greek dictionaries, Louw-Nida, identifies the amount of money that represents the true value of something. Husbands, what “Value” do you place on your wife? No, not money, but something money can’t buy. Do you “give” her that value? Do you show her in words and actions daily that you value her so much? That is Peter’s charge to us husbands. We all fail to perfectly model marriage in the pattern of Christ and the church, but that should be our objective. By what we say and do, does our wife know without doubt how highly we regard her? In the record of Scripture,

Aquila and Priscilla worked together in every account of their spiritual life. We see no competition, only such closeness that Scripture always describes them together, as one.

...as unto the weaker vessel. The “Elephant in the room” question, weaker in what way? Physical? Spiritual? Emotional? Moral? Peter doesn’t specifically name the point. I often hear Christians, especially men (Grin), focus on the idea that women are emotionally, or even morally weaker than men. We should carefully avoid stereotypes in our study of Scripture. When a passage doesn’t specify a quality, we should also avoid being too dogmatic in our thoughts. As a rule, not by any means a stereotype, most women are physically weaker than men. Some women are emotionally weaker than their male counterparts, but I’ve known men who were morally weaker than their wives. However, I would challenge us men. If you go to about 99% of the churches on Sunday morning, why are more women present than men? Now that is a stereotype, and one that defies the moral weakness interpretation of this verse. If we follow New Testament teaching, how are “Strong” believers to regard “Weaker” believers?

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (Galatians 6:1 KJV)

Husbands, do you regard yourself as “Spiritual”? Does Paul teach that the “Spiritual” believer should remind the weaker believer that he/she is “Spiritual” and therefore superior? No, never. Paul charges the truly “Spiritual” believer to **“...restore such an one in the spirit of meekness....”** The idea “restore” in this verse referred to a medical process of resetting and splinting a broken bone. An integral part of medical restoration of a broken bone after the bone has been set and splinted or put in a cast is to give the patient crutches to help him/her walk without putting weight on the broken bone till it heals. Thus, the Biblical example for how believers are to regard “Weaker” believers is to give them loving healing and support for an extended time while they heal, not stand on the sidelines telling them to walk.

For most of my secular career, I supervised people, men and women. One of my most challenging jobs involved supervising a group of men, and those men were more emotional than any group of women I ever supervised. Men and women show their emotions differently, but I can't honestly say that either gender is more "Emotional" than the other. However, we interpret "weaker" in this verse, our Biblical example requires that we respect, nurture, and help them, not criticize them.

... as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Husbands, Peter sets our ultimate objective in our marital relationship. How we treat each other (A principle that both husbands and wives should pursue) will eventually either enhance or hinder our spiritual life and health. The godly Biblical marriage enhances, not hinders our spiritual life and health. Think. How can you meditate on peace and love during a quarrel with someone you love?

...heirs together." The emphasis here is **"Together."** And the union takes us to a vital reality, **"the grace of life."** Over my lifetime, I have grown more convicted with time that we must live the grace

we believe the Lord showed to us if we hope to honorably represent Him in our personal conduct. We too often discount any corollary between our marriage health and our spiritual health. Peter disagrees. One influences the other—in both directions. I find myself increasingly intrigued and instructed by a godly couple who appear in the New Testament, always working together in the interest of Jesus, His gospel, and His people, Aquila and Priscilla. If we interpret “Prisca” in 2 Timothy 4:19 as Priscilla, they appear six times in the New Testament record, and they always appear together, often working closely together for the benefit, spiritual growth, and service of others. A godly couple who appears six times in the New Testament serves as a convincing example of this thought that our marriage relationship and our discipleship go hand in hand. Trouble in one often predicts trouble in the other.

If we honestly believe we are saved all of the grace of God, we are morally—and spiritually—obligated to live that grace.

Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. (Colossians 4:6 KJV)

A soul-searching thought. Does my treatment of other believers mirror the Lord's grace to me? No, we never measure up all the time, but every stumbling failure should urge us to work harder at a deeper practice of true grace toward others.

In Acts 18:26, we read of Aquila and Priscilla jointly encouraging a young promising preacher named Apollos. According to that verse, they together **"...took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."** If we follow the New Testament's teaching, women cannot be preachers or pastors. In this point, Paul's reasoning was not based on local culture, but on the timeless example of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The fall affected both, but differently. (Genesis 3:16-19 KJV) However, as we see in this godly couple's example, both men and women, when working in harmony, can have a powerful and good influence on other believers, even

on preachers. Over my time in ministry, I have often benefitted from the example and the kind words of both men and women. I treasure and I benefitted from both. I thank the Lord for both.

At its heart—and one of the most crucial factors—Peter associates the effectiveness of our prayers with our marital relationship. “**Hindered**” in this verse refers to a strong influence that prevents you from doing what you should do.

I fully appreciate that this topic often stirs intense emotional reactions, even among godly believers. Whatever I might write will stir a strong response in some. To the best of my understanding and study, I try to present a balanced New Testament lifestyle. At age 82, with almost 68 years in ministry and 61 years of marriage (Experience and observation have always affirmed Biblical teaching), I offer my thoughts, primarily from my understanding of Scripture, and affirmed by observation and experience. I’m still learning, and I hope to continue learning till I go home.

Sandra and I didn’t start our 61-year journey as ideal partners. We both had a world of

wisdom to learn in the trenches of our relationship. At many junctions, our marriage could have gone shipwreck. By “Grace,” we found a way to grow together, not apart, and to learn, often with a good measure of humble pie, that we had much to learn. With whatever time I have remaining, my sincere hope is to encourage my readers to take God and His word seriously in both mind and habit. I can only tell you that I’ve done my best and long to do better. Lord help us all together to grow in grace toward each other, especially toward our family.

Elder Joe Holder