

The Husband's Role – Part 2

1 Peter 3:7

Pastor John Miller

We'll read just the one verse and then come back and set the context. Peter says, 1 Peter 3:7, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them,"—that, of course, as we see in the verse is referring to their wives—"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."

I heard the story of a woman who would buy for her husband and the family every Christmas a puzzle to put together, one of those big Jigsaw puzzles with the tiny little pieces (I don't know, I'm not a puzzle guy, I don't do puzzles) where one puzzle has maybe a thousand pieces and people spend 20 years trying to put one puzzle together. She bought a puzzle that year and normally would leave the box so that they could see the picture of the pieces and try to work off the picture and figure what colors went in what places. But this year she wanted to trick the family and actually bought two puzzles and switched the pictures on the boxes. Her husband set out to begin to put the pieces together and worked frantically for days getting frustrated. He couldn't reconcile the picture with the pieces, and it didn't seem to fit or go together. Finally, he found out that his wife had switched the boxes and that he was working off the wrong picture, and the pieces wouldn't fit together.

That story kind of illustrates to me how a lot of people are trying to put the pieces of their marriage together but working off the wrong picture—they're working off the picture of the world's idea of marriage or their false expectation of what marriage is to be and discover that the pieces do not fit together with all the hard work that they're trying to do. We need to follow God's picture painted on the pages of His Word, the Bible. We need to pattern our marriages after God's picture and design of marriage that He's placed in His Word. We've been doing that on Wednesday nights for some time.

We saw, first of all, just to review quickly, marriage as God created it. If you haven't heard these messages as a married couple, and even as a single person, I encourage you to go back to the website and listen to them. We saw in Genesis 2 that God created marriage. He created it to be between a man and a woman, and He said, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Moses' commentary on this said, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." There's the leaving, the cleaving, and then the unity of marriage, they were one flesh.

Secondly, we saw how marriage was corrupted by Satan, so "How God Created it," "How Satan Corrupted it," Genesis 3, and then "How To Correct It," Ephesians 5, and we looked at we need to be spiritually awakened and have a true born-again experience, be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and Ephesians 5:18 says, "...but be filled with the Spirit." We need to be indwelt by the Spirit and controlled or filled by the Spirit, so then we have Spirit-filled wives who are submitting to their husbands as unto the Lord and Spirit-filled husbands who are loving their wives as Christ loved the church—Spirit-filled wives submitting, Spirit-filled husbands loving. It's important that

we know the Bible teaching.

Now, how are husbands to love their wives? Real quick, they are to love them unconditionally. There are five ways husbands are to love their wives, this is the first part for the man: 1) unconditionally, 2) sacrificially, 3) sanctifyingly, 4) affectionately, “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.” The word “nourish” and “cherish” means to warm with body heat. Husbands should be affectionate toward their wives. The fifth way is exclusively, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” We’re going to do a study on divorce two weeks from tonight as we wrap up our series on the subject of “Marriage and the Bible.” We are to be joined together permanently, exclusively in the bond of marriage.

We are not done looking at the husband’s role or duties. There are two more I want to cover. The verse we’re going to look at is quite often missed, skipped, or neglected when it comes to the subject of the husband’s role. Those two more duties are: “...husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge;” and secondly, they are to honor their wives highly. You might say, dwell with them understandingly, there’s the knowledge; and honor them highly. So, they’re to love them sacrificially, dwell with them understandingly, and to honor their wives highly.

Now, go back with me to our text. Verse 7, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge,” that’s the first point. There are only two main points, if you’re taking notes tonight. There are two subpoints under each one, and there are subs under my subs and subs under the subs of the subs. A lot of them will be on the screen so you can follow along with me. The first main point is dwell with your wife understandingly. Verse 7, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge,” or some translations have in an understanding way. The second point is honor your wives highly, “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.”

Notice the first duty of a husband to his wife, verse 7, dwell with his wife understandingly. It’s a good idea for husbands and wives to live together—you think so? Not, he lives with his parents and I live with my parents, or he lives with his buddies, or he lives on the other side of the United States and I live on the other side. They should be living, dwelling together. We’re going to break down what this means to dwell together with his wife. The idea means to settle down and be at home. It has other ideas behind it that I want to break down.

Notice, first of all in verse 7, the word “likewise,” “Likewise, ye husbands.” Why does he use the word “likewise”? The answer is that it connects it to what has gone on before. You say, “Why is that important?” Go back to 1 Peter 2:18. Let’s find out what the subject was. “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.” Notice 1 Peter 2:18, “Servants, be subject to your masters,” so what’s the theme or the idea? Submission, servants submitting to their masters. Today, it would be employees submitting to their employers. Then, look at 1 Peter 3:1, “Likewise,”—there’s the same word—“ye wives,”—here again is the subject—“be in subjection to your own husbands.” The theme that carries

over, “Likewise, ye husbands,” is the same theme of submission. Husbands are to have, in a sense, a submission to God, a submission to the Word. They’re to die to themselves, love, and dwell with their wives. There’s a sense in which husbands need to die to themselves when you get married.

Marriage is a great institution for putting an end to selfishness. If it doesn’t, you’re going to have problems. If you don’t die to yourself, you won’t be able to get along as one couple. “Likewise,” the concept is that it links with the previously taught subject of submission. It’s so very important.

Let me make this point. The same Holy Spirit that makes a wife meek and gentle, 1 Peter 3:4, “But let it be the hidden man,”—or person—“of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” This is referring to the wives—their meekness, gentleness, and quietness is the result of the Holy Spirit working in their heart and life. This is why I always emphasize to be filled with the Spirit. I believe that one point could be the key to a happy marriage—two individuals indwelt by the Spirit, two individuals filled with the Holy Spirit, two individuals obedient to the Word of God walking in the Spirit of God, and what a blessing that is in a marriage relationship. But it’s important to understand that the same Holy Spirit that makes a wife meek and quiet would make the husband kind and attentive, verse 7. When you read that verse about the husbands, you realize that it’s the same Holy Spirit that makes a wife submissive, makes a husband loving and attentive toward his wife.

We learn from this verse that the husband’s relationship with his wife is to cover four areas. The first two are under this first point; the second two will be under the second point. Let me break it down for you. What does it mean for husbands to dwell with their wives? First of all, it’s physical, “...dwell with them.” It’s a good idea for married couples to live together. I hear of people who say, “Well, my husband lives in New York and I live in L.A.” I’ve heard in these marriages where, “We get together once a month or every few months.” That’s not a marriage relationship. I know that sometimes the husband must travel.

When I was younger and my wife and I were having kids, I traveled around the world preaching in different countries. If I had it to do over again, you young preacher boys or businessmen, I would not do that. I would stay home and dwell with my wife. I know that maybe she was “staying by the stuff” and God was using me in the ministry, but I feel that it would be far more valuable and important for me to stay home and dwell with my wife and spend time investing in my wife, my family, and my children.

It’s a good idea that married couples live together, “...dwell with them,” but it’s much more than sharing the same address. The compound verb, “dwell with” occurs only here in the New Testament. It has the general and a specific meaning. It literally means to live together. It does mean to have the same address, to live in the same house together, to dwell together, dwell with your wives. It also has...and this is amazing. Years ago when I studied this, it was to me one of the great discoveries of the Bible that the word “dwell” also refers to cohabiting and

implies conjugal rights and responsibilities.

I'm going to talk next Wednesday night (I know it's the eve of Thanksgiving, maybe it won't be a rainy night), but I'm going to talk about sexual intimacy in marriage. Yes, I'm going to address that issue, and we're going to look at 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. If you want to write that down and read it over and be ready for next Wednesday night, but we're going to talk about intimacy in marriage, cohabiting together, conjugal rights and responsibilities which is implied in this word dwelling together. Some would render that cohabit together with your wife—live together chastely with your wife—but it means to cohabit with them and with them alone. Marriage is to be a physical relationship where the two become one flesh. I don't want to get ahead of next week's study, but if you don't want to be sexually intimate with your spouse, then you shouldn't get married. You say, "Wow, I can't believe Pastor John is saying that." I'm saying that because I've seen more marriages that have great struggles because people don't take their responsibilities seriously in cohabiting with their husband or with their wife. Understand what the Bible says about marriage.

When I do pre-marriage counseling, and I'll admit that I don't do a lot of it here at Revival. I used to do a lot of it, but when I do and have done it, I make sure that we study 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 and you understand if you're getting married what you're committing yourself to—that you're going to have responsibilities, that your body is not your own, it belongs to your husband; that your husband's body is not his own, it belongs to you. You have a responsibility to meet the needs of your spouse. I believe that it conveys the idea the two become one flesh, so there is a sexual intimacy conveyed in this idea of dwelling with your wife, and again, the reference is 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

There's also a general meaning which means to dwell physically and make a home. The word conveys the idea of making a home for your wife. The husband must make a home for his wife and be at home with his wife. It conveys being a provider and being a protector with his wife. Write down 1 Timothy 5:8. It says, "But if any provide not for his own,"—family—"he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." I realize there are times when you do your best and can't seem to meet that need, and it's understandable. No man should choose to not work hard to provide for his wife a home, to provide for his a wife a place to live, to provide for his wife protection, provision. He's the head of the wife, so he should be committed to doing that. That's what's conveyed in this idea of, "...husbands, dwell with,"—your wife.

The danger is also that many times men come home from work but don't really come home when they're home from work. I remember years ago I was looking through a magazine when I just got home from the office one day. My wife was talking to me and said, "Did you hear what I just said?" I said, "Uhhhhhhh, no." She said, "Would you put the magazine down and listen to me?" "Yes." I was so busted, "Uh huh, uh huh," flipping through the pages. Or, you've got the game on and it's like, "Will you keep the kids quiet? I'm watching the game." Or you've got something else going on or you have your man cave or your garage and you're working on your car or you stop on the way home to do things with the guys and you don't really come home to your wife.

When it says, “dwell with them,” it means that when you get off work you come home, and when you’re home, you’re home. You give her your undivided attention. I know that hurts. “Well, I’ve worked hard all day, I need some peace. I need some quiet. I need to do what I want to do.” It may be that you need a little time to unwind, but your wife needs your attention. She needs your focus. She wants to explain how the day went (and she’ll go into great detail, too, by the way). Hang in there, guys. That’s always a great tension between my wife and I, “Do you have to go into so much detail?” “How was your day?” “Great,” and then brrrrrrrrrr, everything, blow by blow, that went through the whole day. O Lord, have mercy on me! But that’s what she needs. That’s what she wants.

We’re going to talk a little bit about communication today. If you’re going to dwell with your wife, you have to talk to your wife. “Well, I’m home. She knows I’m home. I’ll ring the bell out from the garage,” or something. Be home. Be home mentally, be home physically, be home affectionately. Devote yourself to really focusing on your wife when you are home. There’s a danger of being home but not really being there. So, ask yourself, guys, right now, “When I come home from work does my mind go to my own hobbies or my own interests or my own things or does my mind go to my wife and her needs and how I can help her in any situation that she might be dealing with?” The danger for Christian workers is we get busy with the Lord’s work and we’re out at church and we’re too busy for our families. It’s a dangerous thing. I heard of a survey that said that 37 minutes a week is the actual time that the average couple talks to each other on a weekly basis—37 minutes in a whole week that they actually communicate or talk with one another.

To dwell with your wives is physical, but it also has an intellectual aspect to it. Look at verse 7. It not only says to, “...dwell with them,”—but what does it say?—“according to knowledge,”—or in an understanding way. Even though we are men, we should seek to understand our wives. You say, “Wait a minute, wait a minute, Pastor. It’s enough to just be home, don’t expect me to understand her. I don’t know that I’ll ever understand her.” You are to do your best to try to understand your wife, that’s what that phrase means—be home and get engaged and try your best to understand your wife in an understanding way. It’s to live in an understanding way.

Charles Swindoll says, “The success of your dwelling with your wife will be in direct proportion to your acknowledgement of her. The success of your marriage and dwelling with your wife will be in direct proportion to your knowledge of your wife.” You need to know her fears, her cares, her disappointments, her expectations, her hopes, her dreams, her joys. You need to know your wife. I know that the longer you’re married, the more you know each other and the more you should value and appreciate each other. Husbands, get to know your wife. What are her expectations? What are her joys? What are her needs? What are her wants? How can you as a husband show consideration for her if you don’t understand her needs? One of the ways to know that is by communicating, “How was your day?” The challenge is going to be to listen. Communication isn’t just talking, it’s listening. “How are you doing? Are you okay?” Sometimes you can just feel in the air how your wife is doing, if you really know her well, but communication and listening and sensitivity to your wife.

I heard about a young couple that was dating named Kevin and Sarah. One time they were sitting on the front porch in a swing and Sarah asked Kevin, "Do you think that my eyes are beautiful?" Kevin answered, "Yep." A few moments later, "Kevin, do you think that my hair is attractive?" Kevin again answered, "Yep." A while later she said, "Would you say that I have a gorgeous figure?" Once again Kevin said, "Yep." Then, Sarah said, "Oh, Kevin, you say the nicest things!" That's communication. So, guys, learn to talk, to share from your heart and communicate with your wife.

It also teaches us that a husband needs to understand his wife, he needs to understand Christian principles taught in the Bible that direct the marriage relationship. You can't understand your wife, you can't meet your wife's need, if you don't know what the Bible says your job is to be and to do as a husband. So, husbands, are you dwelling with your wife (do you come home, and are you home when you're home) in an understanding way?

Here's the second point of our text, honor his wife highly. So, dwell with her understandingly, honor your wife very highly. Look at the text again, "...giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel,"—I'll explain what that means—"as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." We discover now two more dimensions of the husband-wife relationship. First, there's the physically dwelling and the intimacy; then there's the intellectual knowing your wife; thirdly, there's the emotional and the spiritual dimension. It's amazing to me that the Bible covers this. You dwell with her physically, intimately, you dwell with her intellectually, knowing and understanding her, you dwell with her emotionally, and you dwell with her spiritually, "...and as being heirs together of the grace of life."

Let's break this down. This honoring your wife very highly involves emotional relationship. It means, "...giving honour unto the wife." What does it mean to "give honor unto" your wife? The King James version says, "...giving honour unto the wife." It means to grant or to assign. It's not just honoring her but giving, and it's in the present tense. It means continually, habitually, ongoingly that a husband is to be giving to his wife honor. Honor means that you place great value upon your wife. Interesting that the term "honor" and the words in verse 4, "great price," and precious are from the same Greek root, so it has the idea that my wife is precious, she's valuable, I want to honor her, I want to give her recognition of the value that she has.

Husbands are to keep assigning habitually great value to their wife because they are God's precious gift. Ask yourself, husbands, do you view your wife as God's precious gift to you? Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing," right? Tell your wife tonight she's a good thing, "and obtaineth favour of the LORD." You need to honor and value her by communicating to her, "You are a gift to me from God." What a blessing that is that God would give you the greatest gift after salvation is the gift of your spouse, but we have to be what God wants us to be in that marriage relationship, so "giving honour" means to grant or assign to a portion to someone that they are of great price, that they're very precious, and very important.

I want to give a quote that's one of my favorites. It's by J.R. Miller. Notice what he says about

the husband's love and commitment to his wife of valuing and honoring her. He says, "When a man offers his hand in marriage to a woman, he says by his act that his heart has made choice of her among all women, that he has for her a deeper and tenderer affection than for any other. At the marriage altar he solemnly pledges to her a continuance of that love until death. When the beauty has faded from her face and the luster from her eyes, when old age has brought wrinkles or when sickness, care or sorrow has left marks of wasting or marring, the faithful husband's love is to remain deep and true as ever. His heart is still to choose his wife among all women and to find its truest delight in her." That's what it means to honor your wife very highly emotionally.

Now, husband, are you doing that? Does she know it? Do you tell her that she's valued, that she's important? If your wife has to ask you, "Do you love me?" then perhaps you're not doing your part to communicate it by your words and your actions. "Well, she knows I love her. I come home, don't I? I eat her food. I pay the bills." Well, she doesn't know that you love her. She needs to hear you tell her that. She needs you to demonstrate it and show it by the way that you live by your actions.

Alistair Begg says there's no more precious gift entrusted to a man than the treasure of his wife. The longer I'm married, the more I agree and realize that. He goes on to say, "She is to be admired and prized above all others. She is to have the first place in his heart, mind, affections. She is to be given special care, attention, that leaves no doubt of her husband's esteem." The danger of taking your spouse for granted is great. This is why in Ephesians 5:20, after it talks about being filled with the Spirit, it says, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God." One of the problems in marriages are we begin to take each other for granted and we don't humbly express our gratitude and gratefulness to one another for the ministry that they have in our lives and how important they are to us.

Why should husbands give honor unto their wife? By the way, this "giving honour," William Barclay, one of the great New Testament Greek scholars, says that it's being gracious, courteous, generous, and showing chivalry to your wife. Why should a husband give honor to his wife? Peter gives us three reasons. First, look at verse 7, the wife is the weaker vessel. This statement has freaked people out, confused people, and they've wrestled with it for years.

I, too, have studied it, prayed over it, looked up everything I can about it. Several years ago, again, when I was preaching through Peter and studying it, I was reading a commentary by D. Edmond Hiebert, this great scholar that said (I'll put it in my own words) this weaker vessel is not referring to weaker morally or intellectually or even emotionally. Often you hear, and I don't think that that's what Peter had in mind, that women are more emotional than men so she's weaker emotionally. That's not what Peter was talking about, so it doesn't mean that. Nor does it mean that they're weaker physically. As a general rule are women weaker physically? Yes, but I'm sure there's probably a woman here tonight that can beat me up. I've seen weight-lifting women that I wouldn't want to mess with for sure.

Peter wasn't talking about, "Oh, they're weaker physically, so give honor to your wife." No.

What he is saying, and I think this is so profound, that it's her position as being a wife in submission to her husband that puts her in a weaker place. Let me read his own words. "The wife may be considered weak because of her role as a wife. She, by marrying, has accepted a position where she submits herself to her husband. Such a position is vulnerable, open to exploitation. The husband is commanded not to take advantage of his wife's vows of submission." I think that hits the nail right on the head. She has a weaker position of being submitted to her husband, and her husband should not take advantage of that or usurp himself over her; but he should dwell with her, honor her, and value her highly. So, don't take advantage of your wife who is in a weaker position in that of submission to her husband. She is the weaker vessel, but you are also, "...heirs together of the grace of life."

You need to understand something, men, that God loves your wife equally as He loves you; that Jesus died for your wife equally as He did for you; that she is a child of God just as you are, and that more husbands need to view their wives as a sister in the Lord and a child of the same Father in heaven and to treat them thus, with very great respect. You are, "...heirs together of the grace of life." You've been equally placed in Christ. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," so don't take advantage of your wife. "...that your prayers be not hindered," is in verse 7 as well. So, she's, "...the weaker vessel...you are heirs together"—don't forget that—"of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." You don't want your prayers to be hindered.

These two reasons lead us to the last dimension in the husband-wife relationship. It is spiritual (important for you to note that), verse 7, "and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." Take note that here's a direct reference in the Bible to reasons prayers are not answered. Do you know what it is? A husband who does not give honor to his wife—he doesn't respect, value, and honor her—and he's not in fellowship and treating his wife right. You can't be right with God and wrong with your spouse. You say, "Well, I come to church. I sing. I pray. I worship the Lord, but I don't really like my wife," or "I don't really like my husband." Well, you need to leave your gift on the altar, go to your spouse, ask them to forgive you, get your heart right with God because God does not hear your prayers.

If you mistreat your wife and then come to church, "I love You, Lord. I love You. I don't like her, but I love You, Lord. Bless me, Lord; bless me, Lord. I don't love my wife, but bless me." Forget it. It ain't gonna happen. You can't be right with God and wrong with your spouse, so if there's an ought in your heart or there's an issue in your life, you need to get right with God, but you also need to get right with your spouse. Jesus said, "If you come to church and have an ought with your brother, leave your gift, go to your brother, be reconciled with your brother and then you can offer your gift upon the altar." It's so important to see the spiritual importance of your relationship with Christ.

I've often told people if you value your relationship to God—listen to me very carefully— then you will be devoted to your spouse. If you value your relationship to God, you will be devoted to your wife because you can't be right with God and out of sync with your spouse. You can't expect God to bless you if you're disobeying Him in the area of your responsibilities or your

duties in the marriage relationship. Remember your wife is also a sister in Christ and a child of God. She has the same Father in heaven, the same Savior and Lord, and she loves the same Bible and reads the same Scriptures that you do.

When you're both drawing closer to the Lord, you're drawing closer to each other. When one or the other is not drawing closer to the Lord, then there's a rift and friction in the marriage relationship. A husband, a wife, by being born again have a deeper unity than a non-Christian couple can have. They are one in Christ. They can pray together. They can study the Bible together. They can worship the Lord together. They have the same Father in heaven, the same Holy Spirit, working in their heart and in their life. It's so very important.

Note that Paul assumes that husbands and wives would pray, and it's indicated by this, "...that your prayers be not hindered." Do you know there's power in mutual people joining together in prayer when two agree on anything praying together as a husband and a wife. Husbands and wives ought to pray together as prayer partners. Satan will do all that he can to keep you from praying together, so it's an important part of your marriage relationship. An improper marriage relationship closes the "windows of heaven" on your prayers. It's so very important.

Ask yourself tonight, husbands, do I dwell with her understandingly? Do I honor her highly? If you don't do that, then your prayers are being hindered. Let's pray.