

Submission In Marriage: For Husbands

1 Peter 3:7

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Let's go back and start in 1 Peter 3:6, and I'd like to read the whole section as we have on Sunday morning in the Lord's Prayer, but we're only going to focus on verse 7. The first six verses we covered last week with the wives. Verse 1, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 2 While they behold your chaste conversation"—or life—"coupled with"—reverence or—"fear. 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden [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. 5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: 6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

Now, notice verse 7, "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."

Peter Marshall, who was at one time chaplain to the Senate, said this about marriage, and I've always loved it. He said, "Marriage is not a federation of two sovereign states. It's a union—domestic, social, spiritual, and physical. It is a fusion of two lives coming together; two tributaries, which, after being joined in marriage, will flow in the same direction, carrying the same burdens of responsibility and obligation." I love that picture—the two merged together and flow in the same direction.

Marriage is God's idea. It is a divine institution. We have marriage, we have government, and we have the church. Those are the three divine institutions that God has established. We learned in Genesis 2:24, after God made the man and the woman and brought them together, Moses' commentary was, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Jesus, quoting this very same passage in Matthew 19, said "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The two become one, that's marriage; and Jesus said, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." He speaks of the permanency. So, leave, cleave, which means to be glued together, they become one; and what God joins together, let no man put asunder.

Each has a duty and a function. They become one, but they have their own duties or functions. I actually like the word "duty," and I think that we've gotten away from that today. It sounds so regimented and so legalistic and so harsh, but it is really a duty. If you're a wife, you have a duty to God and to your husband. You have a duty to your marriage. If you're a husband, you have a duty toward God, you have a duty toward your wife, and a duty that you must fulfill in

your marriage. Now, each having this duty or this role, Peter describes the wives in verses 1-6. He described first of all their behavior in verses 1-2, that it is to be submissive. Secondly, he described their beauty, which is to be spiritual, verses 3-4. Thirdly, he described their belief, verses 5-6, that they are women who trusted in God. What a picture that is of the Christian wife—she's submissive, she's spiritual, she trusts in God.

Now, Peter moves to instructions for the husband, and he gives us only one verse, but it is packed with instruction. Let's read it again. Verse 7, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them"—that is, your wife—"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," so the clear teaching of God's Word for husbands.

I want to point out three responsibilities or duties the husband has for his wife. Now, I'm going to have a whole lot more points than three, but I've whittled it down to three main things the Bible teaches is the husband's duty or responsibility toward his wife. Here it is, guys. First, love your wife sincerely. Love your wife sincerely. Normally, when I make points in a text, they come right out of the text. This point does not come from this text, but I wanted to include it because it's a very important point and key. We are going to get into the text. We won't turn there, but I want to just relate it because you know it quite well, Ephesians 5:25. This is what it says, "Husbands, love your wives." Pretty simple, right? "Husbands, love your wives," but it's not a simple kind of love.

When the word "love" appears there in Ephesians 5, and here in 1 Peter 3:7, it is the Greek word *agapá* ἄ or *agape*. In our English language, I know you've heard me teach this many times, we have one word for "love," we use it on a broad spectrum, so we don't really know what kind of love we're talking about. We just use it for many different things. But in the Greek language, they had multiple words for "love." They had the word *storg* ἡ which is family love. They had the word *érōs* ἔρ, which is an erotic love. They had the word *philadelphía*, which is a brotherly love. Then, they had the word *agapá* ἄ which is, I believe, a giving, sacrificial, self-denying love, which is described as God's love in the Bible. When you read John 3:16, it's actually, "God so [*agapá* ἡ the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So, *agapá* ἄ is for sure a giving love. This is where we get this idea of love your wife sincerely.

I want to break it down a little further for you. This *agape* love I would give five characteristics of it in Ephesians 5:25-31. It is unconditionally loving your wife. If you're going to love her sincerely, husbands, you love her unconditionally, " . . . as Christ also loved the church." "Husbands, love your wives,"—and then it says—"even as Christ also loved the church." How did Christ love the church? Unconditionally, so you're willing to give yourself to your wife.

Secondly, you do it sacrificially. He " . . . gave himself for it." As Christ loved the church, unconditionally, and then He " . . . gave himself for it."

Thirdly, to love your wife sincerely means to love your wife sanctifyingly. Ephesians 5:26 says,

“That he might sanctify”—the church—“and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” A husband’s love for his wife is to be unconditional, is to be sacrificial, is to be sanctifying, so your love for your wife is to seek to influence her and affect upon her a love for God and holiness to the Lord.

Fourthly, affectionately is involved in “sincerely”. This is Ephesians 5:29 where Paul says that Jesus “ . . . nourisheth and cherisheth,” the church, so ought men their wives. That word “nourish” and “cherish” literally means to warm with body heat. It means to show affection. We’re going to have some description of this as well in our Peter passage, but you’re to be affectionate and nourishing and cherishing your wife.

Fifthly, you’re to love your wife exclusively. In Ephesians 5:31, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh,” so it’s exclusively. You’re devoted to your wife, and the two of you become one flesh. You are to love your wife sincerely.

Now, I want to quote again, I don’t normally quote other authors this much, but I want to quote a section of a book called *The Home Beautiful*, by J.R. Miller. It 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, and that he has for her a deeper and tender 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, sorrow have left marks of wasting and marring, the faithful husband’s love is to remain deep and true as ever. His heart still shall choose his wife among all women and to find its truest delight in her.” I love that. That’s being devotedly committed to loving our wife.

Let me say this. This is not in my notes, and I didn’t plan on saying it, love is not a passing emotion, it’s a continual devotion; and it is a choice that you make to love your wife—unconditionally, sacrificially, self-denyingly, devotedly, passionately, warmly, affectionately. You make a decision that no matter what, you are going to love your wife, and the word is agape your wife. This is what a husband is to do.

The second main point I want to make is that we should dwell with our wives understandingly. So, we should love them sincerely, we should dwell with them understandingly. Here’s our text. Look at 1 Peter 3:7, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge.” Notice the phrase in verse 7, “Likewise.” Go back to verse 1, “Likewise, ye wives,” and in several spots in 1 Peter 2, where it uses the phrase “likewise” or in the same way. Like the wife is to be submitted to her husband, likewise the husband is to dwell with his wife, “ . . . giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.” You have a responsibility as well. It’s reciprocal.

In Ephesians 5:21, before it says, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,” and it says, “Husbands, love your wives,” Paul says in verse 21, “Submitting yourselves one to another

in the fear of God.” The same Holy Spirit that makes a wife meek and quiet, verse 4, would make the husband kind and considerate, verse 7. The key is, Ephesians 5:18, write that down, “. . . be filled with the Spirit.” Let the Spirit fill your heart and life. Let the Spirit control your thoughts, your emotions, your heart, and your mind. To “be filled with the Spirit” means to surrender to the Spirit of God, to be controlled by the Spirit of God, and to be obedient to the Word of God.

Paul tells the husbands, verse 7, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them.” Now it is a good idea, and I highly recommend, that couples live together. I’m glad you laughed. You know what? There are some people that don’t really believe that. They get married and go separate ways, and they live in separate parts of the house or one lives in New York and one lives...I’ve met couples, the husband lives in New York and the wife lives in L.A. They get together once a month or once every few months. That’s not marriage. That’s not two rivers flowing together becoming one. That’s not the “oneness” that God wants. He wants that “oneness” or that intimacy in marriage. So, you read that and say, “Dwell with them. Well, I dwell with my wife. I come home from work and I eat her food. I sleep in the bed, and stay home, so she knows that I love her,” but there is more involved in that phrase than just having a warm body in the house. It’s much more than simply sharing the same address.

The compound verb “to dwell with” occurs only here in the New Testament. It has a general and a specific meaning. I want to break down this word “to dwell” with your wives. It’s the idea of making a life together. It actually conveys that we make a life together. It’s not, “I do my thing, she does her thing. I do my thing, she does hers.” No. You’re making a life together. The husband is to be the head of the wife, the family, but to love and to lead, to provide, and to protect. Remember, the two become one.

So many husbands are not home when they’re home. They’re not loving and leading their families. It’s determined that only 37 minutes a week does the average married couple actually communicate or talk to one another—only about 37 minutes a week. They’re always going, they’re busy with the kids, or coming...to really take time and just talk and just communicate with one another. So, some are home, but not really home—their focus is not on the wife or the children or the family, they’re on other things. They bring, many times, their work home with them, and I understand that, and they’re consumed with that, or their hobbies in the garage or their other pursuits. They don’t really come home. They’re not home when they’re home. They’re watching tv, reading a book, doing other things. They don’t give attention to their wives. They’re not building a life together, so their marriage and family is not a priority.

Husbands, come home. Be home when you’re home. Put aside your work; turn off your phone. Give your wife attention, “How was your day? How are things going?” Talk to her. Communicate with her. Spend time with her. If you have children, help with the children. Bathe the children. Get them ready for bed. Read them Bible stories. Get involved in helping with the family, don’t just watch tv all night.

It also has a specific meaning, and I found this interesting years ago that some New Testament

scholars see the phrase, “dwell with them” as a euphemism for sexual relationships or intimacy in marriage. It’s the “one flesh” of the book of Genesis, “. . . and they shall be one,” intimacy. I want you to write down, men and wives, 1 Corinthians 7:1-6. There’s a marvelous text there I covered in my book on marriage. It talks about your conjugal rights in a marriage relationship. So, to “dwell with” your wife, not only means to be at home, not only means to be committed to the home and focusing on the home and the family, but it means that also you have that time of intimacy together with your wife. The wife’s body is not hers, it belongs to the husband; the husband’s body is not his, it belongs to the wife, and they’re to be devoted to one another.

In 1 Timothy 3:2, Paul is giving the qualifications for an elder or spiritual leader, a pastor in the church, and the same applies to all the men in the church, “. . . the husband of one wife.” That phrase is pretty cool in the Greek. It actually would read, “a one-woman man.” So, whether you’re a pastor or not, you’re a Christian husband, you are to be “a one-woman man.” You only have eyes for your wife. You only have intimacy with your wife. You only dwell with your wife. You’re devoted to your wife, you’re committed to your wife, you’re dwelling with her “according to knowledge.”

How are we as husbands to dwell with them as our wives? Notice verse 7, “. . . according to knowledge.” That means that you’re to dwell with them understandingly, an understanding way, “. . . dwell with them.” This is the physical relationship in marriage and also the intellectual relationship of marriage. You get to know your wife. You say, “Wait a minute, pastor. I understand I need to come home from work. I understand I need to be devoted to my wife, but understand her?! Forget it. Ain’t gonna happen.” Well, you gotta work at it. You gotta be committed to knowing her, to know her in an understanding way.

Charles Swindoll said, “The success of your dwelling with your wife will be in direct proportion to your knowledge of her.” It carries the idea of, and I like this, to be considerate. It’s actually telling husbands to live at home and to be considerate of their wife. Some translations render it that way, “be considerate.” Husbands often don’t realize it, but they, before it’s too late, are not being considerate of their wives. I can’t tell you how many husbands I’ve had in my office over the years weeping bitter tears that their wives have left them or given up on the marriage. They wake up too late, when it’s too late, and they realize, “I haven’t been considerate of my wife. I haven’t dwelt with my wife. I haven’t been devoted to my wife. I haven’t loved her sincerely,” and then they lose their wives and realize it’s too late. Don’t let that happen. Be considerate. Understand your wife.

Now, “considerate of her” has the idea that if you’re a godly man...and this whole passage is clearly written to a husband that’s a Christian and a wife that is a Christian. This is a Christian marriage. They are, “. . . heirs together,” the text says, “of the grace of life.” So, this is a Christian husband and a Christian wife. If you’re going to be considerate of her, you have to: 1) know her likes and her dislikes; 2) know her feelings; 3) know her fears; 4) know her cares; 5) know her expectations—what does she expect. Her feelings, her fears, her cares, her expectations, get to know your wives. Many times this takes many, many years of learning for the husband—how to talk to her, how to relate to her, how to understand her, how to settle

down and be at home with his wife. Men are sometimes restless. They're always wanting to go, and they're not really being considerate of their wives. When you make decisions that affect her, you make decisions that affect the family, you need to take her into consideration. You need to take her into counsel. You need to show her respect.

Here's the third, honor your wife highly. So, love her sincerely, dwell with her " . . . according to knowledge," and then "giving honour unto the wife." Notice it in verse 7, " . . . giving honour unto the wife." That phrase means to assign great price. Interestingly, it's the same phrase used in verse 4 when it says for a wife to have, " . . . a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The same Greek phrase is translated " . . . honour unto the wife." So, it's a great price. It's placing great value upon your wives. Husbands, ask yourself, do you have great value for your wife? This is the emotional side of marriage. So, you have the physical, you have the intellectual, and you have emotional. You are to consider her to be of great value. Again, this is another thing that happens in a marriage, we take our spouses for granted. We don't appreciate them or value them.

Again, in Ephesians 5, before, "Wives, submit to . . . husbands," and "Husbands, love your wives," and after he says, " . . . be filled with the Spirit," he says, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." So, you'll be thankful and joyful, and then you'll be, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." When the Spirit fills your life, you're thankful, you're submissive, and you're joyful. Here is the husband saying, "My wife is valuable." Do you know the Bible says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the LORD." You need to realize that the Lord gave you your wife. She's a "good thing." She's a gift from God, so highly value her and esteem her highly. It's so very important. Tell her that you love her. Tell her that you value her. Treat her like she's a valuable vase.

Now, Alistair Begg said, "There's no more precious gift entrusted to a man than the treasure of his wife. She is to be admired and prized above all others. She is to have first place in his heart, his mind, and his affections." How true that is. Guys, don't take your wife for granted. You spend hours waxing your car, working on your car. Do you spend an equal amount of time devoted to your wife, showing affection and honor to your wife?

This idea of honor has the idea of respect. It also includes courtesy and, as I said, consideration. William Barclay said it's showing chivalry and a gracious courtesy toward your wife. How? By your words and by your actions. I've asked husbands, "Does your wife know you love her?" "Well, she knows I love her. I come home from work. She knows I love her, I eat her food." Have you told her that you love her? Do you tell her often that you love her? Every time I read this passage and preach on this passage, it convicts my own heart. We take each other for granted. We don't express our love. We don't tell them how valuable they are. You're to love your wife sincerely. You're to dwell with your wife understandingly—understand her fears and her wants and her desires and her likes and dislikes. Honor her very highly. All of this, in verse 7.

Now, Peter's not finished with the men. There's more in this verse. What Peter does in the second half of verse 7, is actually gives the husbands three reasons to love their wives, to dwell with their wives, and to honor their wives very highly. Here's the first reason: your wife is, " . . . the weaker vessel." You got that? You say, "That doesn't sound very exciting." The wife is called "the weaker vessel." This verse complexes a lot of people and confuses a lot of people, and at face value some people may not like this idea where the wife is weaker than the husband. She's not weaker spiritually. She's not weaker morally. She's not weaker intellectually. She's not weaker in her gifts and capabilities and ministries. How is she weaker then? Well, there's two ways she's weaker, and I think the second of the two is more likely what Peter has in mind. She is weaker physically, so you need to take that into consideration. She's weaker physically, but she's also weaker, and I think that this is very important, positionally. Because of her submission to her husband, she's in a vulnerable place; so husbands are not to take advantage of their wives.

I read this today by Charles Erdman. He says, "Husbands are not to presume upon their wives' position or to forget their mutual obligations." When the Bible says, "Wives, submit to your husbands," they're not to say, "Alright! Now she'll do what I want. She'll do it when I want, how I want it, and she has to submit to me, and I'm gonna really take her to task for this." That's not how a husband should respond to the wives' position. She's " . . . the weaker vessel."

It's interesting that in the Ephesians passage, as well as in Colossians, that when he tells wives to submit to their husbands, he tells husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. When he tells children, who are in a place of submission to their parents, to be obedient to their parents, do you know what he tells parents? " . . . provoke not your children to anger," so it's reciprocal. When he tells slaves, " . . . obey in all things your masters," do you know what he tells masters? "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal," and right. Be fair toward them. So, in the marriage relationship as well, be careful that you don't take advantage. You're not to be a despot. You're not a king or a ruler, you're a lover. You're a leader. You're a husband who would give his life for his wife. So, you are to love her because she's the weaker vessel.

I want you to notice something, I've many times taught this and forgotten it, that the weaker conveys that this is comparison; so the husband is weak as well, but the wife is weaker. They are both weak. We both have our weaknesses. It's not that she's the weak vessel and he's the strong vessel; she's " . . . the weaker vessel." So, we are weak together. We both need the grace of God and the grace of life. It's so very important. Don't take advantage of her position. The marriage duties are reciprocal.

Secondly, here's another reason why you should love your wife; again, give honor to her, not only is she the weaker vessel...by the way, that imagery there of "vessel," both the wife and the husband are vessels that God wants to use—God wants to use your wife, God wants to use you. The second reason is you are, " . . . heirs together of the grace of life." You see it right there in verse 7. Why should you love your wife? Dwell with your wife? Give honor unto your wife? You are " . . . heirs together of the grace of life."

As I said earlier, this conveys the idea that this is a Christian marriage, that they are believers in Jesus Christ. The husband should be humble. He should be humble toward his wife. You're " . . . heirs together," and you've experienced God's grace as well as your wife. You know the same Savior and Lord, you both love Jesus. You're both committed to His lordship in your life. The same grace of God that saved you as a husband from your sin, saved your wife from her sin. You've both experienced the grace of God. The same life of God that dwells in your soul, dwells in your wife. So, you have all these blessings together as believers. It's a spiritual dimension. This is the most important part of your marriage, " . . . being heirs together of the grace of life," loving God, serving God, praying together, reading the Word, talking about God, worshiping God, going to church together. It's so very important. It's a spiritual dimension.

The Bible says that " . . . a threefold cord is not quickly broken," so the marriage relationship is the husband, wife, and Jesus Christ in the middle all binding the marriage together.

Here's the third reason why you should love your wife, dwell with your wife, and give honor to your wife, " . . . that your prayers be not hindered." This is an interesting statement. It's a clear statement in the Bible as to why God would not answer your prayers. There are several other things that'll hinder your prayers—sin will hinder your prayers, praying for selfish things, praying out of the will of God—but the Bible is black and white here—very clear—that if a husband doesn't love his wife, dwell with her according to knowledge, give honor unto her as to the weaker vessel, your prayers will be hindered. Now, speaking to the husbands, you can't be right with God and wrong with your wife. This is why if you're both seeking God together, you're going to be growing closer to each other as you get closer to the Lord.

Guys, you can't expect to have an intimate, blessed relationship with Jesus, if you're mistreating your wife or abusing your wife or not loving your wife or not dwelling with your wife or not giving honor unto your wife. You can't come to church, raise your hands, "Bless me, O God. Bless me. Don't bless my wife because I don't like her, but bless me." It ain't gonna happen. If you're out of sync with your wife, you're going to be out of sync with your husband. I believe that the same is true of a wife. If she's not submitting to her husband, loving her husband, and being the wife that God wants her to be, she can't expect God's blessings on her life and other areas and other dimensions. Your prayers will be hindered. Peter assumes in this statement that husbands and wives will pray together. Got that? He's assuming that you will pray together. He's not telling you to pray, but he's saying, "When you do pray, your prayers will be hindered." I believe that Satan wants to do all he can to keep husbands and wives from praying—to keep us from praying and to keep married couples from praying together.

Notice also that God will not answer your prayers. That's so amazing. You can't be right with God, if you're wrong with your wife. Jesus said it like this. He said, "If you come to the temple," it was in the context of the Jewish temple, "and you want to give your offering to God but you have ought in your heart towards someone, you have to leave your gift at the altar, go first, get right with that person, then come back and then offer your gift to God." You can't have a right relationship with God, if you're wrong with your spouse.

Why should you love her sincerely? Dwell with her understandingly? Honor her highly? Because she is a vessel that's weaker, you are " . . . heirs together of the grace of life," and if you don't do what God's required of you in this text, " . . . your prayers" will be "hindered." The word "hindered" means blocked. It was actually used of an army that would break up a road to keep other armies that are approaching from passing over the road. So, your prayers will be blocked. Your prayers will just hit the ceiling and go no further. It's so very, very, very important.

Take every facet of verse 7 as a husband to dwell with your wife, give honor unto your wife, and give knowledge to your wife as the weaker vessel. Let's pray.