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A Rebellious Spouse, Part 3

Proverbs 12:4, “An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who shames *him* is as rottenness in his bones.”

There are many examples in Scripture of “an excellent wife.” Some of whom Peter already has mentioned. Yet there also are examples of the opposite, women who we remember as ones who “shamed their husbands,” For example, Michal, Saul’s daughter and David’s first wife.

2 Samuel 6:16, “Then it happened *as* the ark of the Lord came into the city of David that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.”

Then there was Delilah, Samson's wife.

Judges 16:15-16: "Then she said to him, 'How can you say, "I love you," when your heart is not with me? You have deceived me these three times and have not told me where your great strength is.' And it came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death."

Talk about wickedness! Delilah here accuses Samson of not loving her all the while she is seeking to the secret of Samson's strength so that Samson might be put to death!

Who could forget Jezebel, the wife of Ahab?

1 Kings 16:31, "And it came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him."

Jezebel corrupted an already corrupt heart and singlehandedly ushered the Northern Kingdom into a kingdom wide love-affair with Baal from which it would never recover!

Then there is Job's wife whose true colors were revealed when Job's life was turned upside down.

Job 2:7-9, "Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!'"

There are many more examples we could give. Seven hundred from the life of Solomon alone (cf. 1 Kings 11:1-8)! — all of whom demonstrate the perils of a bad wife. This brings us to 1 Peter 3.

We have considered Peter's exhortation to encourage godly women in how to minister in the context of a conflicted marriage. This morning, we turn our focus to the exhortation Peter gave to the men of his day living with an ungodly wife. This section is brief because in that day it was far easier for a godly man to be married to a rebellious woman, than vice versa. The reason being is that at the time, it was expected of the woman to follow blindly the leadership of her husband. As such, it would be rare to find a man living with an impossible wife; yet it could happen.¹ By and far, the more common situation would be a recently converted man seeking to influence his wife that she might become a genuine servant of God.

And it is in this context, a bitter/contentions wife or just one that is cold toward the Lord that Peter gives a rather short exhortation which carries an incredible punch!

1 Peter 3:7a, “You husbands likewise...”

The word “likewise” draws our attention to something that was said before. And, what is that? Recall that 1 Peter. 2:13-3:7 is written under the larger umbrella of “submission.” In 1 Peter 2:13, Peter addresses the believer’s call to submit to civil authority.

1 Peter 2:13-14a, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors...”

Amazing! At this time these “kings” and “governors” were rounding up Christians, subjecting them to mock trials, torture, and in some cases execution. And yet, God’s people were called to “submit.” And in 1 Peter 2:18, Peter addresses the believer’s call to submit to an evil “boss.”

1 Peter 2:18-19, “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.”

In 1 Peter 3:1, Peter turns his focus to women living in a conflicted marriage.

1 Peter 3:1a, “In the same way [ὁμοίως (*homoios*)- note the word], you wives, be submissive to your own husbands...”

Recall when we looked at this a couple of weeks back that the operative word for a wife in her marriage is that of “submission” which as we saw does NOT carry any negative overtones of inferiority or insignificance. RATHER Biblically, it refers to the ranking of one’s wants, desires, and needs before that of another. Again, it is a military expression.

Ehen Peter then turned his focus in v. 7 to the role of the godly man in a conflicted marriage, it is incredibly significant that he began his treatment with “likewise” which in the Greek is ὁμοίως (*homoios*), Yes, this is the very same word translated in v. 1 as “in the same way”. This serves to connect our text to the previous exhortations regarding “submission”! And so, as much as some Bible commentators don’t want to admit it, Peter roots/grounds the man’s calling in marriage to the call of “submission” — first to God and then to one’s wife. In fact, that is exactly what Paul did in his treatment of the man/woman relationship,

Ephesians 5:21-22, “...be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”

Paul never actually said, “Wives be subject to your own husbands...” The word is picked up from v. 21 which serves as the Foundation of his entire treatment on the man/woman relationship. Accordingly, we must understand that the call of a woman in marriage is “to submit” to her husband by “respecting him” and the call of a man in marriage is “to submit” to his wife by “loving her” (cf. “Ephesians 5:32).

Notice, when Peter thought of a conflicted marriage relationship, THE word that came to His mind was that of “submission.” This ought to remove all sense of superiority or inferiority that we associate with “submission”. As God put it in Galatians.

Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

This is NOT talking about the separate and contrasting roles God ordains for the man and woman in a marriage (for there is a Biblical differentiation). RATHER, the context is that of salvation... SALVIFICALLY when God looks upon a man or woman, He does NOT see any difference in importance, significance, or meaning. They are equally important to Him!

Consider the power behind the man’s submission.

1 Peter 3:7a, “You husbands likewise...”

We are still looking at the significance of the word “likewise” in this text. Recall in v. 1 that the immediate context for this word was the example of Christ (vv. 21-24) who in the midst of hardship and turmoil, proved Himself faithful to the Lord. How did He do it?

1 Peter 2:23, “...while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.”

This is how Christ submitted... and this is how Christian men and women are to submit to their unsaved or difficult spouses! In all that they do, they must “entrust themselves unto the Lord”!

This is so important! For just as the woman’s call might place her in a demeaning role — that of following the lead of a foolish man — so also the call of a man could place him in a demeaning role as he endeavors to honor, lift up, and so cherish a rebellious/contentious wife! If truly “It is better to live in a corner of the roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman.” (Proverbs 25:24), then how can a sinful man endure such a home in his own strength? He can’t and won’t! But as he entrusts himself to the Lord he can! Consider Moses,

In a world where the word for “right — as in “right hand” — was one and the same as the word for that which was morally praiseworthy, there is little question that it would have been Moses’ right hand that slew the Egyptian soldier who was abusing one of Moses’ brethren (Exodus 2:11)! And right after that, God drove Moses into the wilderness where the Lord tempered him for forty years. At the end of forty years, when Moses led the people of God through the Red Sea, there was no question in Moses’ mind.

Exodus 15:6, “Thy right hand [not his], O Lord, is majestic in power, Thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy.”

It took forty years, but Moses came to the point in his life where he saw that it is “...not by

might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6)! In fact, Isaiah 63:11b-12 emphatically states that Moses' right hand had become the right hand of God!

How is it possible to continue in the ministry of caring for a contentious wife when everything within you wants to "move to the corner of the roof of your house"? It is possible only by the enabling grace of God, which means, men, you must cling to Christ all day and every day! With that, consider the three-fold command given to the man.

1 Peter 3:7b, "You husbands, likewise, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life..."-

Explicitly or implicitly, this contains three imperatives- which serve as the three headings in your notes. We begin with living with your wife.

1 Peter 3:7, "You husbands likewise, live with *your wives*."

This exhortation means more than "putting up with" or "surviving." It means dwelling together in close relationship — physically, emotionally, and mentally. In fact, the word translated as "live" denotes the idea of "dwelling together" and refers to living with someone in intimacy and cherishing them. This was a radical exhortation at a time where women were viewed on the same level as livestock and so existed for pleasure and procreation! In this context, men did NOT "live with their wives." Truly, once a woman was wed, she "lived with" the women in her community. That is where she enjoyed socializing, fellowship, encouragement, guidance, and support. Men did their thing; women did their thing... each separately!

Thus, Peter's words here were/are revolutionary. A married woman's need for companionship, encouragement, and fellowship ought properly to begin with her husband. That is the union God envisioned when He created marriage! Paul said the same thing.

Ephesians 5:28-29, "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it [this is the idea of 'living with' another being] just as Christ also *does* the church."

Indeed, it is the Christ/Church relationship that is the foundation of the man/woman relationship. When it comes to our real needs, who ultimately ought to bear them? Christ! In this regard, how does He do that in the case of a married woman? God designed that it firstly be addressed through the husband.

Men don't confuse making a good living and providing physical needs with sharing your time, words, and emotional energy. It is on this level men must approach their wives! So, brothers, ask and genuinely listen as your wife shares about her struggles, fears, worries, and concerns.

Don't be defensive! Whatever accusations you hear undoubtedly will be true... you are that bad of a sinner and Christ still loves you! So, with this security, lovingly bear your wife's burdens!

Furthermore, as with the woman's call, this is NOT something you try once and move on. Rather, this must become the characteristic of the approach you take with your wife!

1 Peter 3:7, "You husbands likewise, live with *your wives* in an understanding² way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman."

The Greek text literally states that husbands are to dwell together with their wives "according to knowledge".³ Commentators take this in two ways. First, it has reference to the woman and so an understanding of her has a person.

If you were called by God to be a missionary to China, what would be the immediate obstacles you'd need to overcome?

- There would be the language barrier. How can you go to China and expect to have any impact if you don't speak the language?
- Then there is the need to understand the culture. You don't want to go to a culture and offend those you are seeking to bless because of ignorance! Accordingly, you'd spend years getting to know and appreciate the Chinese culture, the way they think, the cultural mores, and much, much more!

The word for "understanding way" has this connotation when it comes to marriage. When a man marries a woman, he needs to understand that he is marrying an individual completely different from himself.

- How she thinks.
- What is important to her.
- What is a compliment.
- What constitutes an insult.
- Her needs, likes, and dislikes.
- And so much more.

In this context we understand the statement that she is "a weaker vessel".⁴ Biblically speaking this does NOT have reference to her emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually. Rather, it is speaking of her physically and secondly authoritatively.⁵ Because the man is physically bigger and stronger than the wife AND because the wife has the position of being the reactor and so the follower, women were and are in a vulnerable position. The godly husband understands this and so does NOT push his weight around. He is mindful of the difficulties involved in being in the role of the responder!

But secondly the expression also has reference to God and the call He has placed on a man in

the context of marriage.⁶ In this context, “an understanding way” has reference to God’s purpose and plan behind the man’s role in marriage — which is the force of the expression, “...since she is a woman”. Peter frequently quotes directly from the Old Testament or speaks in reference to it a lot! As that is the case, we know that Peter’s thinking was molded and shaped by the Old Testament. In this context — thinking of the Hebrew Old Testament — what do you suppose is behind the expression “since she is a woman”? In fact, the Hebrew equivalent for this word is אִשָּׁה (*ishshah*)- as in Genesis. After the creation of Eve, God brought the woman to Adam and this was Adam’s response.

Genesis 2:23-24, “And the man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman [אִשָּׁה (*ishshah*)], because she was taken out of Man.’ [And based on this, what do we read? The call of the man in marriage...] 24 For this cause a man shall [covenantally] leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife [with a view of establishing a covenant community]; and they shall become one flesh.”

Men, do you “understand” your call and role in marriage? You have been chosen by God to care for your wife spiritually! She is אִשָּׁה (*ishshah*)- “the woman.” As such, you must understand that God has deigned for you to be her pastor/shepherd! That is your first and highest calling in marriage. Your wife has been entrusted to you as a stewardship. Your call therefore is to present her to God “having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless” (“Ephesians 5:27)!

The call of the man in marriage is this:

- (1) To “live with” his wife and so endeavor to care for her emotional, psychological, and relational needs,
- (2) To approach his wife with “understanding” directed NOT ONLY toward his wife as the object of his ministry, BUT ALSO toward the calling that God has placed on the man in marriage, specifically the spiritual oversight and care of his wife. In this regard, take a chapter out of Christ’s book on shepherding...

John 10:27-28, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

What is a necessary precondition for sheep to follow a Shepherd? The Shepherd must “know them”. That is the idea here!

References

- Davids, P. H. (1990). *The First Epistle of Peter (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Grudem, W. A. (2009). *1 Peter (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP Numbered))*. Chicago: IVP Academic.
- Schreiner, T. R. (2003). *1 & 2 Peter & Jude: New American Commentary [NAC]*. Nashville: B & H

End Note(s)

¹ “It is clear that Peter does not think about the possibility of a husband with a non-Christian wife, for if a family head in that culture changed his religion it would be normal that his wife, servants, and children also changed. Since he had the authority to forbid idols in the house, for example, he could enforce a degree of conformity to Christianity. But this did not mean that his relationship to his wife and family remained the same. He, too, had his duties of submission, making Peter’s command rather unusual for that age.” (Davids, 1990, p. 122)

² “The Greek term *gnōsis* has a variety of meanings, but here it is not analytical knowledge or religious insight that is intended, but personal insight that leads to loving and considerate care, whether in the bedroom or in other activities of marriage. Paul used the expression similarly in 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; Philippians 1:9; Colossians 1:9–10; 3:10 (cf. 2 Peter 3:5–6).” (Davids, 1990, p. 122)

³ “The ‘knowledge’ Peter intends here may include any knowledge that would be beneficial to the husband-wife relationship: knowledge of God’s purposes and principles for marriage; knowledge of the wife’s desires, goals, and frustrations; knowledge of her strengths and weaknesses in the physical, emotional and spiritual realms; etc. A husband who lives according to such knowledge will greatly enrich his marriage relationship...” (Grudem, 2009, p. 151)

⁴ “The sense of ‘weaker,’ then, is not weaker in mind or morally inferior, an opinion widely held in the Greek and Hebrew world (e.g., Plato, *Leg.* 6.781b; cf. Romans 5:6, which uses this sense for all humans), nor weaker in conscience (e.g., 1 Corinthians 8:7–11; Romans 14:1), for the previous exhortation has just called women to feats of moral and spiritual strength as independent moral agents, but weaker physically than men, as both Jews and Greeks observed (e.g., Plato, *Resp.* 5.455e, 457a; *Leg.* 781a; Philo, *De Ebr.* 55; Papyrus Oxy. 261.11-13), and for that and social reasons more vulnerable. It normally was quite easy for a husband to abuse his wife physically or sexually, or, because of his social power, including the power to divorce, intimidate her emotionally. All of this Peter rules out: especially because of her vulnerability he is to be sure to honor her in word and deed; rather than exploiting his power or denying that he has it, he lends it to her.” (Davids, 1990, p. 123)

⁵ “In what sense are women ‘weaker’? Nothing else in the New Testament suggests that women are intellectually inferior, nor is it clear that women are weaker emotionally, for in many ways the vulnerability of women in sharing their emotions and feelings demonstrates that they are more courageous and stronger than men emotionally. Nor did Peter suggest that women are weaker morally or spiritually than men. Such a view would suggest that men are actually better Christians than women, which is not taught elsewhere in the Scriptures, nor is it evident in history. The most obvious meaning, therefore, is that women are weaker than men in terms of sheer strength.” (Schreiner, 2003, p. 160)

⁶ “I understand the phrase ‘according to knowledge’ (*kata gnōsin*), like ‘in fear’ (literal translation) in 3:2 and ‘conscious of God’ in 2:19, to refer to the relationship of husbands to God. Husbands, then, should live together with wives informed by the knowledge of God’s will, of what he demands them to do.” (Schreiner, 2003, pp. 159-160)