

EXPOSITION OF I PETER

Message #12

I Peter 3:7

Marriage imposes obligations upon both partners and if a wife or husband desires to demonstrate the grace of God and lay up treasures in heaven, here is the formula for living life.

Just as Jesus Christ was willing to submit Himself to a plan that required He die on a cross for our sins, so we as husbands need to submit to God's plan He has for husbands. When we come to this one verse it becomes very evident that we demonstrate the grace of God by the way we think about and treat our wives. Husbands have the same responsibility to fulfill their God assigned role in the same way the wife has a responsibility to fulfill hers.

Now just as we said concerning the wife, we also say concerning the husband. You do not have to submit to these things if you don't want to. This is not some forced submission or manipulated submission, this is willing submission. That is, a husband chooses to think and act this way. But if you choose not to do this, not to apply these things: 1) You will not reflect the grace of God; 2) You will not find the favor nor earn the praise of God; 3) You will not have an abundant entrance into heaven; 4) You will not see many of your prayers ever answered. So it is your choice. The point of the verse is not too difficult to see:

GOD WANTS HUSBANDS TO LIVE WITH THEIR WIVES WITH ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS THAT REFLECT THE GRACE OF GOD AND EARN THE PRAISE OF GOD AND THE RESULT WILL BE YOUR PRAYERS WILL NOT BE HINDERED.

God wants His men to look and act like His men when it comes to their wives. In this one verse, there are six specific assignments that God gives to husbands:

ASSIGNMENT #1 – The husband is to live with his wife. **3:7a**

This may seem to be an obvious assignment, but upon close examination the real meaning is not so obvious. This challenge means more than to just live at the same address with your wife.

The term "living with" is only found here in the N.T., but in the Greek O.T., the Septuagint, it occurs five times and includes the total marriage relationship and often the sexual relationship (Deuteronomy 22:13; 24:1; 25:5; Proverbs 19:14; Isaiah 62:5. **This is a challenge to actually make time and spend time with your wife and to share life with her.** This idea also has in view that the husband should provide for her life (I Timothy 5:8).

We live in a time when women are losing sight of the fact that their first responsibility is to care for the home (Titus 2:4-5) and not work at a career. The husband is to see to it that he promotes this manner of life.

Warren Wiersbe read a survey that said that the average husband and wife spend 37 minutes together a week (p. 73). The rest of the time they are just running around here and there.

Church life can be very dangerous for a leader. Sometimes Christian workers get so involved in the lives of other people, trying to solve their problems and figure out their situations that they have no time at their own home for their own wife. This is a clear violation of the Word of God which says, husbands are to live with their wives.

ASSIGNMENT #2 – The husband is to live with his wife in an understanding way. **3:7b**

The Greek text literally reads live “according to knowledge.” It has been observed by some exegetes that this prepositional phrase “according to knowledge” has a reference to sexual intimacy. In their view, this challenge is to be a faithful and fulfilling lover to your wife.

However, we see a much greater assignment than just the sexual arena. The word “knowledge” (γνῶσις) is one that means to seek to know your wife, seek to inquire and investigate as much as you can about your wife, concerning her needs and likes and dislikes (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 94). It is the assignment from God to the husband to understand his wife’s nature and needs. He is to be sensitive and considerate of his wife. He should know his wife; know who she is and what she is. When a husband treats his wife like this, it truly does stand out as a great reflection of the grace of God.

Someone once asked Albert Einstein’s wife if she understood Dr. Einstein’s theory of relativity. Her response was, “No, but I understand the Doctor.” That is what God wants us men to be able to say - we understand our wives.

To live in an understanding way means that the relationship has communication that is based on truthfulness. Speaking the truth in love should be the norm for a husband and wife relationship.

ASSIGNMENT #3 – The husband is to live with his wife considering her to be a weaker vessel. **3:7c**

The Greek word “weaker” (ασθενης) is one that does seem specifically imply physical weakness (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 64). But that is not all it implies.

It is a known fact that men are physically stronger than women. I don’t think you will ever see a woman playing linebacker for any NFL team, although it probably would make the Detroit Lions a better team. All one has to do to prove this is to look at the same type of competitions in the Olympics and compare the times. From the 100 meter to the 5000 meter to the marathon, the men’s times are much faster than the women’s times because they are physically stronger. For example, with these powerful masculine hands of mine, I am able to open jars that Mary cannot open, from pickles to olives to applesauce. The irony of all of this is, statistically speaking, the wife will probably outlive her husband. The mandate to the husband is to realize that God has given certain strength to men which He has not given to women.

I do not believe that it is just referring to that which is physical. A woman is weaker physically, but she also has weaker and more tender and fragile emotions. A woman is a magnificent creation, but her design and makeup means she needs provision, protection and care. God has made her more fragile.

For example, a wife could say to her husband you need to take off some weight and most men, if honest, will say, I know. But if a husband says out of the blue to his wife, you need to take off some weight, it isn't typically viewed the same emotionally. For some men this statement means they just entered an Iraqi war zone. Husbands need to realize the wife's emotions are more fragile. A husband is to realize this about his wife. She is the weaker vessel.

This does not mean she is inferior spiritually or in character. Truth is, I have known of some women who actually had a stronger Christian character than their husbands who were the spiritual weaklings.

But a good God-honoring husband is a strong man of God for his wife. Peter assumes that award-winning husbands will be strong physical, emotional and spiritual leaders. In fact, to be a leader in the church a husband needs to be able to be a good leader for his wife (I Timothy 3:4).

A God-honoring husband is to realize that his wife is more fragile than he is and he is to take care of her and protect her. A wife is much more vulnerable than he is. Killers and rapists know this for they often wait for the husband to leave. This has in view the woman is more vulnerable. A woman is weaker physically than a man and she is more vulnerable than a man.

Husbands need to be good leaders, protectors and providers for their wives. They need to watch out for their needs physically and emotionally and spiritually. A husband has been given an assignment from God to watch over his wife and to help strengthen her, not weaken her.

ASSIGNMENT #4 – The husband is to live with his wife realizing she is a woman. **3:7d**

This may seem obvious, but again it is a challenge that isn't so obvious. The noun "woman" *gynaikeos* (γυναικεος) is the Greek word from which we get our English "gynecology." The word in Greek has to do with the fact that husbands are to realize that their wife is a female not a male (Smith, p. 96). By the way, this very Greek word means men are to marry women, not other men.

Now the word "man" and the word "woman" are two different words. I am convinced this is exactly the point. The emphasis here is that husbands are to realize that men and women are different. Scripture, social research and scientific data all point to the fact that there are major differences between men and women. Husbands are to realize that their wives are women, they typically think different, they act different, they are different. God made them different.

Harvard psychologist, Carol Gilligan, discussed this very point: "At the crux of women's existence, the researchers contend, is the sense of relationship, the interconnectedness of people. Relationship colors every aspect of a woman's life... Women use conversation to expand and understand relationships; men use talk to convey solutions, thereby ending conversations. Women tend to see people as mutually dependent; men view them as self-reliant. Women emphasize caring; men value freedom. Women consider actions within a context, linking one to the next; men tend to regard events as isolated..." (Cited from Stu Webber, *Tender Warrior*, p. 108).

Men and women are different. A woman is a companion and a friend and a man is a loner. This is why small talk to me may not be small talk to my wife. What I am insensitive to may be something she is very sensitive to. While I am focused on the future, a woman is focused more on needs here and now. There are differences and men need to realize this if they are to honor God. In fact, our job is to see the differences and enjoy them, not war against them. As Webber said, "Let's capitalize on them" (Ibid., p. 115).

I knew a man out West who dragged his wife into the mountains to hunt elk and she hated it. In twelve years of hunting the Rocky Mountains, I have only seen a couple of women in the back country that truly loved to hunt with the same intensity as a man. And even the ones I saw did not keep the intensity up day after day. His wife loved to camp, but she did not like crawling out of bed at 4 a.m. to climb up on a horse and ride in the freezing cold six miles in the dark so she could be on top of a mountain by 6 a.m. But this man made his wife do this until finally she refused to go with him. He did not seem to realize that his wife was a female and not too many females find great enjoyment in this experience.

ASSIGNMENT #5 – The husband is to live with his wife and grant her honor. **3:7e**

Now take note of this, men. It is your job to honor your wife. The word "honor" is more than just granting her respect. It has to do with valuing her and esteeming her as precious, worth a very high price (Smith, p. 446). This has to do with a mental consideration that your wife is a very precious person to you. Very valuable to you. She is your helpmate and she is very important to your life.

It is the husband's job to honor his wife and not run down his wife either verbally or mentally or honor some other woman. A man should be kind and gracious to every woman, but your wife should be honored above all. As Dr. Swindoll once observed, your wife sits at a table every day and looks at you as you fall apart. Your hair falls out and you get fat and she is still by your side. You have physical problems, gas problems and a host of other problems and there is your wife right at your side. She deserves honor for that.

Chivalry may be dead these days, but every God-honoring husband must be like "a knight in shining armor" for his wife. A husband should honor his wife.

I want to make one thing very clear here, **giving honor to a wife is not the same as giving in to the wife**. A husband can highly honor and value his wife and still say "no" at times.

ASSIGNMENT #6 – The husband is to live with his wife realizing she too is an heir of God's grace. **3:7d**

A Christian wife is just as much an heir of the grace of God as a Christian husband. Don't ever forget this and don't take it for granted. God's grace is totally undeserved no matter if it is a man or a woman.

If you are married to a Christian wife, you need to know that God's grace personally reached out to your wife and saved her. She is just as much an heir of heaven as you are. She needs to be honored because she knows the Lord and belongs to Him.

Woe to any man who demeans or belittles God's property.

Now at the end of verse 7, you will notice that this becomes a critical matter pertaining to your prayer life. Husbands and wives are to treat each other in the ways described in these verses so that prayers may not be hindered. If husbands and wives pursue this kind of domestic focus and purpose to obey what is here, God says, "I'll answer your prayers."

This text assumes husbands and wives pray together. And there is no question that the Word of God and prayer are basic to a happy and a healthy and holy marriage relationship.

I leave you men with some questions to answer:

- 1) How do you treat your wives in a typical day?
- 2) Do you honor your wife?
- 3) Do you let her know that she is your top priority?
- 4) Do you seek to provide and protect your wife?
- 5) Do you pray with your wife?

You men decide what you will do; but know this - God's eyes are on you.