

FOR BETTER, NOT FOR WORSE

1 Peter 3:1-7

INTRODUCTION

Current stats on marriage.

I think it is encouraging that the younger generation's divorce rate is less than my generation of baby boomers. I think part of the reason for this is that the younger generation has grown up watching their parents divorce and experiencing the pain of divorce so they don't want that to happen for themselves.

It remains to be seen how that plays out. But one thing I can say is that seeking to practice the truth of God in marriage builds strong marriages.

This morning I want us to see what God says through Peter about marriage. Peter was one of the disciples who was married. For how long, we don't know. We also don't know if he had children. But what he says about marriage not only comes from God, but also his experience.

We are in a section of 1 Peter that is talking about relationships within culture. And one of the important summary points he says is:

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. 1 Peter 2:12^{NIV}

Live godly lives. That was so important because Christians were suspect. They didn't bow to Caesar. They didn't participate in the temple worship and feasts to the Roman and Greek gods. They didn't attend some of the cultural events because of the immorality of plays or debauchery.

There were three main spheres of relationships within the Greco-Roman culture in the first century, each of which were critical to the stability of the Roman Empire. It was essential to keep things peaceful within each of those spheres.

Peter addresses how Christians should act in regard to each of these spheres, and the common theme is to submit to the laws or authority in each of those areas.

In relation to government, Peter tells Christians:

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority,¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 1 Peter 2:13-14^{NIV}

In relationship to Masters, Peter tells Christians:

Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. 1 Peter 2:18^{NIV}

The third area has to do with relationships in marriage, and that is what we want to look at here this morning.

Before I dive into what Peter says, I want to make a couple of key points and then describe the situation for women in that day.

First, for every Christian, there are two primary goals:

- Develop your own walk with God with Jesus as your Lord.

Now, that should be obvious to every Christian. But the application may not be so easy. If you are a Christian, your highest allegiance is to be to Jesus, not to your spouse. But you can see where that may cause problems, not only in society but also in marriage.

Statement of Jesus:

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”³⁵ For I have come to turn

*“ ‘a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—*

³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

³⁷ “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:34-39

Jesus was not saying that he came to cause war. But what he said is that when a person becomes a follower of Jesus, it may turn even their own family against them because Jesus comes first. I hate to leave that and move on, but Jesus expects us to first love God, and then love our spouse and our children. And that may cause problems.

The second point relates to our mission to the world as Christians:

- Make disciples by bringing others to Christ.

That would, of course, begin with your family—your spouse, your children. Our goal is to reach out to people to help them become followers of Jesus.

You can see that doing both may require walking a fine line, especially for the women in that day. How do I put Jesus first but obey my husband?

Let me give you a glimpse of the situation of a wife in the first century:

Becoming a Christian opened up a life for women which was totally unheard of for women in that day, even among the Jews. Women are on equal footing with men before God.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28^{NIV}

Women are not second class citizens before God; they are not inferior to men. They are equal with men before God.

At the same time, there is a divine pattern and orderliness of relationships in marriage and in the church. From the beginning, God established the basic unit of life to be marriage and family, and within this basic, foundational microcosm of society, the man is

the leader of the family. But that is not to be expressed as a dictatorship where the man is arrogant and autocratic. It is to be expressed in loving roles to each other.

I. DUTIES FOR THE WIFE

So how is a wife to relate to her husband, especially if her husband is not a follower of Jesus?

1. Serve your husband

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives. 1 Peter 3:1 NIV

I choose to use the word, serve, because that is the heart of what it means to submit. In last week's message, Frank gave us several definitions for the word, **submit: to yield oneself to the authority or will of another; to defer to or consent to abide by the opinion or authority of another.** Those are also expressions of what it means to serve another person.

The motivation for every person in their relationship with others is to love them. And to love a person is to serve their needs. You can look at submission in a negative, restrictive way, or you can look at it as a way to love your husband. Every time you submit to your husband, you are serving and loving him. That should put a whole different light on things.

To submit is to find out what your husband wants you to do, and then to do it. As long as it is not against the will of God, then it is something you should be able to do.

Peter says a second duty is to:

2. Live a godly life

when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 1 Peter 3:2 NIV

This has to do primarily with your relationship with God. And what this says is that a primary way to love and serve your husband is by becoming a godly woman. The practical goal is that if the wife lives such a joyful, peaceful and Spirit-filled life, her life will speak more to her husband than a thousand words about the reality of God and his need for God. The idea is that the husband will not be able to deny the positive impact of God in one's life.

I hate to say it, but I have seen some Christian women whose Christian life, frankly, is so unappealing, that if I were her husband, I wouldn't want anything to do with God.

As I look at the qualities of life that a Christian should manifest, I look at such passages as:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22-23

These are wonderful qualities. If women, lived and expressed these qualities all the time, how do you think their husband would respond to her? What you are communicating

is that God makes a difference in your life and he can give your husband these same qualities.

Peter goes on to draw this out by emphasizing that a woman's focus is to be on your inner, spiritual beauty not just outward appearances.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴ Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 1 Peter 3:3-4 ^{NIV}

Now, let me say up front: I love my beautiful wife. Over the years, I have appreciated how she has worked at and maintained her beauty. OK. I admit it: As a man, I would rather have a beautiful wife than an ugly wife. But what I appreciate more is her inner beauty. Peter reminds us that inner beauty is unfading. In fact, if a woman is conscientious in maintaining her inner beauty as much as her outer beauty throughout her life, the older she gets, the more beautiful she will become. Women, isn't that an encouraging thought?

E.g. amount of time and money an average woman spends on her face.

Now, let's turn to the husband.

II. DUTIES FOR THE HUSBAND:

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. 1 Peter 3:7 ^{NIV}

Peter is addressing Christian husbands. I realize that there are not as many marriages where the husband is a Christian and the wife is a nonchristian. But the situation applies whether the wife is a Christian or not.

So for the husband, here is what God says to us:

1. Serve your wife by understanding her needs as a woman

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner... 1 Peter 3:7 ^{NIV}

It begins with the words, *in the same way*. That carries the command of submitting over to the husband, and is a great reminder. Husbands are to submit to the needs of their wife, just as a wife is to submit to the needs of her husband. It's just that the wife and husband have different needs and to submit and serve the other is going to be done in different ways.

Literally, it says,

Live with your wives according to knowledge...

Some years ago, John Gray wrote a book called, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. It was an insightful, humorous book on the differences between men and women. And there are differences! Not just physically, but intellectually and emotionally. Peter points out that one of them is that women are the weaker partner. That primarily has to do

with physical strength; it doesn't have anything to do with inferring that women are intellectually or spiritually weaker. I've long recognized that Nancy is much smarter in many ways than I am.

But there are differences, and a woman's needs are different than a man's. The way a man can serve his wife is by knowing these needs and seeking to meet them.

This past week, I sent out a request for advice from women about what men need to know about women. Boy, did I touch a nerve. I have 6 pages of comments! [See below for comments].

The second way a husband is to serve his wife is to:

2. Honor your wife as a precious coheir of God's life

treat them with respect ... as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. 1 Peter 3:7^{NIV}

The word "respect" is a bit weak. A better translation is "preciousness." There is a big difference between treating someone with respect and treating someone as precious. To treat your wife as precious means to value your wife highly.

When I hear the word, precious, I immediately think of Gollum in the book and movie, *Lord of the Rings*. Gollum constantly called the one ring of power his precious, and it completely overwhelmed his life. It's all he could think of, and when he lost it, he was consumed with getting it back from Frodo.

Now, we husbands may not be as consumed with our wife as Gollum was with the ring, but do we consider our wife in a precious way? Is she so special and valuable to us that we couldn't imagine living without her?

When God first created man, he then followed by creating woman because it was not good for man to be alone. A man is not complete without a wife. A wife is a complement to a man, a helpmeet, to fulfill a man. And God made woman as an equal, coheir of the grace of God.

One of the effects of sin coming into the world is the sense of independence and self-sufficiency that men have, not only in our relationship with God, but in our relationship with others, especially with our wife. Humanly speaking, we need a wife to enjoy life with and to be a partner in living.

Peter emphasizes that the relationship between the husband and wife has an impact on their spiritual life. Husbands are to fulfill the duties of treating their wife as precious and an equal before God **so that nothing will hinder their prayers**. The truth is that if we are not treating our wives in a precious way, our relationship with God and our prayers to God are going to be hindered.

And that is true even when both husband and wife are Christians.

Next Steps:

1. Wives, ask your husband if there is anything that you can do to serve him better.

2. Husbands, ask your wives to give you 3 things that will help you understand her better.

Advice to Husbands

In understanding each other we mostly have to talk with each other and keep talking. Never let the dialogue stop - whatever the subject. The sooner you can talk and talk on the lighter subjects, it takes out some of the 'mystery' on speaking about the more serious issues.

Listen! Speak in a loving way, with respect.

Be compassionate. NEVER talk 'down' to your spouse and NEVER humiliate your spouse.

'Suggest' solutions, even if it has to be a 'strong' suggestion.

Prove to your spouse you are a person of integrity; prove to your spouse you can be trusted

Be 'fun'. Know how to laugh at ourselves

Have 'dates' with each other; Tell your spouse you love them; Thank them for the hard work they do.

Be kind loving understanding TALK things out don't hold anything in an in a calm an caring way don't yell it doesn't help ♥





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Parenthood is a partnership, but sometimes it can be a bit uneven. As many working moms will tell you, some husbands often don't do their fair share or need to be directed to do certain chores. Which leaves moms responsible for not only their half of parenting and household duties, but also organizing, reminding and planning everything else. This burden is called the "mental load," and is very familiar to many moms around the world.

I am not married, but I heard a speaker talk about this passage at family camp one year and the part that really stood out to me was how he defined loving leadership. That it wasn't leadership in the sense of "I am in charge of all the things" but instead knowing when to lead in front and when to lead in back. That God has given each of us gifts and callings and loving and leading means calling these things out and empowering those things and knowing the other person's strengths. He gave the example of finances, where his wife is much more gifted in stewarding finances, so he steps back in that area and she uses her gifts to serve her family that way. I've also seen that in other marriages where the husband recognizes that his wife is gifted in leading/teaching bible studies and he sacrificially loves her by watching the kids and taking care of household things by himself on that night of the week and throughout the week when she's preparing so that she can use her gifting well! I know that this is important even as a single, because I want to choose a spouse who I know is committed to encouraging me to serve God in the ways that He has created me for, in whatever way that means, and that I can do that in my role in return!

I just thought of something, all of the things that women want from their husband are the very same things that God wants from us.

If men make the final decision about something, explain the reasoning behind it so we are on the same page and give her the opportunity to share her opinion on it. Also, women are complicated, and we navigate through our 1000 emotions daily. And a lot of times we just need to talk them out. Sometimes all we need is a hug and a listening ear without "fixing" the problem. Communication is key.

We all need the same things. We want to be important and to think we are needed, loved, special, desired, beautiful, smart, appreciated, okay just the way we are. We want to be listened to and know that you heard us. We want you to tell us about your day and to think you care about ours. To be included, #1. That's all!

I'd start with this clip and then talk about why it is so important that the man love his wife like proverbs 31 suggests. Together they would be nice stoppable for the Lord's kingdom

I believe that most human beings want and have an innate need to be known. They want to feel that those around them love them enough to truly know them. When someone close to me bought me a birthday cake with walnuts all over it, I was hurt because this person should have known that I'm allergic to walnuts. So when a husband takes the time, the incentive, and the selflessness to truly get to know his wife, it blesses her so and makes her feel loved and cherished. And I think it's because we all have that need to feel that we're truly known by our one-flesh partner.

This could apply to both men and women, but I've benefited from it. I tend to make a lot of the day-to-day decisions in the house, but I have suffered from decision fatigue at times, where I just could not answer one more question or make one more judgment call. It was hard to let go of that, but I had to ask my husband to decide for me/us. He would think about it carefully and make the decision. Now, my part of this was not going back and picking at his decision, but I appreciated that he would just do it rather than trying to second guess what I might want or trying to get out of making a decision. Another biggie for me is the idea of "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Husbands are going to need God's help with this one, because we ALL (men and women) are selfish, but knowing that my husband would literally put his own life on the line for me and for our

children with zero hesitation gives me an assurance of not just my own safety but also of his devotion to us, to our marriage, and to God.

One thing that my husband does that I cherish so much is when we both come home from work, we both go in our room and talk about our day first. Before doing homework with the kids, before planning dinner, before workouts or emails or anything else. Sometimes it takes 5 minutes, sometimes it takes 30+ minutes. But we both shut the door and just unpack the day. And the kids know to get their own snack and not to bother us until we come out. It's so important to me as both a de-stressing tactic and as a clear signal to me that I'm the most important thing in his life. And I'm able to keep functioning and serving my family after that because he's taken on some of the mental and emotional load that I've been carrying just by listening and truly hearing me.

A woman needs to know that she's respected by her husband. This is the most appreciated gift.

By listening. Sometimes, we don't need a situation to be fixed, we just need a listening ear.

Wow that's a loaded question . I think the key to understanding woman is knowing what we need as the weaker sex. We need to know that our husbands love and cherish us. We need to feel protected in every sense of the word. Physically, financially, spiritually etc... We desire to be heard and listened to not just placated where the husband says he listens then forgets ever discussing an issue. We do desire to be appreciated not just for what we do but for who we are or might I say, who God designed us to be. We desire for our men to be leaders. For them to take initiative shows us they care and don't just rely on or assume the wife will take care of everything. Being a man who prays with his wife shows that He takes his God given role seriously. And as God made us the weaker vessel, we process things differently, respond more emotionally and see things differently. We need to be approached with kindness, respect, gentleness and politeness just as when you were courting us. When I witness a man extending these affections to his wife it's a good indicator of the condition of his heart.

We really need to be studied to know us and then to understand us. God designed us this way for a reason. You can be a man of God because you desire to know Him, spend time with Him in His word and share intimate conversations with Him but if you are not doing the same with your wife you are actually falling short of Gods command to love your

closest neighbor, your wife. When men don't consistently practice these things, it sends a conflicting message to us that were not worth putting in the effort for. Now I fully understand that God is first and foremost in our husbands lives, as it should be, but if husbands fall short of loving their wives as Christ loves the church the results speak for themselves. It's important to know what love is first (1st Cor 13 4-8) to then be able to extend that grace to your wife. While God designed us to have different roles as men and woman, we are equal in our inheritance and love that He gives, and He desires us to be unified with our husbands. We don't want to do life alone. We want to partner with our husbands. Spend time together accomplishing same goals. Not live separate lives under the same roof. Steve and I are currently remodeling our kitchen, on a dime I might add, but have a common goal and are sharing ideas on how to repurpose things we have salvaged from makeover. This sharing of work and ideas brings us together and unifies us. We feel a sense of "we" accomplishment.

Now all that being said, we woman can take a step back to study our husbands and how God designed them and what makes them tick but I suspect that topic can be for a future sermon. Hope this sheds a little light on the subject.

I think it's hard to be specific about how husbands can live with their wives in an understanding way because individuals are so unique. However, the general principle seems to be something like this: get to know your wife well enough that you know what she loves, what gets her excited, what motivates her, what discourages her, what she needs to be the woman God made her to be. This requires curiosity, observation, asking good questions, and listening. And then taking some self-sacrificial action probably!

To give support, love and understanding. We both have many strengths and weaknesses but I can't use my strengths because my husband is always thinking that if I do I'm pushing him down and I'll be the Boss. If he doesn't agree with me the conversation is done. To have time for us as a couple; to do things as a team; to have devotional time together. To share home responsibilities. If I don't do things at home they are not going to be done. They will be waiting for me to finish it.