

“A Husband’s Call to Honor”

I Peter 3:7

December 1, 2019

As we return to our study of 1 Peter, we find ourselves right at the heart of the book, where Peter has been exhorting us to relate to all people in the spirit of Christ. And what we have been discovering is that, regardless of the relationship in view, we are to live as unto the Lord in that relationship. In particular, our interactions with people are to be determined more by a response to God’s character than by a response to the other person’s actions. Or as we’ve been saying, “Because I am in Christ and because Christ is in me, I can relate to you in the spirit of Christ” which means imitating Christ by making my supreme purpose in any relationship to honor God.

Let me remind you of the flow of the text from chapter 2 into chapter 3 so that we are poised to understand vs. 7 in its rightful context. In 2:11-12, Peter urged these persecuted believers as aliens and strangers in this world, to “abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul” and to keep their behavior excellent among unbelievers so that they will be able to see Christ through their lives. Then in 2:13-20, Peter gave specific instructions for citizens to submit to governing authorities and for servants to submit to their masters. More importantly, was the major theme that emerged in vs. 13-20 of *living unto God* in those submissive relationships.

- “for the Lord’s sake” (13)
- “for such is the will of God” (15)
- “as bondslaves of God” (16)
- “fear God” (17)
- “for the sake of conscience toward God” (19)
- “this finds favor with God” (20)

Then in 2:21-25, this theme of living unto God is exemplified in Christ. Now in 3:1-7, what has been exemplified by Christ is to be modeled in marriage. We already saw in vs. 1-6 that wives live unto God by hoping in God (5) and doing what’s right in God’s eyes (6), even as they live in submission to their husbands. Now in light of all this, we are going to focus on 3:7 which is directed toward husbands. **[3:7]**

The essence of vs. 7 is this: ***God’s calling to a husband is to live unto the Lord in his marriage by humbly regarding his wife with the very honor that God Himself has bestowed upon her.***

Let’s look more closely at vs. 7 in light of four aims God is calling husbands to live out in marriage.

1. Husbands are called to live as unto God in their marriage, following the example of Christ.

This comes from the word *likewise*, which draws in the context that I explained at the outset of my message. A couple weeks ago, I gave you my argument as to why the word *likewise* both here and in vs. 1 refer not to the theme of submission but to the theme of Godward living. So let me just summarize it this way. Husbands, just as wives are to follow the example of Christ, so you are to relate to your wife in the spirit of Christ. Or to be more specific: Husbands for the sake of conscience (19) toward God, for the sake of God’s favor over your life (20), follow the example of Christ, forsaking sin to live primarily to please God in how you treat your wife (22).

Perhaps even more particular to husbands, is the example of Christ in vs. 24 of selfless sacrifice for the sake of those who were weak, namely sinners: *“He himself bore our sin in His body on the cross...”* Of course, we can’t carry our spouse’s sin in a redemptive way as Christ did for us, but we can adopt His character of selfless sacrifice for the good of our spouse. In Ephesians 5, Paul calls us to do the same. As Christ gave Himself up for the church, so husbands need to follow the selflessness of Christ by dying to their selfish desires, attitudes, and behaviors. So wives are not the only ones who need to die to self in their submission to God and their husbands. Husbands also must die to self in their submission to God so that their wives can come under the leadership of a selfless, Christlike husband.

There is another clue in vs. 7 that confirms that husbands are being called to Godward living within their marriage. The clue is the last phrase of vs. 7: *“so that your prayers will not be hindered.”* We will unpack this phrase at the end, but let me simply say that the key to a husband’s sanctification (his

growth in godliness) in his marriage is to filter his every response to his wife through the grid of humble obedience to God.

Now of course, living unto God in your marriage is not so difficult when all is going well. Rather, we are put to the test and given opportunities to grow when we get tangled up in our sin nature, and differing perspectives that can result in conflict; or those moments when our expectations of each other are driven more by our perspective than God's. Husbands, it is in those moments that we need to step back and ask ourselves this question: "How can I model the humble, selfless, grace of Christ in this conversation? What is the most God-pleasing way for me to lead and respond to my wife in this matter?"

Husbands, God has called us to live unto God in our marriage, by following the example of Christ.

2. Husbands are called to be considerate of their wives, so as not to be overbearing.

I think this is what Peter is getting at when he instructs husbands to "*live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman.*" First let me say, this is by no means a put down to women. When vs. 7 is taken as a whole, clearly it is meant to establish a spiritual equality between men and women with a specific call for men to honor their wives.

So why then does Peter make this comment about relating to her as someone weaker? He is simply reminding husbands that God's design for men and women, physically, is different. Women are not intrinsically weaker than men spiritually, intellectually, morally or relationally, but they do tend to have less physical strength than men. This is why we have separate categories for men and women in competition sports. What Peter is doing is calling men to be considerate of this difference so that their leadership does not become overbearing or abusive, especially in a culture of manual labor where women were more vulnerable than men.

When we remember that vs. 7 is addressing men, Peter is speaking as much to the man's weakness as to the woman's. That is, the man's weakness or tendency to lack consideration for others of a selfless nature in his leadership.

So husbands, we are called to take into consideration our wife's situation in life. Do you take into consideration the daily demands that are upon her? Are you sensitive to the fact that your leadership over her directly impacts the quality of her life? By virtue of your leadership in the relationship, she is vulnerable to any deficiencies in your character or spiritual maturity.

Here's the bottom line. You need to live with your wife in an understanding way, being considerate of her, attentive to her, and sensitive to her needs so that your leadership demonstrates kindness, care, and protective love.

3. Husbands are called to honor their wives as precious recipients of God's gracious favor.

This is really the heart of vs. 7: "*show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.*" It becomes obvious now that the previous phrase regarding weakness was not suggesting that women are not inferior to men because they are fellow heirs who are to be regarded with honor. While there may be distinctive roles, and uniqueness in terms of male and female distinctions, women share equality with men in personhood, dignity and value. It has been said that "in the eyes of God, women have no disadvantage."¹ Actually, the only disadvantage women experience is when men fail to see them through God's eyes.

What Peter states here is actually revolutionary in terms of elevating the dignity of women within that culture. It is ironic that passages like this that are often shunned today as "demeaning" to women were actually understood by the original audience as restoring dignity and value to women from whom culture had robbed all rights and honor.

In order to understand how husbands are to honor their wives, we need to wrestle with what it means to be a fellow heir of the grace of life. Is Peter

¹ Edwards, 134.

simply referring to physical life for is he referring to eternal life? I take the phrase to refer to a woman's salvation—eternal life, based on the context of chapter 1 in which Peter rejoices that we have been *“born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...”* (1:3-4).

Peter is saying, “listen husbands, the very fact that your wife receives the same eternal reward as you, indicates that she is not inferior to you in God's eyes.” As a believer, your wife is the recipient of God's gracious favor which means that you need to view her not just as person, not just as your wife, but as the recipient of God's gracious favor. This increases the weight we give to the word honor. Why? Because now you must respond to your wife not just on the basis of how you perceive her, but on the basis of how God sees her through the eyes of Christ. You must honor her not only on the basis of her honorable traits but also in light of how God has honored her with His grace.

Husbands you are to hold your wives as precious in God's sight. It's interesting that the Greek word translated *“honor”* in vs. 7, is the same word that is translated in 2:7 as *“precious value”* which refers to the precious hope of the gospel.

If your wife is precious in God's sight, if God has set His grace and favor upon her, then you are to relate to her with the honor that is due to one that God Himself honors. If God has given her grace, you dare not withhold grace from her. If God has forgiven her, you dare not withhold forgiveness from her. For to do so would be to put yourself in direct opposition to God Himself. It would be to disagree with God and say that His grace, and forgiveness, and honor is unwarranted. It would be to place yourself in a position of judgment over God.

Husbands, God has called us to honor our wives as a precious recipients of God's gracious favor. Honor her in your speech, both privately and in public. Thank her, speak well of her. When you disagree, do so respectfully and listen to truly understand. Honor her with your attitudes by being attentive, grateful, appreciative, flexible, patient and gracious. Honor her with your actions. Help her, serve her, seek to reduce her burdens and put her needs and interest ahead of your own. Honor her with your prayers.

4. Husbands are called to account by God for how they treat their wives.

The last phrase of vs. 7 gives husbands a sobering motivation to be considerate in how they live with their wives so as to bestow on them the honor that is fitting in God's eyes. The purpose is so that the husband's prayers will not be hindered.

Psalm 66:18 says, *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”* In other words, when I refuse to relinquish my sin God refuses to honor my prayers. Why? Because sin disrupts my relationship with God.

That's precisely what Peter is getting at when husbands are inconsiderate toward their wives and treat them dishonorably. Such sin, disrupts the flow of God's gracious power into your life through answered prayer. What this means is that, functionally speaking, a harsh husband who refuses to treat his wife with honor lives as though he has no more spiritual power than an unbeliever. His life is lacking the impact of God's grace and favor.

Yet perhaps it is even more serious than that. One of the themes of I Peter is that when a believer patiently suffers under unjust treatment, God Himself will vindicate His child in the end. Husbands, if you mistreat your wife by failing to regard her as one of God's own precious and holy daughters, then you may well be putting yourself in a position for God to set Himself against you to vindicate your wife.

Men, how devastating would it be for the life-line of prayer to be cut off in your life? I'm not asking the question hypothetically. I'm asking it personally. This question may be one of the greatest tests of your spiritual health. If your life could go on, relatively unchanged because prayer doesn't really play a vital role in your day to day life, then you need to consider the degree to which you are actually walking with God.

The man who prays little, knows God little. Not because prayer is the means of knowing God. The Bible is the means by which we know God. But the one who knows God, as He is in the Bible, will have a praying life. When we live in such a way that sin, especially in our marriages, hinders God's favor in

answering our prayers, what we hinder is free access to God's grace, provision, protection, deliverance, and joy. We forfeit a productive, fruitful life. We forfeit the opportunity to see our prayers impact the lives of our children, and our extended family, and friends.

Husbands, we are called to account by God Himself as to whether or not we live with our wives in an understanding way, being considerate of her and granting her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life. God cannot honor a husband who does not honor his wife.

As we enter the Christmas season and as we prepare to partake of the Lord's table, let me remind you that Jesus came to earth to live the righteous life that we have failed to live. He came to selflessly sacrifice His own life for us, weak as we are in our sin. He came for sake of His bride, so that she would be honored and favored in His Father's sight.

As we prepare for the Lord's table this morning, I ask you, "are living as unto the Lord in your marriage which is meant to be living portrait of Christ and His bride? Are you relating to others in the Spirit of Christ? While we need to confess any known sin in our life, perhaps none is more pressing than the sin that weighs down our relationships renders them void of God's power and grace.

Communion:

- **Bread:** *"There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."* (Heb 4:13-16)
- **Cup:** *"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you are healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (2:24-25).*