

Husbands, Be Understanding

1 Peter 3:7

4/17/2016

Husbands, imagine yourselves coming home after a long hard day of work. Lots of things have gone wrong. Your co-workers yelled at you. Things broke that you really didn't need to have broken. It could have been huge things, or a long string of small things. It's just been a rotten day all around. You come home only to find out that your wife's day wasn't much better. The kids were sick all day. She had a headache all day. She wasn't able to do the things you had asked of her, and which you really needed her to do. Now, husbands, how are you going to react to this situation? The easiest thing to do would be simply to blow up. How dare your wife not consider your needs first! How dare she forget about what you told her! How dare she be so selfish! On the other hand, there could be another possible reaction. It is possible, husbands, to train yourselves to gauge what kind of a day your wife has had before you start making assumptions about her state of mind. In fact, seeing what kind of mood she's in ought to be the very first thing you do when you get home. Maybe you can forbear talking about your day first, and allow your wife to talk about her day. That way, if her day was better, she might be more sympathetic to hearing about your rotten day, but if her day was as bad as yours, you won't need to come down on her like a ton of bricks. This is a good example of how to apply the passage before us this morning, which is for husbands to love their wives by doing two things, for two reasons, and for a particular goal.

The first thing Peter tells husbands to do is to dwell with their wives with understanding. Dwelling with wives is a very broad category and includes all aspects of marriage, really. It includes day by day living, emotional and spiritual care, marital intimacy, provision for food, clothing, shelter, and transportation, and anything else which comes to mind as important for marriage. It is a very broad category. Husbands are the providers in the family. They provide the broad structure for marriage to work. They provide protection and defense from any forces that would attack.

But notice the operative word here, which is “with understanding” It means that the husband is to put his wife's needs before his own. He is to sacrifice himself so that his wife's needs may be met. Maybe it means putting off a purchase of something you want so that you can buy something your wife wants. Maybe it means going on vacation to her side of the family every now and then. Maybe it means viewing her family as family every bit as much as you see your own side of the family as family. Maybe it means that extra effort to get along well with your in-laws.

Understanding is an area in which all husbands need to grow. As we said last

week, women tend to communicate on many different levels simultaneously, and that can be information overload, or, if we have trouble getting it all, information underload. She communicates with voice, inflection, eyes, and body language. And she is communicating emotionally, spiritually, physically, everything. Maybe not all of those all the time. Oftentimes, however, it is many of those things. So, some of us need to open our minds a bit so that the flood of information can all find a good reception.

Ultimately, of course, the model for husbands is Jesus Christ. He listens to the church better than the church communicates or listens to Christ. Jesus considered the needs of His bride, the church, above His own needs or rights. In fact, He sacrificed nothing less than His life for the life of the church. His bride, the church, needed cleansing, needed forgiveness, needed the Holy Spirit. And so Jesus provided all these things for the church by laying down His life for her. Paul draws a direct connection in Ephesians 5, when he says that the husband is the head of the wife, just as Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, and gave Himself up for her. Therefore, husbands, your model is set before you. You are to be like Christ to your wives.

This means that you are looking out for her spiritual well-being first and foremost. As we have been emphasizing all along in this series, public and private worship needs to be the focal point of the family. The husband and father needs to take point on this, and no matter how much he may not feel like it, he needs to lead his family to public worship, and he needs to conduct private worship.

Being considerate also means realizing that your wife gave up certain things to be married to you. Now, wives, you should not be continually reminding your husbands of this, as guilt manipulation is not a very helpful way of going about things. Nevertheless, husbands, you need to realize that your wives gave up her independence to be married to you. That is not a small thing. Keeping that in mind is a great part of being considerate.

The second thing husbands are supposed to do is to give honor to the wife. Rise up and call her blessed, as Proverbs 31 would say. Always honor her in public and in private. Consider her the most beautiful woman in the world. This is exceedingly important, since many women feel very insecure about whether their husbands think they are attractive. As you are probably already aware, men and women tend to think differently when it comes to declarations of love. The man typically thinks, "Well, I've told her once that I love her, and if it changes, I'll let her know." The woman tends to think, "He hasn't told me that he loves me for a whole five minutes. Maybe he changed his mind!" The husband and the wife both need to understand how the other communicates their love.

Many of you have probably heard of the five love languages: time spent with someone, gifts, words, service, and touch. It is very important to know which of

the five are more important to the wife, and which are more important to the husband. In fact, it is a misunderstanding of the way in which a person wants to be loved that accounts for most “incompatibility” issues that arise. Husbands, recognize that your wife may not want to be loved in the same way you do.

Giving honor to your wife also implies not giving to some other woman what only belongs to your wife. Adultery would be the most flagrant form of that violation. However, the use of pornography is a close second. Pornography is a terrible scourge upon the church today, because it is so easily and anonymously accessible, and is also highly damaging to marriages. It is also highly addictive. Studies have been done that show that certain chemicals are released in the brain that are highly addicting chemicals. If any husbands are here who struggle with this issue, here are some things you need to do. Firstly, get rid of any and all anonymous access points. If you have a computer, make sure that you are accountable on it. Covenant Eyes is an excellent program to use, as long as you have someone who will actually check your reports and ask you about questionable websites. You can get Covenant Eyes for smartphones as well. You have to make it your browser and delete all other browsers. And there are ways to prevent new browsers from being downloaded. Secondly, if you have never told another male friend about it, then you need to tell someone. Do not let fear of what they might think deter you from it. Satan will try to convince you that you can handle this temptation on your own (which is a lie), and that it really isn't that bad (which is also a lie), and that your life will be ruined if you tell a trusted friend about it (which is a third lie).

Peter then gives us the first reason why husbands should be considerate: women are weaker vessels, or weaker partners. Now, we must be careful here. This does not mean that women have less intelligence, or less endurance (in fact, women often have more endurance than men!). Peter is not saying that women are emotionally weaker or spiritually weaker. Peter means here one thing and one thing only, and that is that wives are almost always physically weaker than their husbands. Husbands are often tempted to take advantage of this fact. It is something about which a different attitude must be cultivated. The fact that your wife is physically weaker than you means that you should live with consideration. Maybe it means something as small as opening that jar that your wife can't seem to get open. Maybe it means making sure that you don't use your superior physical strength as a way of brow-beating your wife into submission. We talked about submission last week. But notice something interesting. Submission is something that the wife is to give voluntarily. It never says here for husbands to command submission of their wives. It is rather something that wives should give on their own. Husbands are supposed to love their wives. As Michael Pearl says, if your wife is not following your leadership in an area, the proper response is to stop, go

back, and gently talk and explain to your wife your reasons why you wish to follow a certain path. Make the path of following easy to understand and easy to follow. Make sure also that the responsibility of the decision remains with you. If it was a bad decision, then you claim the responsibility for it. Don't blame your wife for it. That's what Adam did in the Garden, and it didn't get him very far. So, your wife's comparatively weak physical make-up is a reason for consideration, not a reason for brow-beating. Jesus Christ looks at His church and sees that she is weak in many ways, and Jesus uses that knowledge to encourage the church gently, and bring her along in her understanding and willingness to follow His lead. Husbands, you should do likewise.

The second reason why husbands should be considerate and honor their wives, is that wives are equal heirs in the grace of eternal life. Yes, the Bible says that husbands are the leaders, and wives are to submit. However, this in no way implies that wives are somehow second-class citizens in the kingdom of God. Believing wives are just as much heirs of the new heavens and the new earth as their believing husbands are. As Paul says in Galatians, there is no male and female, slave or free, Jew or Greek, for all are one in Christ. Paul is not referring to the roles people play in life, but to their place in the kingdom of God. So, husbands, you need to remember that your wives will not inherit less of the kingdom of God than you will. That means that they are worthy of honor. Peter told us in chapter 2 to honor everyone. That means that wives are certainly included.

As I said last week about wives honoring their husbands in public, the same goes for husbands honoring their wives in public. Husbands, do not make sarcastic comments about your wives in public. Do not cut her down or argue with her in front of other people. Especially do not argue with her in front of the children. The children need to know that you are united in how you are raising your children. Husbands, if you say anything about your wives in public, it should be something that is positive and encouraging and honoring to her. Again, as I look at our community, this is a way in which we fail in many ways. If husbands and wives simply do not care about what the public thinks, they will cut each other down in public. This ought not to be.

There is a goal which these two commands point. Again, to remind ourselves, Peter's two commands here are to live with consideration with your wife (for she is physically weaker than you are), and to honor her (for she is a fellow-heir of eternal life with you). The goal is so that our prayer lives may not be hindered. Peter takes it for granted here that husbands and wives will pray with each other, for each other, and do so often. Husbands, do you pray with your wives? This is extremely important. If your marriage does not include prayer near the very center of it, then something is wrong. Something is in the way. Husbands,

if you don't pray with your wives, it is probably because you are not being considerate enough or honoring your wives enough. Lack of following these commands means that something gets in the way of prayer. After all, it is extremely difficult to pray to God if you are distracted by a rift between you and your wife. There is a horizontal element to a married couple's prayer every bit as important as the vertical element. God should be at the center of every marriage. It is a bit like a three-legged stool. Husband, wife, and God make up the three legs. If there is a rift between two of the three legs of that stool, then the stool will be in bad shape. The benefits, then, of following Peter's exhortations are that the marriage will improve, by God's grace, because prayer, as a means of grace, will be able to accomplish everything that it should accomplish. The marriage itself will be better, because husbands will be making it easy for wives to submit. After all, is it not much easier for a wife to submit to a husband who is kind, compassionate, considerate, sensitive to his wife's needs? Husbands, if you desire that your wives should submit and honor you as head of the households, then follow Peter's instructions here.

One last word here to all married folk, husbands and wives: do not wait for your spouse to make the first move in improving the marriage. You cannot change your spouse, anyway. Only God's grace can change your spouse. You can, however, change yourself. It takes faith to believe that if you change, then God might change your spouse. Of course, you can only change by the grace of God, as well.

For those who are unmarried, these principles of living with consideration next to your neighbors, and honoring them as co-heirs of life can still be applicable to you. Of course, the principles will not work themselves out in quite the same way. Nevertheless, they still apply to you. For those who might be married in the next five or ten years, start putting these principles to work now in your current relationships. Do not think that you will somehow magically be a good husband or a good wife when you get married. These principles are necessary for you to develop at any and all ages. And so we can be considerate of others and their needs. We can love one another. For this is God's will.