

FIRST PETER 3:7 "Okay Guys, This One's For You"

One of the things we noticed last week as we ended our study was that Peter seems to spend much more time addressing the women than he does the men. Six verses for the women and only one for the men.

Of course it is not that Peter was picking on the women. In fact, as we saw last week, because of the condition of the world and its attitude toward women at that time, Peter felt it necessary to spend a little extra time encouraging women to fulfill their role in the marriage relationship.

And before I move on to the men this morning I want to take just a few minutes to make sure we understand how women are to be viewed in this relationship. The idea that women are to be these muffled wall-flowers who aren't allowed to speak unless spoken to is not what Peter intends when speaking of being submissive to their husbands.

The whole idea of being submissive in our text has to do with the wife's role in that marriage. Her role is to compliment her husband and help him fulfill his ministry as husband and father.

The idea of being submissive is simply an acknowledgment that God has given the husband the final authority in that relationship and that the wife needs to submit to the degree that she is willing to go along with what her husband has decided to do before the Lord.

This does not mean that she has no input or that she doesn't have any authority or responsibility in that relationship. For those of you who work at a job where you have a boss, you may have to submit to his or her authority, but if that boss is half-way smart he will delegate some of the responsibilities so that the task is spread out and given to people who are much more able to accomplish the task.

Authority is not necessarily the equivalent to doing everything, as much as it is the responsibility to make sure everything gets done, because that responsibility falls ultimately on one set of shoulders.

It's the same in a marriage. The husband may be responsible before God for all that is to be accomplished in that marriage, but there is no way a husband can do it all. This is one reason Adam was given a help-mate in Eve. She was given to Adam to help him.

She was to submit to his authority, but she was certainly to give input into that relationship as God gave her talents and abilities.

I believe our culture has gone in two different directions to confuse the roles of man and woman in marriage. On the one hand there has been the attitude of keeping the wife “barefoot and pregnant” which is just a derogatory way of suggesting that she needs to be put in her place, which is in the house under lock and key.

In reaction to that unbiblical view we have the other extreme which says the only way a woman will ever be fulfilled is to put her pants on and get out of the house. And by that is meant, she needs to find a career which allows her to use her talents and not be burdened down with a slobbering husband who has more in common with the T.V. than he does with her.

And of course since a career is the most important thing, if the unspeakable should happen and she becomes pregnant then she must do everything possible to get that child into the hands of someone else during the day so she can resume her first responsibility, which is to herself.

Now, I understand that there are cases where women have to be out of the home as someone else watches the children, especially cases where it's a single parent home. But what has happened in many cases, but not all, is that in two parent homes the mom has taken a career so that the life-style they want can be maintained.

And so it's not always a matter of necessity. But that doesn't mean mom can't be working outside the home. But the way God has designed the family mom is very important to her husband and to the children and neither should be neglected for the sake of a career. But that doesn't mean they can't work in harmony.

Turn with me to Pro.31:10-31.....

Proverbs 31:10-31 ¹⁰ An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. ¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. ¹² She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. ¹³ She looks for wool and flax And works with her hands in delight. ¹⁴ She is like merchant ships; She brings her food from afar. ¹⁵ She rises also while it is still night And gives food to her household And portions to her maidens. ¹⁶ She considers a field and buys it; From her earnings she plants a vineyard. ¹⁷ She girds herself with strength And makes her arms strong. ¹⁸ She senses that her gain is good; Her lamp does not go

out at night. ¹⁹ She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hands grasp the spindle. ²⁰ She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out her hands to the needy. ²¹ She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet. ²² She makes coverings for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple. ²³ Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. ²⁴ She makes linen garments and sells *them*, And supplies belts to the tradesmen. ²⁵ Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future. ²⁶ She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. ²⁷ She looks well to the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. ²⁸ Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband *also*, and he praises her, *saying*: ²⁹ "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all." ³⁰ Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *But* a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. ³¹ Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates.

This woman of God is no wall-flower. She takes care of her family in a way that is similar to running a business. She plans everything out with the express purpose of helping her husband and bringing him honor as well as taking care of her children.

She's an entrepreneur. She buys real estate, and from her earnings she plants a vineyard. She's also compassionate to those in her community. She extends her hands to the poor and the needy. She clothes her children and she looks well to the ways of her household.

She's busier than most women today want to be. But the point is not that women clone themselves after this woman, but that women are vital to their family and husband and that when she is sold out to wanting to serve God in that capacity she will have the strength and joy to fulfill her ministry.

And notice the acceptance she receives.

PRO 31:28-31 28 "Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 29 "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." 30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. 31 Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate."

He's not intimidated by his wife, but he trusts her and gives her a great deal of responsibility because he knows that she does it to

please God, and in the process it pleases him and makes him proud.

This is the kind of submission which God desires. A submission which is not under compulsion, but is enjoyed because she delights in pleasing her husband and family and in turn the husband let's her run with it.

But this is the message to husbands. If you are to enable your wife to fulfil her ministry to you and the family don't squash her spirit by trying to dominate in areas where God wants her to soar. Do everything to help her grow in her relationship to Christ and her relationship to you will grow and bloom as well.

But you must understand her and be sensitive to her needs and then meet those needs. This is what Peter says in our text.

1PE 3:7 "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."

Short and to the point. Most guys like it that way. Just give me the facts and don't dress it up with a lot of words. Let's take a look at this verse. "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives..."

The NIV misses some of what is being conveyed in the Greek language here. The Greek could be literally translated "dwelling with them according to knowledge." The NAS comes close to this when it says, "live with your wives in an understanding way."

Dr. Hiebert in his commentary on Peter puts it this way. "All husband-wife relations should be governed by knowledge, a knowledge derived from reason and common sense, as well as an understanding of the Christian principles directing the marriage relationship. That involves the husbands understanding of the wife's desires, goals and frustrations; knowledge of her strengths and weaknesses in the physical, emotional and spiritual realms."

A husband must take the time to understand his wife. Be knowledgeable of what she needs to be the wife God wants her to be. And an essential ingredient to this is to have a knowledge of God's word regarding both your role and hers. Only as you begin to understand her true God-given role will you be able to

effectively minister to her and be thoughtful enough to meet her needs.

And as you understand how they fit into God's scheme of things you will be, as the NIV suggests, more considerate of them. William Barclay gives this insight. "The cruelty which is hardest to bear is often not deliberate but the product of sheer thoughtlessness."

Peter then adds the idea of treating them with respect as the weaker partner, whereas the NAS and the NKJV uses the term weaker vessel, since she is a woman."

This is not a derogatory slur. It's simply an acknowledgment of the truth. Now by weaker, Peter suggests that physically she is not the equivalent to a man. The militant women's movement for years has made the assumption that women are not weaker to men in any way.

I just saw a News-magazine program recently, where scientists and doctors are now coming to an amazing discovery. Women really are different from men. That's a no-brainer and yet the wisdom of the world has been shown to be foolishness once again.

But here Peter is saying that the differences between a man and a woman needs to be taken into consideration, not for exploiting her but in helping her. Suggesting that she is the "weaker" vessel also carries with it the idea that both vessels are weak and frail in this world. She just happens to be the weaker of the two.

But there's another aspect of weakness which should be pointed out and Peter has implied this in the context in verse 6. She is weaker in authority and so she is much more vulnerable to the misuse of that authority by the husband, which is why the husband should be vigilant in being considerate of his wife and her needs as the weaker vessel.

Dr. Grudem in his commentary on Peter points out that the particular word used for woman in verse 7, which the NIV has omitted, is a rare word and can be better translated "the feminine one."

He makes the comment that this word "suggests that Peter looks to the characteristic nature of womanhood or femininity and suggests that a wife's femaleness should itself elicit honor from her husband."

But whether a weak or strong vessel, the term vessels carries with it the idea of lives designed by God for specific reasons. And both vessels in a marriage relationship are to be used in the way God intended to bring glory to Himself in that relationship as their relationship with Him grows. She is a vessel of honor and he is a vessel of honor and both are to see each other in that light.

Peter then brings an important part of the spiritual aspect of this relationship into view. "She is an heir with you of the gracious gift of life... "

Keep in mind what we saw last week as it related to how men saw women in the first century, and how many cultures today see women as less than men in value.

Cultural norms in different parts of the world may relegate women to second class citizens, but not God. They too are able to share in the same eternal inheritance in Christ as men. It was customary, even among Jews in the first century, to view women as less in this spiritual arena. Only men were allowed to participate in certain religious rituals whereas women could only view them from afar.

It carries over even today. Some men have confused their role with their standing before God in Christ as they relate to women in Christ. It's true that in the church some men have a certain role in leadership. But this does not preclude that women are second-class citizens within the church any more than they are second class citizens in the home.

God sees both as precious and beautiful in His sight as they both share equally in the blessings of their salvation. It's when men think they are better than women simply because they are different that trouble starts and a haughty spirit rears its ugly head.

Peter says, "grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life." The NIV uses the word respect. But here that is a weaker translation because as Dr. Hiebert puts it, "one can treat someone with detached, formal respect and yet give no special honor to the person at all."

We are to respect our wives, but like the woman in Proverbs the husband is to give honor for all to see as he lifts her up in a way that shows that she is a very special vessel to him in that marriage.

And you guys will find that as you honor your wives in private, as well as in public, her desire to submit to your authority will be as natural as God intended it to be, because she will want to please you and in doing so she will please God.

Paul also talks of this relationship in marriage and he too has something to say to the husbands.

EPH 5:25-33 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." (Gen. 2:24) 32 This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Since wives are joint-heirs of the Kingdom of God, then a Christian marriage is spiritual in nature and must be nurtured spiritually. Not only are men to live with their wives according to knowledge, they are also to promote the spiritual well-being of their wives by taking the responsibility as the spiritual head.

Paul starts off by saying that husbands are to love their wives even as Christ loved the church. I don't about you but that sounds a lot like giving everything for the sake of your mate whom you love.

In Paul's description of marriage he brings in a very interesting analogy. In fact he gives us the real picture of what marriage is to represent.

EPH 5:32-33 "This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

Marriage is an intimate union where the two become one in a covenantal relationship as they are living with one direction now instead of two separate directions. They are to be moving Christward together.

As we have become united to Christ by faith and are to be loving Him with all of our hearts, souls and minds, we are to be united to our mates and loving them in a way that reflects the love we should have first and foremost for our God.

The problem which both men and women face in a marriage relationship, or any relationship we have with other people in this world, is that we all have a tendency to be selfish and self-centered. This is simply known as sinful.

Because of this, the kind of ideal relationship which God speaks of and wants us to enjoy in Christ is often missed because one or both parties are more concerned with self than in wanting to be loving servants for one another.

The picture Paul gives is that if we're willing to lay our lives down for each other and accomplish the task God has given us, then that relationship can be used to accomplish far reaching goals which extend beyond the immediate family. And in the process God is glorified as He is seen working in the lives of husband and wife as they both submit to Him.

Peter doesn't use the word submission with the husband because in his role the husband doesn't submit to his wife's authority because that has been given to him. But it must be implied, as we read the whole counsel of God's word, that the husband must be submitting to his head who is Christ.

1CO 11:3 "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."

If a husband is not loving his wife as he ought then he is not submitting to Christ; he is in fact misusing his authority and not honoring his wife as a joint-heir of God's Kingdom. And when this is happening the husband runs the risk of having his prayers hindered, according to our text.

This is an interesting thing. What does it mean to have your prayers hindered? Well, whatever it means it certainly has a negative connotation. And it's the direct result of not honoring your wife as a fellow-heir and dealing with her in an understanding way as with a weaker vessel.

This is Peter's point. And he is saying that it has some effects which are spiritual in nature. Whenever we talk about prayer it is assumed we're talking about communication with our God. Peter is saying that wrong behavior toward your wife, (and the principle will certainly apply to other areas of life as well), will affect your fellowship with God.

In this case prayer is hindered. How it is hindered is what we need to see. First of all the word hindered in the Greek is *ekkopto* and it's a military metaphor which Dr. Hiebert brings out as meaning, "to cut in on, throw obstacles in the way or cut up the road so that normal movement is impossible."

This is something the enemy would try to do to thwart normal communications and movement between lines. And what Peter is suggesting is that this hindering is one way which the enemy uses for the purpose of cutting off normal communications between men and God. But it's because of sin on the person's part that brings this about.

In fact it's interesting to see something similar in the case of Job and his friends who assumed that Job had sinned against God and therefore was receiving the brunt of God's judgment.

JOB 42:8 "So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

The implication is that Job, because of his seeking after God, was in constant fellowship with the Lord and these friends of Job's needed the prayers of Job to go up to God and be answered. In other words, 'because of your rebellious hearts your ability to pray according to My will is hindered.'

This is the problem with a lot of people. Selfishness will get in the way of seeking God's will. God will not listen to that unless He desires to use even our own rebellious wills to His glory, as He did with Israel when they prayed for an earthly King instead of trusting the King of kings for their leadership.

Their prayer was answered, but it was in the form of discipline instead of the blessing they could have received if they had sought His will in the matter and then obeyed His will.

Peter implies the same thing here. In fact two things are implied. 1) Natural outcomes for disobedience and 2) the supernatural outcomes for disobedience.

Let's look at the first. When we are not seeking God's way and walking in God's way, as in the case of the husband and wife as the husband is not honoring her, there is a natural outcome which follows.

His desire to pray to God begins to wane. In other words, if you're rebelling against God your spiritual desires become weak until you're willing to repent.

The desire to pray humbly is hindered. Another natural outworking is that the ability for the husband to pray with his wife is limited, especially when the wife feels the husband is mistreating her. She is not going to want to come together with, what she feels to be a hypocritical encounter towards God, with her husband.

William Barclay quotes Biggs in saying that "The sighs of the injured wife come between the husbands prayers and God's hearing. Here is a great truth. Our relationships with God can never be right if our relationships with our fellow-men are wrong. It is when we are at one with each other that we are one with Him."

I would invert that last phrase and add that it is when we are at one with God that we are at one with each other. Sometimes people get the idea that because I'm having problems with other people that that will affect my fellowship with God. That is true, but the root of the problem lies in the fact that if you were loving God above all you would be loving your neighbor as yourself.

When we have people problems that we play a part in creating, it's indicative that we are having a God problem where we are not living according to His will and submitting humbly before His presence.

But there's a second and related supernatural consequence to having our prayers hindered when sin is placed before love. Dr. Wayne Grudem puts it this way. "The hindering of prayers is a form of God's fatherly discipline, which Heb.12:3-11 reminds us is 'for our good' and is given to those whom God loves....

....So concerned is God that Christian husbands live in an understanding and loving way with their wives, that He interrupts

his relationship with them when they are not doing so. No Christian husband should presume to think that any spiritual good will be accomplished by his life without an effective ministry of prayer....

....And no husband may expect an effective prayer life unless he lives with his wife in an understanding way, bestowing honor on her. To take time to develop and maintain a good marriage is God's will; it is serving God; it is a spiritual activity pleasing in His sight."

Of course this is not limited to husbands. Wives, singles, husbands, people of all sorts need to understand the importance of humbling themselves before God and obeying Him according to His word. As James says, let's not be hearers only of the word who deceive ourselves, but let's be doers of the word.

But you know, the beauty of how our heavenly Father loves us, even in discipline, is to drive us back into His loving arms. That's what He wants; for us to come running back and confess that we've messed up and trust that He forgives.

I don't know about you but I'm very thankful for God's grace and forgiveness when I mess up and I stand on His promise as I find it in John's first epistle.

1JO 2:1-2 "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

He may have to get our attention periodically so that we'll flee back to Him, but as His children, the sheep of His pasture, He will never leave or forsake us and He will do everything to make sure our relationship with Him will grow and that in the process our appreciation and thanks will grow as well.

It all comes down to trusting that He is a God, who not only will take care of us here, but has every intention of bringing us home to be with Him forever. May we never think we've arrived when it comes to growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Stay humble and stay close to Christ. He will stay close to you.

And your relationship with Him will grow and your relationship with your spouse will bloom as you both fulfill His will in your lives in the power of the Spirit of God in the truth of His word.