

Following Christ as a Husband

1 Peter 3:7 (09/18/16)

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1 Peter 3:7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Men, glad to see you showed up for your hammering this morning! We're going to get bloody and bruised this morning. Remember Rocky? Creed may have beaten him to a pulp, but who do we cheer for? Listen, your wives are here to love you and bless you with their gentle and quiet spirits. They want to do you good. But we've got some learnin' to do. You may have the sweetest wife possible. Don't take her for granted. Or you may be in a situation where your wife creates a real trial for you. If you take this verse to heart and by the grace of God apply it in your life, you will not only please God, but you will probably have a wife full of appreciation and love in return.

1 Peter 3:7 is one of the memory verses for the future grooms in our premarital counseling course. And it may be the most important verse for them. I try to hunt down the groom on the wedding day before the ceremony and ask him to quote it. And I threaten him if he can't, we won't go through with the wedding! I actually asked one poor victim to quote it impromptu right during the ceremony. I'm glad to report he came through with flying colors!

Now husbands and aspiring husbands, I want you to memorize this verse. Even if you think you can't memorize verses, I know you can. You can remember who plays quarterback for the Bears and who the Eagles traded to the Vikings and all the different models of pistols and bullets and some of you can name every different 2016 model of Chevy. So you can memorize this verse! Now, let's all read 1 Peter 3:7 aloud together, thinking about the words as we read.

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Husbands, some time ago you entered into a covenant of companionship with your wife. You vowed to love and cherish her "til death do you part." That was easy. The work starts after the wedding. That's when God really starts using your spouse to sanctify you and hopefully make you more like Christ. That's what 1 Peter 3:7 is all about. This verse gives seven hammers or seven principles that if you as a husband apply them, you will not only please God, but you will so please your wife that she'll thank God for giving her such an amazingly loving and caring man as a husband. Are you ready?

#1 Your pattern - No matter what your wife is like, God called you to follow Christ as your pattern – "likewise." Peter is taking us back again to Christ as the one we are called to follow no matter what difficulties we face in this life, even a difficult spouse. Christ suffered unjustly and trusted Himself to God. Do husbands ever suffer in marriage? Are wives ever disobedient? Well, they are sinners. Marriage is one sinner marrying another sinner, so yes, there are some wives who are tough to live with. Abe Lincoln was married to a woman most of us would rather have a root canal than continue living with. Abe wasn't the most loving and romancing husband, but Mary was a case. She often flew into rages, complained endlessly about their poverty, way overspent their budget, and abused the servants. She was intensely jealous of any attractive females that got close to Abe and one time she chased him with a knife. She was proud of her elegant neck and grieved Mr. Lincoln greatly by how she displayed her person and fine clothes. But Lincoln persevered "For better or for worse." I'm sure your wife isn't even close to a Mary Todd Lincoln, but you have Christ as your pattern regardless of how she treats you.

God will use your wife to show you your sin and selfishness and drive you to Christ. God will use your marriage to help you grow and change and become more like your Savior. Philippians 2:3-5 says, "Do

nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another (*your wife*) as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others (*your wife*). Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” We are intensely selfish and need Christ’s forgiveness and Christ’s power to keep Christ’s way of thinking in us. He is your pattern.

#2 Responsibility - You are responsible for loving, leading and learning your wife – “*You husbands.*”

Husbands have three major responsibilities in their marriage: love your wife, lead your wife, and learn your wife. Those responsibilities are given in Ephesians 5. Ephesians 5:25 says, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and laid down His life for her!” When you got married you promised to love her. You say, “That’s just the problem; we just don’t have any love for each other anymore.” Like Jay Adams says, there’s only one thing to do; you’ll just have to learn to love one another! And learning to love each other begins with you the husband. You are the most responsible for love in your marriage. You are to be the lover, the one to initiate love, and we’re not talking about sex here and we’re not talking about bossing her around. We’re talking about nourishing and cherishing and providing and protecting and honoring and esteeming and appreciating and thanking and helping and changing diapers at 3 am and, well, you can fill in the blanks. And you do all this loving leadership with a gentle, humble spirit, like Jesus who said, “I am gentle and humble in heart.” Jesus never abused or mistreated a woman, do you know that? He totally esteemed women as they came to him, even those who had really messed up. Love your wife and lead her as Christ loves and leads the church. You must be the one who leads the family to church and leads in prayer in your home. Any husband who sits out in the car beeping for the wife to hustle up while she’s inside getting five children ready needs a good thrashing.

#3 Time - You must plan to spend a lot of time with your wife - “*Live with her.*” Before you got married, you couldn’t wait to be with her. There was a pretty big snow storm in our area when Carolyn and I were dating. There wasn’t anything to do at my house and I kept thinking how much I’d enjoy being with Carolyn, so I got in my car and began the 15-mile journey toward her house through the snow. About two miles from her house I came to a large drift over the road. What did I do? Turn around and go home? Are you kidding? I wanted to be with her, so I walked through snow and rain and hail and tornadoes and earthquakes to spend time with her. That’s what living with your wife implies. You are going to spend time with your wife. Some guys spend a lot of unnecessary time at work, just to avoid being home with her. You might say, “I’m fine when I’m at work. It’s not until I get home that the battle begins.” It’s time to consider what God is saying to you.

God says live with her. Give her your attention. You may have to give up some stuff you like to do in order to be with her. John Wesley traveled 250,000 miles on horseback and preached 40,000 sermons. He married a widow named Mary against the counsel of his brother Charles, as well as others. He declared he would not preach one sermon less or travel one day less after he was married. His marriage was a total disaster. Both were wrong, but John Wesley grievously offended 1 Peter 3:7. She was intensely jealous of the attention ladies gave him. He was gone for weeks and she accused him of adultery and called down on him “all the curses from Genesis to Revelation.” Sadly, they broke up after a number of years.

“Live with” means to dwell in the same house together, but it’s more than just using the same hot water heater, AC, and refrigerator. Living together means talking together too, without distractions like phones and TVs. Ladies, we men are easily distracted, but no excuses are acceptable. Here’s a wife trying to have a conversation with her husband and he’s distracted by the TV. You can tell and she can tell as his eyes keep being drawn like a magnet to the TV that he’s not listening. So she hits the mute button and he gives her more attention, but watch his eyes as they slowly drift toward that TV. That’s when she hits the off button. “Now, do I have your attention?”

How are we doing, men? Any bloodletting yet? God will use your marriage to hammer you into shape. And if you’re paying attention and wanting to please God, you will need Jesus to forgive you over and over, because you’re not going to get this right, ever. Hopefully you have a very forgiving and forbearing,

merciful wife, but don't presume on her. Hopefully she'll stick it out with you. And you'll need the power of the Spirit of God in your life to overcome your selfishness and to empower you to love her and lead her.

#4 Understanding - You must spend the rest of your marriage studying and learning your wife – “an understanding way.” God says you must understand your wife. You must be a learner of your wife. When you married her you entered into a lifelong course of study called “Wifeology.” You can't say you can't understand a woman, because God says you must live with her in an understanding way. And this is what makes it exciting. Once you think you understand what she likes, she may pull the feminine prerogative card and change her mind. She loved Mint Chocolate last week, but this week it's Decadent Chocolate. This is one way God keeps you on your toes and helps you to grow.

So how do you learn about your wife? What do you need to do to understand her? Observe her. Listen closely. Ask her questions. Hear her heart. Take notes. What does she really enjoy? What makes her smile? What makes her afraid? What zaps her energy? What makes her sad? What makes her light-hearted? How much do you know about her? What's her shoe size? Is there something she'd really like? Go get it, do it, take her, buy it, build it, plant it! You have to be alert to her weaknesses, fears, hopes, desires, viewpoints.

What about her theology? What does she think about God? Is she an infralapsarian? Does she accept the doctrines of grace? What about definite atonement? Some of you may say, “She knows more theology than I'll ever know.” Thank God for that. And ladies, be careful how you use your knowledge. One author said a Christian woman with a deeper grasp on God's Word will carefully show due respect to her husband's wisdom, though it be less. We knew a couple in Winona Lake while attending seminary. She was a real sharpie; he was quite a bit duller. She taught college level science classes; he was struggling with painting houses. But when they were together, you'd never know the difference. There was a love and tenderness between them and she always treated him with great respect.

Pay attention to your wife. She loves to know you are even thinking about her. Kenny Rogers sang, “Buy her a rose, call her from work, open the door for her, what would it hurt? Tell her you love her by the look in your eyes.” How's she doing with the children? Does she need help? Don't even ask her, just get up and put the dishes away. She's tired. She's not feeling well. You be the one to sit in the bathroom with the kiddos while they play in the tub those nights. Or if she needs something from the store, offer to get it. Men, there's no one more important in this world than your wife. No one. Understand her!

#5 Tenderness - You must treat your wife with tenderness and care – “as with someone weaker, since she is a woman.” It all started back there at conception and the distribution of the xx chromosomes. She's a woman. God doesn't mean she's weaker mentally or spiritually or even emotionally, although the ladies tend to be more sensitive. You don't talk to ladies like you do to men. But she's not weaker in terms of pain tolerance. Guess who has to bring all these babies into the world. There's a reason they are called labor “pains.” Men couldn't handle it. The population would dry up!

But your wife has an invisible tag on her: “Fragile, handle with care.” Most of you guys could probably take your wife in arm wrestling. How about planking? She's physically more tender. She bruises more easily. Her entire anatomy is different. You've got 40% and more muscle; she's got 23%. She's different internally in all her organs. She's a lady, she's a female, and as Adam said, she's “Ishah,” such a soft, delicate word. She's weaker and you're her protector. When you're lying in bed and suddenly you hear the back door squeak open at 2 AM, you don't go, “Sally, someone's out there. Go see what's going on.” You don't even hand her your gun and send her out there. You are to protect her! You are her provider and her protector. You love her enough to lay down your life for her!

Guys, your wife is different than you are in every way – even down to the hormones running around her body and yours. Calvin wrote, “The weakness of the female sex ought to make us not to be too rigid and severe towards our wives.” Any husband who browbeats, bullies, verbally assaults, or physically manhandles a woman, any woman, let alone his wife, is truly deplorable, which means terrible, awful, appalling, dreadful, disgusting, shameful, pathetic. The cultures that mistreat women because they are women are shameful. Jesus never mistreated women. He protected them and honored them.

B. B. Warfield was an esteemed theologian on the faculty of Princeton University at the end of the 19th century. In 1852 he married a local girl from Lexington, Kentucky, named Annie. He took his new bride to Germany for a combined honeymoon and study abroad. One day they were walking in the Harz Mountains and were overtaken by a severe thunderstorm. Somehow that experience so severely affected Annie that she never recovered and was more or less an invalid the rest of her life. Dr. Warfield, the brilliant and godly theologian, brought Annie back to Princeton and spent the rest of their 39 years of marriage caring for her. He was rarely absent from her side more than two hours. She required his constant attention and care and he gave it to her. Here was a 1 Peter 3:7 husband.

#6 Honor - You must highly honor your wife as one of God's highly valued children – “and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.” The phrase literally means, “assigning her precious value.” She is one of God's chosen children. He loves her as His child and tells you to highly honor her. Treat her like a lady! Open the door for her. Help her with her coat. Pull out the chair for her. Do I always do these things? No, but I'm learning, I'm learning! We've only been married 47 years.

As she gets older, honor her even more. She may not be able to physically keep up with you. My dad was a fast walker, as am I. My mom was a hearty soul (she still water skied at age 70), but as she aged, she slowed down, especially in her walk. I'm sure my dad would have loved to walk faster, but he thoughtfully slowed his pace to stay by her side. You can honor your wife by considering her needs as she ages.

This phrase “show her honor” is in the present tense. Keep on showing her honor, not just once in a blue moon or when you have ulterior motives, but every day. Never stop honoring her. Honor her all the way to the grave. Build her up. Encourage her. Honor her in how you speak to her – your words and your tone. Ephesians 4:29 says to bridle your heart and your tongue – let no cutting, critical, judgmental, belittling, slighting, contemptuous word fly out of your mouth, but only words that build her up and give her grace. Never shut her out.

I sat in a counseling case with Pastor Goode of Faith Baptist Church back in the '80s. Nellie had married 74 year-old Basil after her first husband died and things didn't go well at all as expressed in her grievances. “I feel like I'm getting the low end of the deal. He just clams up and never tells me any of his plans. He's been spending and hiding things from me. I just want to be treated right, as a partner, like I am something. He makes me feel like I don't know anything. He's always telling me I'm wrong. He made me lose confidence. Whatever we do, he crosses me.” Do you hear sirens and see red lights flashing here? She had her issues, but Mr. 74 year-old had a lot of learning to do about giving his wife honor.

Nothing is more important than honoring your wife. Honor her with heartfelt words that express thanks and appreciation and affirmation. “This soup is delicious! You look really nice in that outfit. I appreciate how you study your Bible and raise our kids. Thanks for doing the laundry week after week. I so appreciate how you keep our home. I am so thankful for you.” He who finds a wife finds good and obtains favor from the Lord. Proverbs 31 says her husband rises up and praises her. “I couldn't have married a better person. You fit me perfectly. I thank God for you!” Men, hold your wife in highest honor. She belongs to God and He doesn't like people mistreating His children.

7 Pray - You must grow in becoming a 1 Peter 3:7 husband so your relationship with God can grow – “So that your prayers will not be hindered.” God says, “If you don't love her and lead her and learn her and honor her, don't be talking to me. I'm not listening!” If you don't honor your wife, you cannot love God and God says your prayer line to God is snipped – cut off, like cutting off lines of communication in war.

This implies that you are to be praying, praying for your wife and with your wife as well as leading in family worship time. If your love has gone cool, ask God to fill your heart with fresh, new love for her. Begin obeying His commands in 1 Peter 3:7 and you will find a new genuine appreciation for her.

Men, I hope you have enough to chew on here. You may find plenty of logs sticking out of your eyes in light of this verse. Ask God to help you identify them. Ask yourself what it would be like to live with you.

Would that be a happy experience? Then bring your whole bruised, bloody, sinful and selfish self to the cross of Jesus. Ask forgiveness and empowerment to bring the greatest joy possible into the life of that dear lady who entrusted herself to you so many years or just months ago!