

Suffering in Marriage (for Husbands)

1 Peter 3:7

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 8, 2017

Well, you can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Peter. And as you're doing that this morning, we're in a series called, "The Suffering Church," where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. We were out of town last week at Family Camp and enjoying a time of worship and celebration together, but this week, we're back to the real world, back to normal life and talking about suffering because you can't stay in the woods forever, amen? Eventually, you got to come back to the real world, normal life.

Beck Weathers was a pathologist from Texas who was part of a team that climbed Mount Everest in 1996. You might have heard of this catastrophe, but they were caught in an avalanche on the way down the mountain. And as a result, eight people died and a dozen were injured and trapped on top. And Weathers himself had his nose amputated and five fingers on his left hand amputated and part of his feet from frostbite. But in one of his books he made an interesting point, that in climbing Mount Everest, most people die on the way down the mountain not on the way up. Most people get in trouble on the descent on the way back from camp. And I think the Christian life is like that. I've been thinking about that this week, coming back from a time of Family Camp. You guys know what this is like. You hear a wonderful sermon on prayer from Carl Hargrove and you say, "I'm gonna do that. I'm gonna pray like that." And you get up every morning at 6:00 AM. You get into your prayer closet, find some time alone and you do it for about what, about a week? And then it kind of dies on the way down the mountain. You guys know what I'm talking about? Does anybody else experience that? Or you hear a wonderful message on parenting and you say, "I'm gonna do that. I'm not going to do the NASA countdowns." You guys remember that, "three, two, one?" "I'm not gonna do that. I'm going to cut out my inconsistencies. I'm going to stop exasperating my children." And that lasts about until you come home and have to pick up trains off the floor on Sunday night. See, you die on the way down. Everything's fine when you're in the woods, it's hard coming back. That's real life. I grew up in a church where we try to do this. We kind of lived on a mountain top, tried to, anyway. And everything was about getting worked up into some kind of spiritual high, it was just like a drug you had to have almost. And I remember even as a teenager, listening to the same songs over and over again on my CD player trying to get close to God, trying to work up my emotions or going to camps and conferences and doing the same thing. And what they never told me, at least in the church I grew up in, was what do you do when the emotions don't come? What do you do when the song just doesn't do it for you the 10th or 20th time, when life is normal, when there's nothing high about it? I've got nothing against Christian movies but I think they can be bad at this. They show you what to do when you're getting shot at or chasing bad guys, but they don't show you what to do when you're picking up your kid's toys on the floor, living a normal life. In one of the movies I saw recently, the main character saved a girl from a burning building, he went through a mental breakdown and got into a high-speed chase with police. I've never done any of that. I watched that movie and I'm like, "That's great for that guy, but I just get up in the morning and go to work." And the question I want us to wrestle with today is, "Well, what do you do when you just have to get up in the morning and go to work? How are you supposed to honour God when you're back to reality, back to normal life?" And that brings us to

the book of 1 Peter. 1 Peter is about honouring God on the way down the mountain. It's about honouring Him in the real world. When things are normal, they're boring or when you're suffering for the faith, there's nothing fun about it. If you look in 1 Peter 2:21-25, just to kind of build up to our text for today, Peter writes this. He says, "For you have been called," in chapter 2:21.

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth"; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and 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 were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Verse 21 says, "For Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example to follow," meaning, Christ suffered so you could follow Him. That was why He did it. That was the point of His coming to earth, dying on the cross, was so you could imitate how He handled all that. Maybe to look at it this way, before He started His ministry, Jesus lived a very normal existence, so you could imitate that, or at least learn from it. In fact, you can make the argument that Jesus' life was so normal that from the time He was born until the time he turned 30, we don't know anything about Him. We know one event from His birth until He started His ministry. Apparently, it wasn't very exciting, or at least it wouldn't make a good Christian movie, maybe. He was very normal, you can add to this that He had a very normal job, or a low paying job. He came from a normal town. He was so normal that when one of the disciples heard the Messiah had come from Nazareth, what did he say? He said, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" He had a normal family life. He was single. He had a normal appearance. Isaiah said, "He had no stately form or majesty." Which means that if you saw Jesus in a photograph, you wouldn't have known who He was. He would have looked like everyone else. But the point Peter is making here is that since Christ went through all of that, you can go through it too. Since He had a normal life, and honoured God, and committed no sin, and uttered no threats, you can learn from His example.

Especially in you're suffering, that's what this passage is about. When your times are hard, you can learn from your Saviour. You can say it this way, if Jesus can go through the cross, then He can go to work with you on Monday mornings, you'll be fine. If He can face the wrath of God, then He can face whatever you're dealing with at work, whatever you're dealing with at home. It'd be the easiest thing in the world to Him.

But the point is that Jesus is all you need to live the Christian life. You don't need another high, you don't need another emotional experience, you don't need to wait until the camp rolls around next year. I remember as a teenager just going through all of my young life in church waiting for the next camp or retreat, because that's what everything was built on. Peter says you don't have to do that. You have a Shepherd and Guardian of your souls now.

Which leads to our passage for this morning, starting in chapter 3, Peter ties all this into the subject of marriage. And he says that Jesus is all you need in marriage. When you come back down the mountain in your married life, with your husband or with your wife, Jesus is all you

need there. He's all you need when the romance dies and the spark fizzles out. He's all you need when you can't find the birds and the bees, you don't know where they went. You heard a song about it and now they're gone. He's all you need then.

Which is important to mention because I told you last time, that four out of ten marriages in Canada end in divorce. I think in the States it's higher than that. And three out of ten people here in British Columbia live alone. They don't want to get married or they're not married. You can add to this that according to some polls, some people in our province would rather be with their dog than with their spouse. I don't know if this is true or not, but it may not come as a surprise. According to the Global News website, a new poll found that 54% of British Columbians admitted to having days when they loved their dogs more than their spouse. In fact, if they got into a fight, they would rather keep their dog. Which is tragic because that totally disagrees with the Word of God. You've probably heard this before, but the Bible says marriage is a good thing. Proverbs says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing." Not a bad thing, but a good thing, a wonderful thing. Better than a dog, better than a pet, better than anything. It says, "A prudent wife is from the Lord." God gave her to you. She's a gift. The end of Proverbs says, "An excellent wife who can find? She is worth far more than jewels." Other passages say, "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband."

And it's because of this that Malachi says, "I hate divorce, says the Lord God Almighty." There aren't too many places in Scripture where God says, "I hate something." There's a few but just a few. And this is one of them. God says, "I hate divorce. I hate it when couples split apart. I hate it when people love their dogs more than their wives, their pets more than their husbands. It makes Me furious," God says. Because marriage is good. He designed it that way. But the question I want to ask you this morning is, what do you do when marriage doesn't feel good? What do you do when you think that you would rather keep the dog than your spouse? What do you do when the romance dies? Well let's talk about it this morning.

A friend of mine once said, "The Christian life can be like a roller coaster. You go up and you go back down again, up and down." You hear a great sermon and then you get back to real life and go down. Or you hear that great song and you're up here and then ... Marriage can be that way. Your wife gives you a kiss and you go straight up and then you guys have a conversation and, boom, you know? Or your husband says a sweet word to you and you go up, and then he keeps talking and, "Yeah, yeah." It's like, "You just stop right there." With Jesus, my friend said, this is interesting, he said, "With Him you can go up and stay up." And what it means is there's still ups and downs but they're up here. Does that make sense? They're not down here. It levels off a little bit. The highs are not too high, the lows are not too low.

But how do you get there? How do you think that way? Well, let's talk about that. If you're taking notes this morning, in 1 Peter 3:7, I want to give you some ways to suffer well in your marriage. The outline's very simple, it kind of piggy backs off what we talked about last time. Here's some ways to suffer well in your marriage, particularly as it relates to husbands. Last time we talked about wives and how this relates to them. And if you missed that, you can go online and listen. But for this week, here are some ways for husbands to do this. And the first one is this: learn how to live with your wives. I'm gonna explain that a little more as we go, but learn how to live with your wives. Learn how to have relationship with her and do life with her. Learn

how to be one flesh and not total strangers. Don't be ships that pass in the night. You kiss each other on the way out the door, and that's the only time you see each other. Don't be that way. Don't have all your conversations on social media. That's not a good way to do marriage. Have life together, the whole thing. If you notice in verse 7, it starts off with this, "You husbands in the same way," Peter says, "live with your wives."

That phrase, in the same way, points back to all Peter said so far in verses 1 through 6. So if you want to look up in verse one, we'll kind of read all of this just to dive into verse 7, but verse 1, he says,

1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be merely external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

And then he says, "You husbands, in the same way, live with your wives." Husbands are to live with their wives in the same way that wives do all these other things. In other words, you do it out of submission to God. That's the point of this passage. All of this is done out of reverence and worship and submission to Him. Wives submit to their husbands and win them by their behaviour and follow Sarah's example out of worship to God, and you husbands live with your wives in the same way. It's a religious commitment. If you're a believer, you have to do this. This is non-optional for you.

This was a strange thing to say in the first century. Because in the first century, husbands had no obligations to their wives. They weren't expected to do anything for them. In fact, I looked it up and one Athenian spokesman named Demosthenes said that, "We have prostitutes for the sake of pleasure, we have concubines for the sake of cohabitation, and we have wives for the purpose of bearing children." And that's really it. That's all he said. That was the purpose of wives in the first century to the lost people. Another one said, "If we want to defeat our enemies, we will send them our wives and they will nag them to death." It's awful. Another one said, "A silent woman is a gift from the Lord," which is terrible. And Peter says that is not Biblical. It's not godly. He says not only do you need to talk to your wives, husbands, but you need to live with them. Not only do you need to not send them away, but you need to be as close to them as possible.

The word live here is *oikos* in Greek, which means "with the house". And the idea is you and your wife live together with the house, with the home. You're both part of the same entity. You're intimate and close to each other. You stay nearby, not far away. And I think this is helpful to mention, because it seems like every time there's a problem in marriage, it starts right here. The husband drifts away, or the wife drifts away. They're both in a world all by themselves. I can't say every time, but it seems like every time I've seen a conflict in marriage, it's because she

nags him and he neglects her. She tells him what to do and bosses him around and he runs away and hides in the basement and watches hockey. It's not always the way it works, but oftentimes. And Peter says, husbands, you don't do that. You don't run away and hide in the basement. You don't cut out and leave your wife no matter how bad it gets. No matter how nasty the fight and no matter how hard. You stay in there and work it out.

It's kind of telling for Peter to say this. He was one of the only apostles, maybe the only apostle who actually had a wife. And you read the story of Peter in the Gospels. You could tell he was not an easy person to live with, I'm sure. And I'm sure it caused some friction in his marriage. And Peter says, "Here's what I'm supposed to do. Here's how I'm supposed to handle this." He says as a husband. By the way, the story goes, Church history tells us, this is not in Scripture, but Church history says, Peter was crucified right after watching his wife be crucified. They were together in everything. And it seems like she never left his side. "That's how you're supposed to do it," Peter says.

A pastor I know once came across a couple who'd been married for 40 years and he asked them what was their secret? And the answer was kind of sad. The husband said, "Well, it's easy. She watches TV in her room and I watch TV in mine." "You don't do that," Peter said. You may have heard about the guy who bought his wife a ticket to Thailand for their 25th wedding anniversary. And he said that for their 50th, he would go pick her up. You don't do that either. That reminds me of the three rings of marriage. Have you guys heard of the three rings of marriage? Engagement ring, wedding ring, and suffering. You guys heard it? No? Okay, the bad jokes just keep ... Don't laugh at my jokes 'cause I'll keep telling you one. That's the wrong attitude. Wrong attitude. Stuart Scott says ... He says, "Our relationship with our wives should be one of continual, ongoing living with them. It's not something we do once or twice or that we do only when we're newlyweds." A lot of people do a great job of this when they start off, but it just over time goes away. But he says, "We're to be doing this all the time for all our married days." And he says,

Based on what Peter is saying here, every husband is responsible to do this by knowing his wife. If we're ignorant of her, we can't live with her the way God intends us to. If we don't understand where she's coming from, we can't be united as one.

Guys, it all boils down to this, you have to talk to your wives. Big pause in the room. Crickets chirping. You have to talk to your wives, and hear them out, and hear what they say, and understand where they're coming from. You can't watch TV in two separate rooms. You can't go live your life while she lives hers. And if you're struggling with this, I looked it up and a Reader's Digest came up with some questions you can ask your wife to get to know her better. I actually thought these were pretty good. You can ask her, "What frightens you and what excites you? How is our relationship going and how can we make it better? Is there anything you're struggling with right now?" Those are all good things to ask. You can follow this up spiritually with questions like, "How is your walk with God? What excites you about ministry? What sins are you struggling with?" But you have to communicate with each other. "Communication" - the word actually means "sharing information". You've gotta share information with each other. You have to share life with each other. You can't go through life in silence.

And that leads to the next point, let me just dive on into the next part of this, and that is this. Not only should you live with your wives, but husbands, you should study your wives. It just piggybacks off what we just said. Learn how to live with your wife and the next way to suffer well in marriage, learn how to study your wife. You need to figure out who she is. We already talked about this a little bit with the last point, but men and women are different, and that's a good thing. But with those differences come misunderstandings. And to clear that up, men, you have to study your wives. You can't be like the book that said, "Here's everything I ever knew about my wife," and you open it and there's nothing in there. You can't do that. You can't be like the guy who got the silent treatment from his wife. So he came home one day and he said, "Hey honey, things are going great between us. Let's go out and celebrate." And you can't be that way.

Peter says in verse 7, he says, "You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way." That phrase, "In an understanding way," literally means "according to knowledge". A husband should live with his wife according to knowledge. Again, according to information; information that he might have to go and dig out; information that he might have to go draw out of her.

This ... The word "knowledge" here it's an all-inclusive term, it could really mean anything. It could mean he should know what makes her happy, what makes her sad. He should know what she likes to do, what she doesn't like to do. He should know what she enjoys in ministry, what she doesn't - just all-inclusive; anything. That word could refer to knowing other things, like the Bible. The husband should know Scripture and how that applies to marriage.

He's to be the leader of the home, the spiritual leader, and that means he's got to have the resources to do that in God's Word. I've talked with wives who ... They can't go home and ask their husbands questions about the Bible because they know more about the Bible than their husbands do. Men, you don't want that to be the case. You want to be someone your wife can come home and ask questions to and understand Scripture. But the point here is you take an active interest in her. You find out who she is and what God wants her to do in His word, and you put the two together.

There's a lot of reasons for this. One simple reason is that people change, don't they? They don't stay the same forever. And to keep up with the changes, you have to be constantly learning your wives. I once heard a man say he feels like he's been married to seven different women in one because his wife keeps changing, not in a bad way, but in a good way. And every time something big happens in life, she changes. Gets married, there's a change. Has kids, there's a change. Older kids, there's another change. Grandkids, so and forth. It's a constant growing process, which means it's a constant learning process. The learning is never over.

In June of 2005, Percy and Florence Arrowsmith of England set the record for the longest marriage in history. It was 82 years. That's one flesh being married 82 years. And they were asked, "How did you do that? How did you stay married so long?" And their answer was so simple. They said, "Friendship." They said, "We were friends. We enjoyed being together." They said, "You can't be married this long to a stranger. You can't be married to someone this long that you don't know." And it's the same thing what Peter's saying here. If you want to be married for a long time, you have to be friends with your wife. If you want to keep it together for 40 or 50 or

80 years, you have to love each other and know each other. You can't be outsiders to the relationship. You shouldn't have to go to other people to understand your spouse.

Now let me tie this into the area of suffering for a moment. People can really change when they suffer, it can really do a number on them. And so, men, if your wife is suffering, you have to really ramp this up. It's interesting that Peter says this here, if you go to ... Don't turn there but if you look in Ephesians 5, you see directions for husbands and wives there. And as far as I can recall this is not in that passage, this is here in 1 Peter because this is about suffering. And when you suffer with someone it requires a lot of learning, a lot of questions, a lot of patience, a lot of time, a lot of understanding. It's kind of sad to think of it this way but, it's been said that the number one reason men commit adultery is for sex, for physical pleasure and the number one reason women commit adultery is for companionship. They don't feel like their husband gets them. They don't feel like he understands and so they want to run off and find someone who does and then what Peter is saying in this passage is you don't ever want to give your wife a reason to do that, not to justify her sin if she does. You don't ever want to give her any cause to find companionship elsewhere. Study your wives and let them know you're trying, sometimes the effort means more than the accomplishment with your wife. Is that fair to say? Amen? Sometimes they just want to know you're trying.

And that leads to the next way to suffer well in marriage, and that is learn how to honour your wives. Live with your wives, learn how to study your wives and honour your wives, even when she doesn't honour you back. That's the idea here, if you remember from a couple weeks ago we looked at the passage on wives and Peter's going through that whole section talking about if your husband doesn't do the right thing, wives you still have to respond the right way. And he lays that out for you. And chapter 3, verses 1 through 6, and kind of with that backdrop, he gets into verse 7 and he says the same thing to husbands essentially. If your wife doesn't respond to you the right way, you've still got to do the right thing. Sin does not change the roles in marriage. The husband is in sin, the wife still has to be the wife and if the wife is in sin, the husband still has to be the husband. And Peter says when there is conflict, this is what you're supposed to do, you honour her, you respect her.

Verse 7 goes on to say, "You husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker." I told you last time, the word "weaker" there, it's not an insult, it's actually a compliment. The word is *skeuos* in Greek, which means a weaker vessel, or a weaker piece of pottery. And the idea here is that a weaker piece of pottery is more expensive than a tougher piece of pottery. Fine china's more expensive than regular china. You don't put the sticker "Fragile, Handle with Care," on a piece of junk. You do it on something that's valuable. And husbands should treat their wives this way Peter says, as something valuable. "Don't rough her up with your words," he says, "Don't bully her around with your tone, handle with care."

When you're going through a hard time in marriage and you're suffering, or things are hard, I think it's common for both people to lose their temper and to say things they shouldn't say. But husbands just kind of say it louder, don't we? They both get mad but, one's kind of like a volcano waiting to erupt and the other ones like I erupted ten minutes ago and punching the wall and throwing things, right? They're both sinning, just one of them is sinning very overtly and Peter

says, don't do this. To kind of unpackage that a little bit, what he's saying in this verse is, a wife picks up on tone and eye contact and facial expression. So, as a husband, you need to pay attention to those things. She picks up on emotions and thoughts behind the words and all that kind of stuff and you need to pick up on it too. Don't be a caveman with your wife. My dad says when he first got married to my mom, he said he learned quickly that he couldn't talk to her the way he talked to guys at the gym. I never asked him this, but I thought, "Well didn't you know that before you got married?" But when I got married, my wife said, "You sure are mean to your friends, you say some really hurtful things." And I said, "No, I love them, this is the way I express my love, by making fun of their hair or their clothes or whatever, that's real love right there honey." And she said, "Well don't love me like that," She said, "Don't talk to me that way." So she's a precious vessel. She's a delicate piece of pottery. She's not some dude at the gym. She's not some buddy at work.

Peter goes on to say, "since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life." In the ancient world, a Father's inheritance passed directly to his son, the daughter got nothing. She was never an heir. In fact, this is why when you read Scripture, you see all the references to taking care of widows. Because if you're a woman in the ancient world and your husband died, you were almost left penniless. There were times when you weren't, but often times that was the case. So the church took care of widows and orphans, the two most helpless people. There were no nursing homes back then. There was none of that. And Peter says, "This may be the way society looks at women and wives," but he says, "In heaven, it's totally different." He says, "In eternity, wives are given the same treatment that husbands are." "The grace of life" here, is just another word for salvation. So your wife should be honoured because she is a fellow heir of salvation. She's going to the heaven the same way you are. There are religions that taught, I think it was the Gospel of Thomas, you could quote the Gospel of Thomas, the false gospel, as saying that in order to get to heaven, Mary had to become like a man. That's how they thought of this subject. Peter says that's completely backwards. He says, "You respect her because she's a fellow heir with you. She goes to heaven through Christ with you. She puts her faith in Him with you. It's the same thing."

I get real theological about this, there's two terms that kind of describe this. There's the word "ontological" and the word "economic." And "ontological" means you have the same being as someone else, same substance. God the Father, Son, Spirit have the same substance. You guys understand that? But they have a different function in this world. And that's the word "economic." Wives and husbands have the same substance, they just have a different function. Does that make sense? They're equal in God's eyes. Both made in the image of God and they have a different role. And this is saying, you need to remember that, honour her by remembering that.

I heard a counselling pastor say once, "That this is another major source of conflict in marriage is that couples forget to honour each other as a man and as a woman." And what he meant is they forget to respect their differences. He wants to talk to her like a guy and she wants to talk to him like a girl and it doesn't work. He wants a five-minute conversation when he comes home about work and football and hockey and then go on with the day. And she wants to talk about things like relationships and things like that and have a more in-depth conversation and they just talk past each other. Or he comes home and he grunts and he's just not thinking about ... mind's on

something else to the point that they fight and when that happens, Peter is telling us that “Men, it is your job to step up and do something. It's your job to lead.” When there's a fight at home, it may not be the husband's fault, but it is the husband's responsibility to lead in that. God gave you the role of authority, which means you set the direction for this. You set the tone. The honour begins with you. The respect begins with you, and that means it comes out of your mouth first. Husbands, if your wife is disrespectful to you, you respect her first. You die to yourself first.

For an example of this, it's interesting how much love means to a wife. It means everything. The wife of one of Cyrus the Great's generals was on trial for treason and brought before the king and as she was about to be executed, the general rushed in and threw himself to the king's feet and he said, "Oh, great king, please take my life instead." And the king let her go. He was so moved by the gesture from the general that he said, "A love like this should not be spoiled by death," and he let the wife go. And as they were walking out, the general turned to his wife and he said, "Did you notice how kindly the king looked at us when he released you?" And she said, "No, I didn't. I only had eyes for the man who loved me." And I think, men, if your marriage is going sour then this is how you turn it around, you throw yourself at the king's feet and you say, "Oh king, take my life instead." You throw yourself before God and say, "I will do anything. I will do whatever it takes, even if it cost me my life ... cost me my job, my hobbies, if it cost me my time."

If you were at the Family Camp with us this past weekend, Carl Hargrove said, "You can't love people without giving them your time." Your kids, your wife, family, whoever, your church, you can't love without giving time, which means you're gonna have to give up something for her. You may not be able to be a great golfer and a great husband all at once. I've never figured it out anyway. You can come tell me if you know how to ... or a great hockey player and a great husband. Not wrong to play hockey, not wrong to play golf but what Peter's saying is when the two come in conflict, the one that has to go is the hobbies. She's a precious vessel and precious vessels require time. Give that to her and the Lord will bless it and make that sacrifice and He will reward you for that.

And that leads to one more way for husbands to suffer well in marriage and that is to learn how to prioritize your wife. It all boils down to this, if you live with your wife and study your wife and honour your wife, then you can't help but prioritize your wife. By the way, it might help for me to make a side note here real quick. I want to talk to the wives for just a minute. Ladies, as you're hearing this just remember these are commands for the husbands. These are not commands for you to throw at the husbands. So what I'm saying is don't go home and say, "Hey listen Pastor Jeremy said we got to talk, so I've set aside six hours this afternoon. We're going to figure this out." Okay, don't do that. Don't say, "Listen, the Bible says you got to do this, so you're not leaving the house. I took all the car keys and the keys to the John Deere tractor and you're not going anywhere until ... " That's not what... Remember this is his responsibility. He's the leader, he needs to own this, not you. But what you can do is pray for your husband, be patient with him through this. Be caring as he works on this, like he is supposed to be caring as you work on the things you learned a couple weeks ago. But it all boils down to this in the end and that is husbands you need to prioritize your wives. When you treasure something you make it a priority. Goes back to the issue of time, doesn't it? When something is important to you, you put it on the top shelf.

And in a curious way Peter says you have to do this. If you read all of the verse he says, "You husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she's a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." It's a very interesting way to finish all of this but Peter says this is how important it is to God. If you don't do this, it will hinder your prayers. In other words, if you have a bad relationship with her, it will lead to a bad relationship with Him. If you don't talk to her, God says He won't talk with you. It will obstruct your prayer life. You can't fight with your flesh and it not affect your spirit, and your wife is one flesh with you.

You know Wayne Mack says ... He says, "Marriage is a total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with another person until death." That's a really good definition of marriage. Let me read that again to you. He says ... Wayne Mack says, "Marriage is a total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with another person until death." According to the Bible, the marriage act is more than a physical act. It's an act of sharing. It's an act of communion. It's an act of total self-giving wherein the husband gives himself completely to the wife and the wife gives herself completely to the husband in such a way that they become one flesh. And what he's getting at here, what Peter's getting at is, is when you don't do that, God is angry. When you don't totally give yourself to the other person and you hold something back it impacts your prayer life.

Remember God says marriage is good. He says it's important. It's a priority to God and if it's a priority to God, it needs to be a priority to you as well. "He who finds a wife finds a good thing," and when you don't treat it as a good thing there are consequences. To say that another way, don't expect God to bless you if you don't bless your marriage. Don't expect God to prioritize you if you don't prioritize your marriage. Friends this is serious stuff. This is a very big deal. You cannot have a high view of God and a low view of marriage. Doesn't work that way.

This leads me to ask, do you have a low view of marriage this morning or do you have a high one? Is this important to you? Is this serious business in your life? Men, if we went home and asked your wives, "Is this serious business to him?" What would they say? If we asked your kids, "Is this serious business to dad?" What would they say? Kids pick up on all kinds of stuff, don't they? To ask this another way, are you willing to stick it out? Are you in it for the good times and the bad? The high points and the low? Are you in marriage for the way up the mountain and the way down again? Life goes up and down. They're seasons. Goes around, comes around. Are you in it for all of that? Henry Ford, the great automobile maker, was once asked how he stayed married so long and he said, "It's the same way as it is with making automobiles. You stick with one model." You stick with one wife. Are you willing to do that? Stick with one wife. The author Agatha Christie said, "A good husband is like a good archaeologist. The older you get the more interested he is in you." Are you willing to do that? To be more interested in your wife as the years go on, to love her more and more and more. You have to do that if you want to please God, friends. You have to do that if you want Him to hear your prayers.

A minister in California once said (started a wedding this way) ... he said, "On one hand we're here to celebrate a wedding, to celebrate a great event but on the other hand we're here to celebrate a funeral." And then he looked at the couple and he said, "Because both of you are going to have to die in order to make this work." And friends I want to tell you that this morning,

if you want your marriage to work you're going to have to die. And men, it starts with you. Die to yourself. Don't hold anything back. And as you do that, God will be pleased, and He'll use it to bless you and to bless your marriage. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, these are heavy words, I think, this morning. Important words, I pray, and helpful for a very important subject. God, our ... We live in a world where our marriages are falling apart. They're falling apart in the world. They're falling apart all around us. Father, I pray that they would be restored here in our church. I pray for these dear people who are here this morning who are interested in Your Word. And Lord, I pray for the husbands who are here, that this word would take root in their hearts. I don't know what everyone's going through. I don't know what's all going on in the home, but if there are men here who are struggling, maybe even the wives are ... It's hard for them. Lord, I pray you give them much grace to go home and apply everything Peter says here.

Father, we thank you for Your Word that does not turn void and Your Word that touches us in every aspect of life, even in our homes, we don't get to go home and turn the Scriptures off. They're alive and well in our home just as much as they are anywhere else and whatever else we do. And so, we pray for Your help in applying them there for Your glory, Father. Thank you for Christ who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Thank you for the Spirit who lives within us, that allows us to do these things we've talked about this morning and make these changes, and I pray for those here that we would all change in our marriages for your glory, Lord, and that You would be pleased with it. We pray this all in Christ's name, amen.