

1 Pet.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.NASB95

What would these Christians have already known about the verse we are looking at when the letter was read to them?

Was this the norm for men treating their wives in the culture? Was this instruction needed? Would honoring your wife as an equal heir in something be a norm in the predominant culture in which they lived?

Let's say this. This is the norm for Christian husbands to treat their wives in any culture regardless of how others may react and it is necessary for believing husbands to take this scripture to heart.

How many men do you know who are married and seem to have great struggle in their prayer lives? Have you, as a married believer ever struggled in your prayer?

If so, Scripture makes it very evident that probably the first thing you need to examine is your relationship with your wife.

“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 the 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.” (Wayne Grudem, 1 Peter, p. 146.)

Men, we probably could end this sermon right now and just start praying about this and we would accomplish as much if not more than continuing, but we will go on.

How do you look at wife? What is the most significant thing for you that makes your heart go all thumpity-thump when you think about her? Is it her incredible beauty,

physically? Is it her thoughtfulness for others? Perhaps it is what you observe about how she lives her life unto the glory of God even when no one else is watching? May it be that she demonstrates humility that you would die for, which by the way you can do biblically speaking.

Perhaps you do not see as much of the Christian ideal in your wife that you should. Again I say examine yourself first and see what kind of example you are setting before her. Yes, she is accountable for her own life but you do have a responsibility in your Christ ordained role as head of the home to be that example.

Once we can answer this question we can look at what Peter is writing but first we have to interpret what Peter means by saying IN THE SAME WAY.

The phrase in the same way or likewise are exactly the same word in the greek and it is found in two preceding verses: 1 Peter 2:1 and 3:1. In 3:1, as you recall, wives are being told to be submissive to their husbands as slaves are to be submissive to their masters. In 2:1 we are all instructed to honor all men and love the brotherhood and so on as we follow the example and pattern of Christ.

In the same way our text most likely refers back to 2:1. I am to honor my wife as any other person and love the one who is also my sister in Christ. Then my relationship with her as a husband comes into focus and the specific care and understanding that I am to show her is mentioned by Peter because it is so vital not just in honoring and loving her but because my prayers to God are affected by my relationship with my wife.

A husband's prayers being hindered means interrupted just like when you are on a phone call and someone interrupts you or as Paul wrote to the Romans I have been prevented from coming to you in Rom. 15:22.

Some believe that the prayers of both the husband and the wife while praying together are what is intended by Peter and if that is so the emphasis is still on the husband as the one leading in prayer and that makes sense because what kind of prayer life does a man have with his wife if he is not in right relationship with God or

her? What kind of unity in praying could there be? It is a fruitless exercise. So in the end, how this statement is viewed does not change the importance of what Peter is teaching in any way. Prayer is affected when the husband is involved and he is not treating his wife as God intends.

Now, let's revisit the first phrase live with your wives in understanding.

I believe it is necessary to see this as meaning understanding according to God's principles and commands for living with a wife.

The mega-culture of the world in which the Christians were aliens and strangers had a different understanding of the marriage relationship and Peter's exhortation is designed to teach believers concerning God's design for marriage as it related to His people in Christ. Paul did the same thing by instructing husbands to love their wives, not that some pagans did not love their wives but it certainly was not a necessity nor was it particularly the cultural norm. However, in the Christ culture and kingdom it was necessary for a husband to love his wife because the marriage relationship among Christ's own was a picture of Christ's marriage to His bride the church.

So we have established that the husband is to live with his wife in an understanding way. It does not take knowledge of greek or an ordination certificate to grasp what is being said here. Husbands, part of your life's work is to know your wife better than anyone else after Christ. And there is the rub men. It is work and therefore we better make time for the labor that is needed.

Men and women in the course of history have had some things to say about wives and it is obvious that God has a very different view in mind.

"It is a noteworthy fact that kicking and beating have played so considerable a part in the habits which necessity has imposed on mankind in past ages that the only way of preventing civilized men from beating and kicking their wives is to organize games in which they can kick and beat balls." George Bernard Shaw. Irish author and playwright

"The word and works of God is quite clear, that women were made either to be wives or prostitutes" Martin Luther

What makes men indifferent to their wives is that they can see them when they please." Ovid Roman poet 43 BC

“Men shall have the preeminence above women, because of those advantages wherein God hath caused the one of them to excel the other, and for that which they expend of their substance in maintaining their wives” The Quran

“If they are ignorant, they are despised, if learned, mocked. In love they are reduced to the status of courtesans. As wives they are treated more as servants than as companions. Men do not love them: they make use of them, they exploit them, and expect, in that way, to make them subject to the law of fidelity.”

George Sand 18th Century woman author friend of Chopin and Liszt

“Men do out know their wives well; but wives know their husbands perfectly” Anonymous
So what does it mean to live with your wives in a knowing way. I don't believe that is all so difficult. It simply means do you know her likes, dislikes, fears, things that bring her joy, heartaches and anything else that helps you to understand your wife better. We don't have to write a book here although the market is flooded with all kinds of self help books that area written for Christians that have nothing to do with Scripture.

A number of years ago while on staff at the City Mission in Buffalo I was counseling a woman who said she had been a Christian for some time. She had been through many struggles in her marriage. She listed for me all the books she had read on marriage and being a good wife etc. I asked her one simple question, ‘How much time have you spent reading the Bible and what it says about your problem. She answered,” I have not studied what the Bible says.”- and Bob's your uncle.

All the practical suggestions from numerous books had not helped her. After two months she contacted me and said her marriage was improving through Bible study and prayer. Now this is not a guarantee but if the heart is inclined to hear God first then there will be solutions and some practical applications that are not given in Scripture may have value.

Now we come to a phrase that really stymies some people. How are women weaker than men. That does not fly very well is a modern culture where women are front line soldiers, corporate executives, body builders, firefighters, police officers (difficult to be a policeman or fireman if you are female), prime ministers and so very much more. Yet the Scripture says *as with someone weaker*. In what way is a woman weaker. Is it

The idea here is a physically weaker vessel. The same word can be used of furniture or utensils.

So be very careful as you study Scripture and think you have done well by only doing word studies. Based on a word study alone you could translate this by saying as with a weaker piece of furniture or as a weaker utensil. Now it may be true that through out history some men have only had wives to use them as showpieces and what they used to call window dressing but this is not what Peter has in mind.

By the woman being the weaker vessel this means that the man is also a vessel. There is equality - both are vessels in God's house and in His kingdom. But what does it mean to be the weaker vessel?

Both the man and woman are vessels for the glory of God.

In 2Co 4:7 Paul uses the word speaking of those who are ministers of the gospel, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves..."

Peter's description is merely saying that wives are physically weaker. Of course this is not an absolute.

I remember when I was a teenager I was making fun of my mother in the bathroom while my mother was replacing some toiletries before I took a bath. I started to laugh and before I knew it she had flipped me into the bath tub saying "watch it". I never realized how strong she was.

What Peter means is that the husband has a responsibility to give this proper consideration to his wife so that he is not treating her as a slave, not caring about the consequences of forced duties beyond ones strength, which slaveholders did not care about depending on the value they placed on a particular slave.

So men we are treat our wives in a particular way concerning the duties they perform in the role as wives but then we are to honor them as fellow heirs of grace.

and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life

We are to assign or apportion honor to our wives because of their position in Christ.

The wife is not just a wife or a woman but she is an equal heir of Christ's grace and an heir of eternal life and off all the benefits that come with being a genuine believer in Christ. This is the meaning of Galatians 3:28

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." NAS95.

Jews and Greeks and their particular ethnicity were not removed from them. There were still slaves and masters and men and women and their respective roles in culture were not done away with by the waving of a magic wand represented by the word of God. Paul is teaching that the equalizer of all these different people that make up the construct of the known cultures of the world he knew were equalized in their grace relationship with Christ. None of their roles were changed, but how they lived in the context of those roles as Christians with a new ethic was drastically changed. All now shared submission in Christ and all were in equal status spiritually because of their common salvation in Christ.

The context of Galatians 3:28 makes abundantly clear the sense in which men and women are equal in Christ: they are equally justified by faith (v. 24), equally free from the bondage of legalism (v. 25), equally children of God (v. 26), equally clothed with Christ (v. 27), equally possessed by Christ (v. 29), and equally heirs of the promises to Abraham (v. 29).

This last blessing is especially significant, namely, the equality of being a fellow-heir with men of the promises. In 1 Peter 3:1-7, the blessing of being joint heirs "of the gracious gift of life" is connected with the exhortation for women to submit to their husbands (v. 1) and for their husbands to treat their wives "with respect as the weaker partner." In other words, Peter saw no conflict between the neither-male-nor-female principle regarding our inheritance and the headship-submission principle regarding our roles. Galatians 3:28 does not abolish gender-based roles established by God and redeemed by Christ.

Men are to be considerate leaders in the home. They must take this seriously. Even though they have the headship responsibility they are not to be arbitrary in leading. They must have consideration for their wives because of her position in Christ.

Leadership that honors does not mean harsh or domineering use of authority.

Leadership that honors does not imply equal sharing of leadership in the family.

Leadership that honors does not imply lesser importance for a wife.

Leadership that honors does not mean always giving in to a wife's wishes.

This has occurred in Scripture for example when Abraham followed Sarah's urging and decided to have a child by Sarah's maid Hagar (Genesis 16:2, 5). The principle was also ignored by Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-3, 8), and Ahab (1 Kings 21:25).

Wayne Grudem makes a good comment about this in the book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* p.204, "The mere fact that one's wife-even a godly, believing wife-wants to do something morally wrong does not mean that a husband is free before God to endorse or participate in that wrong. To do so would be to abdicate the leadership God has given the husband and would be the opposite of the righteous leadership God requires him to exercise. In actual practice, it will often take much prayer and knowledge of Scripture for a husband to be able to tell the difference between a morally wrong choice being urged on him by his wife and a morally right choice that just differs from his personal preference or judgment of how things should be done. But there will be times in every marriage when a godly husband simply will have to make decisions that affect the whole family, that go against his wife's desires and preferences and that he nonetheless is convinced, before God, are right."

Peter finishes this idea in his letter and says that the husband's prayers are hindered if he is not treating his wife properly. This is where we began this morning.

It is so important to honor wives as God would have it that our most intimate time with God, either alone or as a couple can be interrupted in its purpose if we do not

There needs to be a unity in the home and some of that comes from the husband living with his wife in understanding; or if the husband should not give honor to his wife, and take care of her as he ought to do then strife and quarrels could easily malign the relationship because they could not cordially, and to each ones edification, join together in prayer; nor would such prayers, with this lack of like mindedness be acceptable unto God, who requires that men should lift up holy hands everywhere, whether in public, or in private, in God's house, or in their own houses, without wrath and doubting.

In God's sovereignty, He can interfere with our prayers by hindering them as He so chooses, even if we are praying according to His will, Our attitudes toward our wives, are taken into account. What is His will in prayer will always come to pass but only as HE designs the time according to His purpose. And so husbands if we are disciplined for our behavior, even if praying that which is acceptable by God it will still be for our good and unto the praise of His glorious grace when from our perspective it may seem that God should be answering as we desire Him to rather than when it suits His purpose.