

Text: 1 Pt 3.7

Now we turn to the husbands. After three weeks of working through the wife's spiritual life in marriage, we come to the men.

Men might look at the text and feel relieved that they only have one verse as opposed to the women's six (and women might resent this)

- Remember that in Ephesians 6, the opposite proportion exists
- When we get through with this verse, you men may think my previous three messages only lashed the women "with roses"

Marriage is the basic human institution. God created it before the fall. It is the basic unit of humanity; all other human institutions derive from the fall and the need for restraint of the fallen. This institution derives from creation and the call to dominion over the earth.

Now Peter is addressing fallen men and women who often fail God's ideal in marriage. These spiritual lessons have the intent of overcoming the selfishness of the fallen nature so we can achieve (in some measure) God's creation ideal in our homes.

I. The spirit of the husband's way of life "likewise, in the same way"**A. The translations**

1. NAU, NIV, NET: in the same way
2. KJV, ESV: Likewise
3. YLT: in like manner

B. The manner of the "submission section"

1. To government: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake" (2.13)
2. To masters: "with all respect ... for the sake of conscience toward God" (2.18-19)
3. To wives: "be submissive to your own husbands ... as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior" (3.1-2)
4. To all:

1 Pt 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,

C. The spirit is everything

1. The underlying theme of the passage addresses the inner life, lived to God before men
2. One commentator: this spirit is “the foundation of love”

II. The inner development of the husband’s way of life “understanding”

A. Grammatical note:

1. The commands of this verse are participles
2. Commentators agree they all have imperative force, as do the translations

B. The first imperative addresses the way a husband is to think

1. Dwelling is an action informed by thinking (the “understanding way”)
2. The “submission” section is about relationships, but almost all subordinate to superior
3. Here, the concept is turned on its head: superior (in rank) to subordinate (not unequal in value, but in function/rank)
4. The superior rank is to live with the subordinate person’s needs in view

“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 husband’s understanding of ‘the wife’s desires, goals, and frustrations; knowledge of her strengths and weaknesses in the physical, emotional and spiritual realms.’ [Grudem, p. 143]”¹

C. The chief consideration for the way the husband should think

1. Translation challenges:
 - a. NAU: “as with someone weaker, since she is a woman”

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1997), 205–6.

- b. KJV, ESV: “as unto the weaker vessel”
- c. NIV: “as the weaker partner”
- d. YLT: “as to a weaker vessel -- to the wife”

Many trans. put the two “as” clauses with “showing honor,” but they are separate, each connected to its separate command, as in the NAU and the YLT.

The implication that the woman is “weaker,” however, causes no end of trouble

2. How is the woman weaker?

- a. On average, women are *physically* weaker than men (not always)
- b. Historically, women were *culturally* weaker than men (not so much in our culture)
- c. Either option turns the man’s “understanding” into *condescension*

3. What relationship are we talking about here? Marriage

- a. In marriage, the Christian woman *voluntarily* adopted a subordinate position (in God’s eyes, by her vows)
- b. The Christian husband should seek to understand the needs of his wife because she voluntarily made herself weaker

“The wife may be considered weak because of her role as a wife. She, by marrying, has accepted a position where she submits herself to her husband. Such a position is vulnerable, open to exploitation. The husband is commanded not to take advantage of the woman’s vows of submission.”²

4. One last point: on the translation

- a. The Gk has no “since”
- b. YLT: “as to a weaker vessel -- to the wife”

² Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, p. 133, cited in Hiebert, 206.

- c. The word “wife” is not the usual word, it is an adjective meaning “womanly” or “woman-like”

My TRANS: “dwell with her in an understanding way as with a weaker vessel, the womanly one”

- d. This emphasizes the idea of a vessel (a container of the soul, essentially)

- 1) Note: if she is the weaker vessel, that means she isn’t the only vessel

Constable: “Both the husband and the wife are vessels, but husbands are more typically similar to iron skillets whereas wives resemble china vases...”³

- 2) Now, men, understand this: your wife volunteered to submit her china vase to your iron skillet

This understanding should change our behaviour...

III. The outer expression of the husband’s way of life “showing honour”

A. Giving honour means assigning what is owed

1. “a Prefect is praised as rendering to all their due”⁴
2. “The husband should give his submissive wife her just due and not take liberties with her rights.”⁵

B. The reason? (the second “as” clause”) she is a fellow-heir

1. The gospel is for men and women
2. In heaven, Jesus taught, there is no giving in marriage: both inherit the same position

“Wives, like husbands, believe in the same Savior, are redeemed by the same ransom, live by the same grace, and look forward to the same eternal destiny.”⁶

³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Pt 3.7.

⁴ J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 67.

⁵ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 207.

⁶ Hiebert, 207.

We've given most our time to understanding "understanding" — once our "understanding" actually understands, our acting should follow suit.

IV. The stumbling-block to married life "hindered prayers"

A. Peter gives us a "result" statement: "so that your prayers will not be hindered"

1. The word "hindered" refers to obstacles strewn in the way
2. Some commentators/preachers speak of this as if God will not answer your prayers if your actions are outside his will
3. This may well be true, but there is more

B. Not simply preventing prayers reaching God, but preventing prayers at the start

1. If a man won't give to his wife the honour that is her due, will he be a praying man?
2. If a man won't dwell with his wife in an understanding way, will he bow his knee to God?

"A husband who treats his wife in the wrong way will himself be unfit to pray, will scarcely pray at all. There will be no family altar, no life of prayer. His worship in the congregation will be affected."⁷

Conclusion:

A concluding thought — on hindering:

"The compound infinitive 'hinder' (*engkoptesthai*) is apparently a military metaphor and means 'to cut in on, throw obstacles in the way' or 'cut up the road' so that normal movement is impossible."⁸

- The picture is of a military unit in retreat, blowing up bridges, mining their back-trail, to prevent pursuit

Here, the man who fails to follow God's will in marriage is laying minefields in his own life, especially his spiritual life

⁷ Lenski, cited in Constable, *Expository Notes*, 1 Pt 3.7.

⁸ Hiebert, 208.