

GODLY CONDUCT IN THE HOME

1 Peter 3:1-7

Introduction:

A woman accompanied her very ill husband to the doctor's office. After his examination, the doctor called the wife into his office alone. He told her, "Your husband is suffering from a very severe disease, combined with horrible stress. If you don't do the following, your husband will surely die. Each morning, fix him a healthy breakfast. Be pleasant, and make sure he is in a good mood. At lunch time, make him a warm, nutritious meal to put him in a good frame of mind before he goes back to work. For dinner prepare an especially nice meal for him. Don't burden him with chores, as he probably had a hard day. Encourage him to watch some sporting event on TV, and don't discuss your problems with him, it will only make his stress worse. And most importantly, don't nag him and do everything you can to satisfy his every whim. If you can do this for the next 10 months to a year, I think your husband will regain his health completely." On the way home, the husband asked his wife, "What did the doctor say?" She replied, "He said you're going to die!"

Wives and husbands – I feel like this is always a dangerous topic. No matter what I say, I am going to be in trouble—there is no right answer. However, I am going to wade in and we'll see whether I sink or swim.

To begin, we need to set this passage in its context. Never allow the chapter and verse divisions in your Bible to mislead you. They are not part of the inspired text of Scripture—they were added later by men.

Peter wrote this epistle to believers who were scattered throughout the northern part of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Many of them were facing severe persecution and suffering, and Peter could see that suffering was only going to get worse for believers living under the degenerate Roman Empire. So, he wrote a letter to encourage them to stand firm under the oppression and to give some instruction on how they should conduct themselves in an increasingly corrupt world.

Peter begins his letter by turning the focus of his readers to the glories of their salvation—the source of our salvation, the hope of our salvation, and the security of our salvation. When we see what lies ahead in eternity then the present temporary suffering that we may face becomes bearable – vv. 6-9.

He then moves on to the need to be prepared for suffering by being clear in our thinking and pure in our motives and actions – a holy life built upon the fear of God and obedience to His Word (1:13-2:3). As he continues with the call to holiness he reminds us of our identity in Christ – read 2:9-10. Then, he wraps up his exhortation to a holy life by reminding us that we are strangers, sojourners here on earth—our true citizenship is in heaven. As such we need to conduct ourselves honorably so that no serious charge can be made against us – vv. 11-12.

Chapter 2:13 begins a new section, but I believe that it is not unrelated to the previous section. Even though we are citizens of heaven—sojourners and exiles here on earth—we are not exempt from the laws and authority structures here in the world. So, Peter offers some instruction about how we ought to conduct ourselves in the authority systems we find ourselves in.

We are certainly not going to review all of what we looked at the past couple of messages, but in the last 13 verses of chapter 2 Peter challenges our thinking in two specific areas of authority—our responsibility to the authorities that rule over us - government, and the relationship between workers (servants) and those who have power over them – workplace. We are reminded that, whether those in authority treat us well or with cruelty, we are to conduct ourselves rightly, in order to honor God, and follow the example of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who also suffered and yet did not retaliate.

That brings us to today's text, which I believe is not a new subject, but an extension of Peter's instruction regarding submission and authority. This time he is talking about the home and the relationship between husband and wife, and how we ought to conduct ourselves in the home, to bring honor to our Heavenly Father. In his instruction, Peter speaks first to wives (vv. 1-6), then to husbands (v. 7). Let's try to break this down.

A Word to the Wives

I have three principles that come out of these six verses.

- 1. Actions speak louder than words.** *Read vv. 1-2.* Just as Peter instructed servants to be subject to their masters, even when they are harsh (v. 18), so he instructs the wives here. If your husband is not what he should be, and does not know or obey the Word, that is not a reason to reject his authority. (Obviously, this does not approve of abuse or violence.) Peter suggests that by your positive and submissive attitude and actions, perhaps he will come to believe the Word and be won to Jesus Christ.
- 2. True beauty is on the inside, not in outward appearance.** *Read vv. 3-4.* This is not to suggest that there is no need to think about appearance, but all of the outward beauty in the world means nothing if the attitude and life are not pleasing and right.
I think that what Peter is saying is that what sets you apart, or causes you to attract the attention of others should not be a matter of outward beauty but the gentle and quiet spirit that is within you. Outward beauty fades with time, but inner strength and beauty only grows as you grow in Christ.
- 3. Submission is not a dirty word.** *Read vv. 5-6.* As much as I might like it for my wife to call me “lord” or “master” I don’t think that is really the point Peter is making here. He is pointing out that godly women, like Sarah, demonstrated that gentle and quiet spirit by willingly submitting themselves to the authority of their husbands. And, he says, you will be like her if “...you do good, and do not fear anything that is frightening.” I see two things there – holiness (doing good) and protection (not fearing anything). It is a husband’s responsibility to protect his wife, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
There is probably a lot more that could be said on that, but I am going to leave it there as this leads me into the next part...

A Word to the Husbands

There is only one verse here for us men, but I have four points I would like to make that come out of this verse. Note that Peter’s instruction here has nothing to do with authority or control...

- 1. Understand your wife’s strengths and weaknesses.** *“Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way...”* NIV says, *“...be considerate as you live with your wives...”* I know that it is a standing joke that as men we will never understand women, but we need to make the effort to listen and understand, to be considerate of their needs and desires.
- 2. Honor and protect your wife.** *“...treat them with respect as the weaker partner...”* What we need to realize is that, while Peter refers to the wife as the weaker vessel, in fact we are all weak. I found an interesting note on this in Adam Clarke’s Commentary. He says, *“Roughness and strength go hand in hand; so likewise do beauty and frailty. The female has what the man wants — beauty and delicacy. The male has what the female wants — courage and strength. The one is as good in its place as the other: and by these things God has made an equality between the man and the woman, so that there is properly very little superiority on either side.”* Now, you can do what you want with that statement, but the fact is, men and women were made to complement each other, not to compete with each other.
- 3. Recognize that both she and you are the recipients of grace.** *“...as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life...”* One of the things that is so easy to forget is that, apart from the grace of God, we all are nothing. It is only by God’s grace that we exist or that we can know Him, or even relate to one another. Husbands, you have no advantage over your wife when it comes to salvation. We are called equally into salvation the hope of eternal glory by God’s grace.
- 4. The effectiveness of your prayer life depends on your relationship with and your treatment of your wife.** *“...so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”* There are a couple of things that are implied here. First, it is implied that prayer would be a part of your life, both individually and as a couple. Peter does not here tell us that we should pray, He assumes that we will pray. And as the head of the home, it is the responsibility of the father and husband to lead the family in worship and prayer.
Second, it is implied that it is possible for our prayers to be hindered by a broken relationship in the home. It is hard to pray for your wife and family and even harder to pray with your wife if there is conflict

and mistreatment in everyday life. Albert Barnes, in his commentary says this, *"If the husband treated the wife unkindly; if he did not show her proper respect and affection; if there were bickerings, and jealousies, and contentions between them, there could be no hope that acceptable prayer would be offered. A spirit of strife; irritability and unevenness of temper; harsh looks and unkind words; a disposition easily to take offence, and an unwillingness to forgive, all these prevent a "return of prayers." ... There can be no doubt that ... prayer is often "hindered" by the inequalities of temper, and the bickerings and strifes that exist in families. Yet how desirable is it that husband and wife should so live together that their prayers may not be hindered!"*

I would add to that, based on Peter's admonition, that it is the responsibility of the husband to maintain the climate that will result in a positive and fruitful prayer life.

Conclusion

In a perfect world, we would not need these kinds of instructions. If every husband was loving and caring in his leadership as God intended, wives would not have trouble with living in that submissive relationship that is described in Scripture. If every wife was perfect in supporting and encouraging her husband, he would have no reason to be harsh in his treatment of his wife.

Imagine ... the Garden of Eden – Adam and Eve – perfect harmony. Eve was the perfect complement to Adam and vice versa. But when they disobeyed God and ate the fruit, everything changed. The woman began to try to control her husband and the husband became domineering and controlling of the wife.

Ever since then there has been tension in the marriage relationship. But the ideal has not changed. Even though a perfect relationship may be out of reach, it should be our goal, as wives and husbands, to strive for the kind of relationship that not only results in peace and harmony in the home, but in the glory of God before the world.

I will leave it to you and the Holy Spirit to take these truths and apply them to your life, both in and out of the home.