

It is once again my great joy and privilege to minister the Word of God to you. I am reminded of the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:21 that "God (is) well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." What we are about to do is foolishness to the world. But it's not to God, nor I'm sure is it to those who have been saved by the power and the truth of the Word of God. Certainly my goal, as always, is to stir your spiritual and holy affections so that you will have an increasing hatred of sin, so that you will have gratitude to God for His mercy and His grace, and you will have a passion for holiness. So that you will examine your own heart and delight in the glory and the excellency of Christ, and hope in His promises. That is certainly my prayer today because we have before us a very difficult subject. We have a subject in which we have some very practical and intensely personal insights that God gives us. I fear that the lash will fall upon all of our backs today. It is never my desire to intentionally hurt anyone, but certainly there are things that we all need to hear, and some in particular.

We have before us in our study in 1 Peter the issue of, "Submissive Wives and Devoted Husbands." I would like to read the passage to you and we will reflect upon it. 1 Peter 3:1-7. "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, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. And let not your adornment be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 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. 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. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

In our feminized culture, where men are considered to be a threat to overcome, especially by women seeking empowerment, God's plan for marriage that is found in the Bible is typically considered to be the archaic ranting of an abusive chauvinist, not worthy of consideration. Certainly it is not politically correct. Even so-called evangelical feminists have joined the ranks of many secular feminists in their rabid opposition of gender-based role differences. They oppose any unique leadership role of men in marriage or the church. Gender to them is irrelevant when it comes to leadership. Through tortured exegesis many have sought to eradicate what they consider to be misleading and masculine-oriented language from the Bible. In fact, back in 1989, the first major "gender neutral" translation of the Bible was printed. Since then, numerous other translators have followed suit.

While such tampering with the truth is a profound act of blasphemy that God has promised to judge, nevertheless, the distortions of God's role for men and women in the church and especially in the family and marriage, have found widespread acceptance in the neo-evangelical church. Occasionally I see elements of it even here—yet another example of the lack of discernment that has now reached pandemic proportions in these last days of Laodicean apostasy. Against this very dark backdrop of satanic deception, combined with legitimate confusion, as well as frustration that many women have, having to live with ungodly and even at times abusive men—and men with wicked women—today's text is going to provide a brilliant light of divine clarity. Before us we have God's voice that will penetrate the cacophony of heresy and will silence the musing of fools who would assault the Word of God, especially with respect to this most important issue. I believe it will also bring comfort to all who will humble themselves before His truth. Herein we have a disclosure from God regarding the essential

elements of an ideal marriage, as well as some very practical truths for Christian women who struggle with ungodly husbands.

As we look at this text we will discover answers to questions that many women ask. For example, “What does biblical submission really mean and why is it important?” Some would say, “I thought we were all equal in Christ, so why am I supposed to submit?” Other women will ask, “Does my husband have authority over me? Does God expect me to submit to an ungodly husband, perhaps an abusive husband?” Some women admit they walk on eggshells around their husband. “What should I do in light of that? What are the boundaries of submission?” Some women might ask the question, “Why do I bristle when I hear the very word submission, and why do I resent other women who have no problem with it?” Some might be asking, “What does it mean to have ‘the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God’?”

Some men may be asking similar questions for themselves that we will discover answers to in this text. Some might be asking, “What is my spiritual role in the house? Am I the spiritual head of my house and what does that mean, especially with respect to authority? How do I harmonize that with Ephesians 5:21 that says we are to ‘be subject to one another in the fear of Christ’?” Some men might be asking, “Does my wife’s submission mean that I get to make all the decisions and she has to obey me? What do I do if my wife is not submissive? Does living with my wife in an understanding way mean that I must give in to her wishes in order to keep the peace? What does it mean for me to ‘show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that (my) prayers will not be hindered’?”

Again, by God’s grace, we will find great insight into these issues and others as we humble ourselves before this text. May I remind you of the context? Peter has been encouraging the beleaguered, persecuted saints of the first century. He has ravished their spiritual affections by reminding them of the glorious nature and benefits of their salvation. He has called them to holy living. He has called them to learn what it means to feed on the Word as if it’s a matter of life and death. And then he’s come to a whole section here on submission. He has told them they need to be submissive to their government, to the civil authorities, as well as servants to their masters. We are all to be submissive for the Lord’s sake, demonstrating our love for Him and our confidence in His care and His faithfulness to us as a sovereign God who has orchestrated events in our life for our good and His glory.

He has encouraged the saints that through their submission we have a wonderful opportunity for evangelism, as others observe our behavior. Now he’s going to expand upon this theme by asking Christian wives to submit to their husbands, as well as by asking Christian husbands to cherish their wives. As we look at the text we see two messages to women. Most of these women had come to Christ and many of them were living with unsaved husbands. The first thing we see from the text is that wives must be committed to respectful submission. Notice the text in verse 1. “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands.” To your own husbands, it says. That underscores the unique intimacy of the marriage bond. Women are therefore not required to submit to all men, like in many cultures, but only to their husbands.

He uses the term “submissive” here, *hupotasso*. It means to submit to, to subject to, to rank yourself under. It was used many times in a military context. All through the New Testament, and this is important for you to understand, this term implies a relationship of submission to an authority. In fact, grammatically it means submitting yourself to your own husband. In other words, he’s saying, “I don’t want you to go out and divorce your husband, nor do I want you to try and dominate him. But rather I

want you to willingly affirm him as your leader and as your authority.” We’re going to see more of this, “even when you may disagree with him.” Obviously, since these women had chosen Christ and their husbands had not, submission does not assume that you obey your husband where his decisions violate the commands of Christ. Your first allegiance is always to Him. We have been told that we are to submit ourselves, in chapter 2:13, “for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men.” In chapter 2:21 we are to seek to “follow in his steps.” So again, we fear and we obey God, not man. Ultimately the submission requires a woman to submit only to those things that are within the parameters of biblical authority and things that are not contrary to what God would have us do.

Many will argue, “I thought that the Bible teaches that there should be mutual submission in the marriage. ‘Submission’ meaning something to do with consideration, love and allegiance, and it really has no sense of authority.” First of all, you never see that anywhere in Scripture. That is something that people impose upon the text. Some will use Ephesians 5:21 where it does say, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Some will say, “See, there you have it. There’s no such thing as authority. It needs to be mutual submission within a marriage.” But if you look at the context you will see that Paul is explaining the importance of wives being in submission to their husbands all through verses 22-24, and then he’s also describing children being submissive to their parents in chapter 6:1-3; servants to masters in chapter 6:4-8, but nowhere does he reverse the command to in any way make it mutual. Nowhere do we see that husbands are to submit to their wives. You never see that in Scripture. Nor do you see that parents are to submit to their children. Nor do you see that masters are to submit to their servants as the servants are to their masters. You just don’t see that.

In fact, the apostle Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 5:22, “Wives, be subject to your own husbands,” again not to all men, “as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of a wife, as Christ also is head of the church, He himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.” This is very clear. Any confusion here is self-imposed, a deliberate attempt to manipulate the text to make it say something that you want it to say. We have to be very, very careful with that. Moreover, I would also argue that when we look at the term submission in Scripture, especially through the New Testament in many other situations, it always has the idea of one person or one group being subject to the authority of another. Jesus was subject to His parents, demons subject to disciples, citizens subject to civil authorities, powers being subject to Christ, church members are to be subject to elders, the Church is to be subject to Christ, servants are to be subject to their masters, Christians are subject to Christ and on and on it goes. Never is this term used to mean anything other than one party submitting to the authority of another. It never has some meaning of a mutual act of love and consideration, as many feminists would argue.

So Peter is simply saying in verse one, “In the same way.” In other words, looking to previous examples, in the same way as he was talking about citizens being subject to government and slaves to masters—and we do all this for the Lord’s sake—in the same way, with the same motive, “you wives, be submissive to your own husbands.” Wives, that is your responsibility before the Lord. Why? Well for the same reasons that we have been asked to submit to other authorities that God has placed over us. Because first of all it is an act of obedience to the Lord. We do it because it honors the Lord. Not to mention it emulates His submission to the Father. We do it, as chapter 2:13 says, “for the Lord’s sake.” And later in verse 20, “it finds favor with God.” Likewise ladies, your submission demonstrates your faith in a sovereign God. “God, I know that You have placed me in this situation. Sometimes it is not a good situation, but I know that it is Your plan for my life and I will submit to the loving authority of my husband, even at times when it’s not loving, so that You can somehow glorify Yourself through me

in this situation and I will trust You to that end. And You will use that submissive attitude as a tool to help him grow in Christ if he's a believer."

So ladies, this is at the very heart of what I mean by respectful submission. Notice the spiritual power of your submission, found in verse 1, "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, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior." What a magnificent thought this is! Think about this. God is going to use your character and conduct to draw a sinner to Himself. What a privilege, what a joy. "Men who are disobedient to the word." This is a reference primarily to unsaved men, but it could also refer to immature men. Some of you women are married to very immature Christian men. Wives should, therefore, live out this submission and allow their behavior to be a ministry to these men. This doesn't mean, by the way, that you are not to ever present the words of the gospel to your husband. I know some of you that are listening in other countries, some of the Muslim women I've talked with, and some of the Jewish women who have been converted to Christ, I know this is very, very difficult. But the reality is yes, you present to them the gospel. There's nothing wrong with that. But don't get preachy is the idea here. You confuse them instead with your godly submission. They will observe your "chaste and respectful behavior."

I find it very sad, very few men ever see this because very few women ever live it out. Certainly this is not affirmed in our culture. When was the last time you turned on your television set and you saw some talk show host interviewing a woman. And the reason why she was chosen to come on the show was because this woman is noted for her chaste and respectful behavior in submission to her husband for the Lord's sake. Can you imagine? That would make the front page of every paper in the country, if anything so insane were to occur. And yet that is precisely what God calls women to be.

Some people might ask what the word "chaste" means. It means virtuous, pure, innocent, free from moral defilement. By implication here, submission would never include, wives, for you to consent to a husband's demand to be immoral or violate any divine standard of holy conduct. To do that would be sin. But you are to be chaste, and also to be respectful, a term that's rooted in the word *phobos* from which we get our words fear and phobia. It has the idea of honor, of esteeming someone, of revering someone, of valuing someone. This gets at the very core of what God has called Christian wives to do. Again, your responsibility is to be committed first of all to respectful submission. Not grudgingly, not with teeth that are gritting and fists that are clenched, but with a sense of joy and honor and privilege. "Lord, I'm doing this for Your sake. That is my ultimate motive. This is what I know You would have me do. And I also can see that it has the potential of making an enormous impact on my ungodly husband."

Make no mistake about it. Ungodly people are very careful observers of godly people. They watch what you do. They listen to your words. Frankly, our values offend them. Our conversation silences them. Our demeanor will convict them. Our love for them and others will embarrass them, and our peace and joy even in the midst of great adversity will confuse them. So dear Christian lady, consider it a privilege to respectfully submit to your husband for the Lord's sake, knowing that, "Perhaps God, You will use my humble submission to win my husband to Christ. Perhaps You will use my submission to take my husband who claims to be a believer but is not living like one, maybe You will cause this to humble him and cause him to repent and grow in the grace and the knowledge of Christ. And certainly I know that regardless of the outcome, You will bless me for my obedience and I long for Your blessing more than anything."

But not only must you be committed to respectful submission, but secondly to reverent substance. Let me explain what I mean by that, and the text will bear this out. Reverent substance means a loyal, devoted, worshipful commitment to genuine depth of god-honoring character. The opposite is the phony, superficial, painted-up, hairdo, designer type of woman that we see, the Hollywood celebrity type. That's the opposite extreme. People who are as shallow as water on a plate. They have no substance. Praise God for women of substance. It's extremely rare to find them these days. Frankly, only this kind of woman can truly be committed to respectful submission. Why? Because at her core she is a woman of reverent substance. If you struggle, dear lady, with submission, it's because these things that we are about to discuss are not a reality in your heart. Notice what he says, "And let not your adornment be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses." In other words, there's no spiritual power in externals alone. Many women wrongly assume that the way to reach their husband is to somehow seduce him with her beauty. Certainly this is the message that is given to our young girls in our culture.

I would hasten to add that there certainly is a place for proper adornment. You look at the bride in the Song of Solomon and you will see a graphic description of how a woman should adorn herself. There is a great description of how she should dress herself and how she should smell, right down to explicit details regarding the curves of her body. So there is a place for that. I would also add that many marriages are greatly harmed when a woman allows herself to "go" as we would say, who allow their appearance to become a source of embarrassment to their husband and their children. Some women are too fat, some women are too skinny. There is a place for something in the middle there. Some women look like they just crawled out of bed. Other women look like they're going camping. Certainly in our culture, with the styles today, even with women that are obese, they're wearing things to show all of their body. It's so sickening to me and to go into a restaurant and see some woman coming in with her top halfway between her naval and her breasts, allowing her belly to be exposed. I don't want to see that when I go to a restaurant. Today, you even see women that are pregnant and they want to show as much of the underbelly as they possibly can.

Ladies, this is not biblical, this does not honor God. We are called to come out and be separate from the world, not be like the world. Such conduct betrays a shallow heart, a lack of a secret devotion to God. In fact, Paul gives a similar admonition to Christian women in 1 Timothy 2:9-10. He calls them "to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly." Let me pause for a moment. "Modestly" is very interesting, it's a word only used in the New Testament. It has the idea of shame, it's even translated at times as shame-facedness. We would never use that word, but it's the idea of a woman who has a sense of blushing, that she would never want to do anything to reveal any part of her body that would draw attention that would cause men to be drawn to her, to be seductive. She would never want to be a source of temptation. It's the idea of not wanting to dishonor God. It's the idea of having a sense of grief over any sense of sinfulness in herself. A woman who would therefore not want to be a provocation when it comes to causing a man to lust after her.

So Paul calls women "to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly." "Discreetly" in the original language means self-control over sexual passions. Not having a desire to be noticed. Women, you want to ask yourself that question. "When I get dressed in the morning, am I dressing in such a way so that I hope men will look at me?" If so, you are violating what God has called you to be. There is a place for proper adornment, but certainly the other extreme is equally dangerous when you become a fashion queen, consumed with mere externals, desperate for men to

notice you. That's the wrong preoccupation. The right preoccupation is in verse 4, "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." This is the heart of reverent substance. Notice the language the Holy Spirit uses here, "hidden person of the heart." In other words, this is a woman who takes great care to beautify her soul, her heart, her inner self. Who longs to adorn her inner being with the costly jewels of purity and modesty and discretion and holiness and faithfulness. He says, "with the imperishable" which literally means unfading, "quality of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God."

Now this would be the very opposite preoccupation of, for example, a cheerleader or a supermodel or a Hollywood celebrity, sadly the very types of women that our young daughters tend to want to emulate. I might give a caution here to parents. Parents, guard your daughters, guard your little girls from being exposed to these kinds of people. Please hear this. A child's inherent foolishness makes them easy prey to the world's temptations, and we as parents must be careful to do all that we can to keep them as far away from the slippery slope of sin, rather than seeing how close we can get them to it. Wives and mothers, you want to be preoccupied with your heart. Teach your daughters to be preoccupied with adorning their heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit. That's the source of true beauty of your inner nature. In verse 4 it's "the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God."

What does it mean, imperishable? It's used in the New Testament to describe the beauty of heavenly realities, the beauty of things that never decay. The beauty of things that never fade away. Ladies, don't you get tired of the fashions? They're always in for a while and then they're out and you've always got to be changing. This is something that is never out with God. Certainly it's out with our culture. It is that imperishable, that unfading quality of a gentle and quiet spirit. What does that mean? Gentle is the idea of humility, of tender meekness, of controlled strength, of patient submissiveness. That's what you want to cultivate in your heart. That's the beauty of the inner person. Not only gentle but quiet. It means calm, tranquil, still, composed even in the midst of adversity. Why? Because you're trusting in God. This is the kind of inner quality that will joyfully affirm the leadership of your husband. Your demeanor will honor him as God's leader for you, even at times when you differ with him.

Look at the opposite of a gentle and quiet spirit. Somebody that is controlling, bossy. We all hear of women who "wear the pants in the family." A woman that is condescending, rude, inflexible, and I'm taking these from many other passages, especially in Proverbs, that describe this type of a problem woman. A woman that is argumentative, selfish, contentious, demanding, hot-tempered and bristles at authority, and usually she's also quick to condemn other people. Examples would be a woman who likes to finish her husband's sentences, likes to correct him in public, that will demean him in private. When you get around that marriage in private, you say to your wife, "We can see who's got the short end of the stick in that marriage." A woman who is easily offended, temperamental, pouts, throws tantrums, self-centered. You've seen the old sign, "If mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." That's the type of woman. That's what dishonors God.

Having counseled many women like this, I know they secretly feel cheated, like a failure. They often feel depressed and anxious and they push other people away without realizing it. They have very few close friends and there's certainly no oneness in the marriage. Many times they live like roommates. Sadly, many times the husbands usually "check out" because they don't want to rock the boat. How tragic! You stop and think about it, ladies, if that is you, or husband if that is your wife, if that's your

marriage, what type of testimony is that to the world? “Yes, I want you to come to Christ because I want you to see what He’s done in my life and in my marriage.” And people look at that and say, “No thanks!” I rejoice with men who are married to women who are committed to the beautification of their soul. Those women who manifest “the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.”

I rejoice because I know that I can look into the eyes of my wife Nancy and I’ll never see bottom. I never have to worry about her dressing immodestly. I don’t have to worry about her embarrassing me in public or in private because of the way she looks, talks, acts, dresses, carries herself. I never have to worry about her devotion to me. I don’t have to worry about her purity of heart. I don’t have to worry about what she is modeling for my children and my grandchildren and the children in the church. I never have to worry about her unfailing love for me or her family because I know that love is eclipsed only by her undying allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of you women know that about yourself, and many of you men have that same kind of wife. But my heart goes out to you, men, if you don’t have that kind of wife. Your work is cut out for you.

Ladies, likewise for you. Men who are married to women like this never have to worry about their wives respectfully submitting to their leadership because their wife is a woman of reverential substance. If you’re an unsaved man and you’re listening to my voice and you’ve got a wife like that, you need to realize that that’s a demonstration of God’s grace in your life. You need to repent of your sin and you need to see your wife as an instrument of righteousness in your life, and ask her about the transforming power of the gospel of Christ that has caused her to be what she is.

Peter gives a biblical role model here in verses 5 and 6. “For in this way in former times the holy women also,” referring to women of the Old Testament, “who hoped (trusted) in God, used to adorn themselves.” The grammar tells us that they were repeatedly, continually adorning themselves here with a gentle and quiet spirit. It goes on to say they are “being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord,” in other words, master. Again the grammar here would indicate that Sarah had a perpetual attitude of submission, whereby she continually and constantly adorned her heart with “the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit” and thus she maintained an attitude of respectful submission to her husband Abraham. I’m sure at times he was very difficult to live with. She was a model of virtue and submission.

Frankly, all Christian women who imitate her, as the text says, “...you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.” Literally, if you are doing what is right and not succumbing to fear, in other words, fearing your husband, fearing what type of tirade he may go into, and thus acquiescing to his ungodly demands or fearing him in such a way that you’re going to completely bail out of the marriage. Instead of that, it says, “if you are doing right and not succumbing to fear you have become Sarah’s daughters.” What a magnificent encouragement this must have been to the dear Christian women of the first century. Many of them married to men that I’m sure were abusive, because that culture allowed for that. What hope and joy there is in serving the Lord by being committed to respectful submission and reverential substance.

Well next, we have a couple of words here to believing husbands. Again, remember the context here. Even Christian men were heavily influenced by a virulent strain of male chauvinism in their Greco-Roman and even Judaistic society, very similar to what we have in our society. It seems like we’ve got two extremes: we’ve got the chauvinists and we’ve got the effeminate sissy boys, girly-men, as some

famous person has called them. Men, there's two things we must be committed to as we look at this text. The first is sympathetic devotion. Verse 7 says, "You husbands likewise." In other words, similarly, even as your wives have a heart of respectful submission to you that flows from the wellspring of their reverent substance, you husbands have a responsibility as well. He says, I want you to "live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman." Understanding here, the King James says that we are to "dwell with them according to knowledge." It's the idea of having a conscious, informed, sensitivity to our wives. It's the idea of having a tender consideration to her physical, emotional and spiritual needs, based on a firm knowledge of God's Word regarding her role and your role. That is sympathetic devotion.

This describes a man who not only studies the Word, but studies His wife as well. It's a man who is considerate, attentive, benevolent, chivalrous, compassionate, polite, patient, warm-hearted, tender and sympathetic. Here is a man that reflects upon his wife pensively, who analyzes her, who gives great attention to her, who concentrates on her, who wants to discuss things with her as he studies her, because he is consumed with helping her become conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is living with his wife in an understanding way. Men, I ask you, is that how you treat your wife? Is that the attitude of your heart? Or do you demean her or disrespect her? Do you talk down to her? Do you treat her like a child? Men, are you aware of the types of things that disappoint your wife? Are you aware of the ways that you hurt your wife? That you neglect your wife?

Likewise are you aware of those ways in which your wife is violating the principles that God has laid out for her in her role as a wife and mother? Do you love her and the Lord enough to be obedient and to confront her and to teach her and to pray for her? To lead her? Some of you men have wives that are the very opposite of a gentle and quiet spirit. My heart goes out to you. Your work is cut out for you. Some of you men treat your wives like children or like slaves, and for you, you need to repent. In Ephesians 5:25-28 the Holy Spirit speaks through the apostle Paul and says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself."

It's so tragic, over the years in counseling I find women are so often scared to death of their husbands. They're terrified to stand up to them and confront them in their sin; husbands that talk down to them, that boss them around, make all the decisions, treat them with contempt. Husbands that violate Colossians 3:19 where we're told to "love your wives, and do not be embittered against them." Embittered means to make them bitter towards you because you are harsh, you are demanding, because you are always finding fault, you are impatient, you're constantly ridiculing and nagging them. What a tragic thing, a thing that should break your heart and cause you to fall on your face before a holy God and cry out for forgiveness. Go to your wife and ask her to forgive you as well.

There's the other end of the spectrum, the man that is totally uninvolved. He wants nothing to do with his wife or his children, he just lives in his own little world. He won't lead, he won't initiate as a spiritual leader, he's basically a wimp. Men, we are called to "live with our wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman." In other words we are not to live with her as a brute nor as a wimp. But to love her as Christ loved the church. What does it mean, a weaker vessel? Certainly she is not weaker intellectually, nor is she spiritually inferior to men. This has the idea of

being, first of all, weaker physically. It's hard for men to identify with what it feels like to be physically weaker than a person even your own size. You take the muscle mass of a man versus a woman, the same size of muscle mass in a man will automatically be 50% stronger. Men, it's hard for us to know what it would be like to have to submit to an authority that could slam us to the floor. Women must do that. We must provide for them therefore, protection and provision, and never intimidate them with our physical power nor abandon them in the weakness of our character.

But the weaker vessel also refers to the idea of emotional sensitivity. Women are precious, fragile beings. When it comes to being hurt relationally, wounded emotionally, they are very easily hurt, far more quickly than a man. I believe Peter has already alluded to this when he warns the women to not succumb to fear at the end of verse 6. Husbands, I find, are routinely amazed when they discover how abusive and insensitive many of their words and actions are. Thus we are called to "live with our wives in an understanding way." In other words, men, learn what it means to be committed to sympathetic devotion.

Finally, men, we need to be selfless in our honor towards them. Sympathetic devotion and selfless honor. Look at verse 7, "and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." Let's remember that men and women are of equal value to God, both are created in His image, and yet both are created very differently. The difference is far more than anatomically or physiologically. True Christian manhood and womanhood understands how we are to complement, not duplicate, one another. So men, we must learn that because she is that weaker vessel, we have an even greater responsibility to treat her as a prized possession, "to grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life."

In other words, husbands, let's learn to honor our wives, to respect them. To cherish them, to nurture them, to admire them. She, like you, is a recipient of divine grace. A fellow heir. She's not only your sister in Christ, but she's your wife, your soul mate. The two of you have become one. You must understand that God has given her to you to complement you. It doesn't mean to pay you compliments. It means is to fill you out, to complete you, to make you whole. You are not all that you need to be apart from your wife, and you need to understand that and to tap into that.

Marriage is a magnificent opportunity to manifest the marvels of divine grace, the marvels of unmerited favor, to demonstrate the love of Christ in the context of the covenantal bond of matrimony. The result, men and women, is intense joy and blessing. And you will see this in your children and in your grandchildren and in your great-grandchildren and in all that come in contact with you. We do it moreover so that our prayers may not be hindered.

I close with this thought, men. If you are failing to treat your wife with sympathetic devotion and selfless honor, you are out of fellowship with God and your prayers will be hindered. Some of you men are even embarrassed to pray with your wife. You know why? Because you are not living consistently with what God has called you to do. And it says right here in this text, "your prayers are hindered." Not to mention that when you go before God and pour out your heart, there's a part of your conscience that's gnawing at you because in your hypocrisy you are asking God to bless you while you in return are treating your wife with disrespect. Your prayers will be hindered. God wants you to get your life straight first, and He's given you the opportunity to live out what it means to be a man of God in the context of your wife and your children and your family, and you must start there. Men, you will never

have an effective prayer life until you learn to live with your wife in an understanding way and grant her honor as a fellow heir of grace.

As Peter says in verse 12, later on, “For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” Oh dear Christian wife and Christian husband, learn well these lessons of promise. Wives, be committed to respectful submission and reverent substance. Husbands, let’s learn to be committed to sympathetic devotion and selfless honor. As we do so, God will open up the gates of heaven and shower us with blessings beyond our imagination.

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