*The Godly Husband*

1 Peter 3:7

2/26/23

Last week we mediated on Peter’s instruction to wives. This week, it is the husbands’ turn. Thinking biblically about God’s design for our homes is vital to our witness in our culture. Eph. 5 teaches that marriage pictures the gospel. Healthy marriages reflect an accurate gospel; unhealthy marriages present a distorted picture of the gospel. We all want healthy marriages. Men, achieving that desire starts with us because God has appointed men as leaders of the home.

The English puritans of the 1500 & 1600s understood the importance of this. They argued that every home was a church; and every father was the pastor of his household, responsible to shepherd everyone under his roof into a deeper relationship with God. Although I disagree with the language of a home being a church and the father serving as pastor, I admire the way puritan fathers cultivated an environment that helped their wives thrive spiritually and pointed children to belief in Christ and a life of meaningful service in His kingdom.

That principal rests behind Peter’s instructions to husbands. There is a theme running through this section of 1 Peter. We submit to governing authorities for the Lord’s sake, demonstrating, even in unfair treatment, our faith. Slaves submit to their masters with all respect, not because slavery is just or good, but because their patient endurance in doing what is right points their masters to the salvation Christ provides. And wives submit to their husbands, even one who is undeserving of it, so that they might be won for Christ through the godly character of their wife. When Peter says *in the same way*, he is tying his instruction to husbands to this same principle. Although husbands are not called to submit, they are told to lovingly care for their wives in a way that points to the glory of the gospel. The substance of our faith is to control every facet of our lives, including our relationship with our spouses.

To drive this point home, Peter gives husbands two commands. I have been wrestling with how to explain the first one for a month, because it can sound quite alarming to 21st century ears. Peter calls women weaker and says this is the case because they are women. This is sure to make the feminist’s blood boil. But a careful look at the text reveals that Peter is not degrading women. He is actually elevating them in the eyes of their husbands, calling men to show women the dignity God bestows on them. So, let’s pull this command apart to see what Peter is saying.

This verse is challenging to translate, which is evident when you compare translations. Although I am a huge fan of the NASB, this is one place where they could have done a better job. A literal translation of the phrase *live with your wives in an understand way* would be *live with according to knowledge*. The word wife isn’t even in the text, although a Greek reader would understand that it is implied. What is meant is that men are to act towards their wives in accordance with knowledge. Our behavior is to be informed by the knowledge of God.

What is the knowledge the husband is to have? *That his wife is someone weaker.* To 21st century American ears, this sounds demeaning. But Peter does not mean that women are inferior, less capable, or nothing more than damsels in distress. What he is communicating is that women are the gentler of the two sexes. This is true physical and emotionally. Men and women are physically different, for a good reason. Furthermore, women are more sensitive and in tune with their emotions than men. This is what enables them to be the nurturers and care givers. There is a reason a hurt child wants their mom, not their dad. Although there are other circumstances when they would prefer dad to mom, in that moment, the mom is better suited to meet their needs. So the weakness here has to do with their gentler disposition.

Finally, this disposition is rooted in her womanhood. Women are the way they are because God designed them that way. Men and women share many things in common because we are equal bearers of God’s image. There is much overlap between the two genders. Yet God purposefully made the genders unique. It is the differences that make men and women perfect complements to one another. God has wired men to be protectors and providers. He wired women to be nurturers and care givers. He equips each of us to function in the role He assigned us. This does not mean that women cannot be good workers or hold an influential place in society. It simply means that God has hard-wired us differently, and that is a good thing.

What this command is telling us, men, is that the treatment of our wives is to be informed by a knowledge of how God has designed her. Know who God has made your wife to be. Your role as her husband is to help her become the godliest woman she can be. God wired her to think and feel differently than you do. Do not be frustrated by that. This is what makes her the perfect complement to you. Rather than knocking her down, demeaning her, or taking her for granted, you are to live with the knowledge of who God made her to be so you can love her and lead her towards a greater relationship with Him!

Not it is wise to remember at this point that sin makes doing this substantially harder. In the same way a wife may struggle to submit to her husband, a husband struggles to lovingly lead his wife. We are more inclined to abuse our authority over our wives by domineering them or treating them as second-class citizens or even as property. Historically this has certainly been the case. Today, it is more common for men to neglect or even abandon entirely their leadership responsibilities at home. But both instances are a departure from God’s design.

Men, we are to lovingly lead our wives. This requires a knowledge of what God desires for woman in general. But more than that, it requires a unique knowledge of who God has made your wife to be. So know your wife well. Understand and cultivate her strengths. Know, have grace for, and loving help her grow in her weaknesses. Value her for what God has made her to be and serve her that she might become all that God desires. Do this, irrespective of whether or not she is meeting whatever needs you feel you require of her.

The first command calls husbands treat their wives according to the knowledge of how God has designed her. The second command removes any notion that the male-female relationship to be one of superiority and inferiority. Husbands are to show their wives honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life. Yes, God has assigned men and women to function differently in the everyday flow of life; but there is no distinction in our value to God. Every person is a sinner; and every Christian, regardless of gender, is a sinner saved by the unmerited favor of God. Men are to honor their wives as a fellow heir of this grace. Men, see your wife through the lens of the gospel. See her as God sees her. Then love her how God loves her. This was radical teaching in the 1st century, when many women were treated as second class citizens or even property.

According to Eph. 5, men are to love their wives like Christ loved the church. How did Christ love His bride? By sacrificing Himself on the cross, that she might be purified from sin. In the same way, we are to sacrificially serve our wives, even at the expense of ourselves. We must build them up, meet their needs, and help them become better followers of Jesus. By doing this, we honor them as fellow heirs of the grace of life. Ladies, if you have a husband who does this, realize the rare gift God has given you.

What we are seeing in the husband-and-wife dynamic is the same thing we saw in the previous passagaes. In the same way our faith controls our conduct as citizens and workers, it should also transform our marriages. I tell young people who are looking for a spouse to ask this question before their emotions run away with their heads: *does this person make me a better follower of Jesus, or do they hinder my pursuit of Christ?* Ladies this is a vital question for you to ask because you must follow this man once you say I do.

Notice something else about this second command. Husbands are told to *honor* their wives. When Salome and I met with the pastor who did our wedding, he took us to Eph. 5 and talked about how she needed me to love her and how I needed her to show me respect. Those are the commands given in Eph. 5. But as I have studied in the years since, I have come to realize that this is an incomplete picture. Paul tells young women in Titus 2 to learn to love their husbands, because a husband needs the love of their wife just as much as a wife needs the love of her husband; and Peter tells husbands to honor their wives because they need that from their husbands just as much as the husband needs it from his wife. We all need our love, honor, and respect from our spouses. Men, it is our responsibility to establish a culture in our homes where these qualities can thrive. If you do that well, you will probably find your wife willingly following you anywhere God takes you.

Our text ends with an interesting statement, as Peter connects a husband’s display of honor towards his wife to the effectiveness of his prayer life. He is to show honor, so that his prayers may not be hindered. Peter is reenforcing a principle we see throughout the Bible. There is a direct connection between the practice of our faith and our enjoyment of God’s presence. A husband who is acting like a jerk, should not expect God to meet him in a vibrant prayer life. When one area of our life is spiritual sick, it affects everything else. Being a good husband is not the secret formula to getting God to give you everything you ask for. But failing to be a loving husband will hinder one’s fellowship with God. At is core, prayer is communion with God. It isn’t about telling the sovereign ruler of the universe how to better administrate His rule. It is about coming into His presence for fellowship, to experience His grace and mercy, and to recalibrate our thinking to His will. When we are not living like we should, our ability to do these things well is hindered. More on this theme next time, as it is the point of our next text.

As we draw this to a close, I want to give a brief exhortation to husbands, to wives, and to singles. First, men: God has assigned you as the spiritual leader of your home. To do that well, you must be a spiritually minded man. Do you want your children to love and serve the Lord? Then show them what that looks like in real life by loving and serving the Lord. You want their marriages to thrive? Then cultivate a mutually loving and honoring relationship with your wife. Immerse yourselves in God’s word; then order your life around the principles you find in it. Teach your family to do the same. A healthy home starts with you. It is time for men to awaken from their spiritual apathy and become the kind of men God desires us to be. Some of us need to go home and apologize to our wives for the way we have failed to lovingly lead our homes.

To you wives, find loving ways to respond to your husband’s leadership. This is especially true if your husband has not led your home well in the past but is now trying to learn how to do that. I have watched more than one wife complain about a lack of spiritual leadership from their husband then turn around and belittle their husband’s efforts when they try to grow into that role. Do not do that. Help him grow into the role God has given him. Your loving support may be the difference between success and failure.

In the same way your husband is to live with you in an understanding way, seek to be a woman that is a joy to live with. Proverbs 21:19 says it is better to live a in desert land than with a contentious and vexing woman. Pr. 27:15 says *a constant dripping on a day of steady rain and a contentious woman are alike.* The same way in that your husbands display of love will make submitting to him much easier, your conduct can make his leadership of your home either a joy or a burden. Seek to make it the former. It is quite possible that some of you need to apology to your husbands this afternoon for the way you have kicked against his leadership.

For our singles of all ages, I have three quick thoughts. 1) the most important thing you can do to prepare for marriage is cultivate a godly life. Pursue the qualities that will make you a godly husband or wife. 2) wait for a spouse who will make you a better Christian. It is better to be single for a lifetime than to marry someone who hinders your relationship with God. And finally, do not underestimate the value of singleness. I am sure that is not what you want to hear from a happily married man. But Scripture says that there is value in a life of singleness too. It even says that it is a gift that God gives to some people. If you are not content in Christ without a spouse, you won’t become content in Christ once you have a spouse.

Peter has been teaching us throughout this letter that our relationship with Christ ought of be our ultimate concern in every relationship, attitude, and circumstance we face. We are to live every moment of every day for His glory. May God help us to that end.

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.*