

## **THE HEALING HUSBAND**

### **1 Peter 3:7**

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1 Peter 3, a very short portion of Scripture today, verse 7: “Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (NIV).

Last week we looked at verses 1–6 and called the message “The Healing Wife.” Today, verse 7, “The Healing Husband.” We indicated that Peter doesn’t devote six times as much material to wives as husbands because they need it more but because, rather, the wives at the time he was writing had a much more difficult social position than the husbands. Especially the wives married to non-Christian husbands, which is the case of the advice given in the first six verses. But Peter in this verse today has an enormous amount to say and a few words to Christian husbands.

If you’re here and you’re not a husband—and at least half of you are members of the feminine part of the human race and are not husbands, so I don’t want to simply preach to the husbands this morning—I would like to say that this passage of Scripture not only talks to us about being a healing husband but also about being a healing person. It’s part of Peter’s counsel to struggling Christians. He’s talked about a number of categories of struggling Christians in chapter 2. Now he’s talking in verses 1–7 about struggling Christians in marriage.

One of the problems with a marriage may be that we try to put all the responsibility on one partner when it’s really a responsibility on both the husband and the wife. Peter doesn’t simply talk to wives; he also talks to husbands. Any marriage in which all the privileges are on one side

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and all the obligations are on the other side is bound to be an imperfect marriage with every chance of failure.

#### **I. The healing husband shows thoughtful consideration for his wife.**

Peter talks to us about some characteristics of the healing husband, or even the healing person.

First, he states that the healing husband shows thoughtful consideration for his wife: “In the same way be considerate as you live with your wives.” Literally this verse can be translated, “Husbands, live understandingly with your wives.” And the word “understandingly” refers to mental processes. It calls upon the husband to take note intellectually and mentally of how to live with his wife.

Peter uses the words “Husbands, in the same way,” or “Husbands likewise.” To what does “likewise” or “in the same way” refer? Notice he uses the same word of wives in 3:1: “Wives likewise be submissive.” Or “Wives, in the same way be submissive.” “In the same way” as what? What are both wives and husbands being called to? They’re being called back to verse 21 of chapter 2. “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (NIV). So therefore wives, in the same manner as Christ, endureth. And husbands, in the same manner as Christ, live. When we’re called as husbands to be considerate of our wives, to live understandingly, we’re really being called to treat our wives as we would treat ourselves. Or to treat our wives as Christ would treat us, which is even a higher standard.

There are some things that I know the Lord would never do to my wife because of His thoughtful consideration. He would never curse my wife. He would never yell at my wife. He would never insult my wife. He would never hit my wife. He would never be rude to my wife. He would never bully my wife. He would never treat her like a slave. He would never tell her to shut up.

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(He might tell her to be quiet, but not shut up.) He would not allow himself or ever demand to be waited upon hand and foot. He would not give her the silent treatment. He would not tell her that her opinion was unimportant. He would not insist that His demands be met without considering her needs. Looking at the example of Christ, that's a way to live considerately.

While I know the Lord would never do those things, I'd have to ask on the positive side, how would the Lord treat my wife? How would the Lord treat your wife? He would live with us considerately on these bases. One is that He would model any response that He desired rather than simply demanding that response. If husbands want their wives to be more submitted to them then they are not to order their wives to be submitted. They are to show their wives through example what the true nature of submission is. When the Lord wanted the disciples to express humility to one another and they weren't doing it, He didn't give them a lecture on how to be humble. He took a towel and washed their feet. One of the things that needs to take place within the home structure is, instead of the husband sitting on a pedestal demanding submission, the husband is to seek the submission of his wife. We must, as a follower of Jesus Christ, live in His example and take a towel and serve. Jesus had the headship by right, but He earned it. He didn't take anything on simply an honorary basis. That goes with our headship in families as well.

The Lord would live in thoughtful consideration in that He would initiate communication when there was a breakdown because of an argument or a misunderstanding. The Lord would not wait for the wife to initiate communication. He would be the one to initiate it. This perhaps is hard because in our culture we are, as males, taught to live in a macho sort of a context that holds that the woman is the one to have the softer emotions and empathy, and therefore she should be the bridge builder when there is a breakdown of understanding and communication.

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But Christian marriage is not this way, because Christ seeks the lead in restoring communication when it is broken. He exemplified this continually with His disciples.

In addition to initiating communication, the Lord would initiate reconciliation. He does this with Peter when Peter's failed Him miserably. He appears to Peter. The Scripture says, "The Lord appeared to Peter." And the Lord would also have us as husbands in the home seek to be agents of reconciliation.

The Lord would also exhibit responsibility and provide security for His wife. He does this for His church. He says, "No one could pluck you out of My hand" (see John 10:29). Psalm 23, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." He has promised never to leave us or forsake us. The husband is to assure his wife that, no matter what, he is with her. No matter what the misunderstanding will be in their relationship, he is not going to undermine her security by threats of walkout and threats of punishment and threats of denial. The husband is to remain loyal and committed and provide an emotional security for his wife as well as a security of knowing there are resources—that he will work, that he will provide for his own family. He is to make that home a safe place in every way—spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and financially.

He should also take the lead in demonstrating tenderness. The Lord takes the lead in demonstrating tenderness time and time again in His ministry. He was the person who loved to reach out and touch, who was easy to reach out and touch. The Lord, in His maleness, shows us as men what we are to be in relationship to women. We're not to simply leave it to our wives to demonstrate tenderness. Tenderness is a mark of manhood. It involves an aspect of this matter of living considerately with our wives.

### **II. The healing husband demonstrates courtesy.**

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The healing husband lives considerately with his wife. And, second, the healing husband demonstrates courtesy. “Treat them with respect as the weaker partner” (1 Peter 3:7). I’d like to work this phrase backwards, beginning with the word “partner” and working toward the front. “Partner”—the King James Version translates this word as “vessel.” Treat them with respect as the weaker vessel. In this case the King James is a more accurate translation, because the word is “vessel.” It is the same word that Paul uses of himself in Acts 9:15: “Paul, a chosen vessel.” We get the word “vessel” from a Latin word that means “vase.” If we translate 1 Peter 3:7 as “the weaker vase” we may get a better understanding of what Peter is saying. The wife is to be seen in terms of her delicacy, her usefulness, her worth, her beauty, her fragileness, and is to be treated therefore as such. She is the weaker vase. Not weaker morally. Not weaker intellectually. Many wives are smarter than their husbands. Not weaker spiritually. But weaker physically. I don’t think it takes any brainy scientist with much reason to figure out that men biologically are, by and large, stronger than women. Therefore a man is to live with his wife with courtesy because she is the weaker vase. He too is a vase, but he’s a stronger one physically. He is, in regard to this weaker vase, to treat her with respect.

The root word behind “respect” is the same word that in 1 Peter 1:19 is translated as “precious.” The precious blood of Christ. What Peter is saying in 3:7 is the husband is to regard with preciousness his wife as the weaker vase. She is one of a kind. She is a jewel. Husbands are to have a special place of honor in their hearts for their wives.

Look at the example of Christ again to this regard how He would treat His bride, the Church, with courtesy. He never leads from the power of position. Instead, He teaches in Matthew 20:25–28 that we are not to be in our relationship like the Gentiles who lord it over one another and who are always going for the power position. He instead tells us that “whoever is first among

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you must be your servant or your slave.” That renders the whole contemporary discussion in Christian circles on headship in a whole new light. If you insist on being the head of your house what you are simply demanding to be is the one who serves the most. That’s the whole meaning of headship.

Christ, in regard to His position, does not lead from power. Although He is Lord, He does not serve as a tinhorn dictator. He never wins His ways by barking orders. But He wins His ways through drawing in love. There is a magnetism about His love.

The husband, like Christ, could never simply say, “I’m the boss. You follow orders.” But live with courtesy.

It’s interesting to look back and see how people distort the Scriptures for their own ends. We’re all guilty of this, I suppose. I ran across a translation of 1 Peter that was done in 1551. This is how he rendered 1 Peter 3:7: “If the wife be not obedient unto thee, endeavor to beat the fear of God into her head that thereby she might be compelled to learn her duty and to do it.”

Pride of position and authoritarian spirit are destructive to fellowship. If I or members of the leadership team of this church begin to be proud of our position and demonstrate an authoritarian spirit, it will have severe and adverse consequences on this church body. If it’s true of a church body, it’s true of a home as well. An authoritarian spirit is destructive to fellowship. The Lord does not lead from the power of position. He leads courteously. He does not lead from the vantage point of superior to inferior. Even though He is Lord, He does not say to us, “I’m better than you.” He gives us a feeling of His infinite worth in His eyes. He does not lead from the need to control. The Lord is secure enough in himself so He can trust others and see their potential. God is calling Christian husbands to be secure enough in their own manhood that they can allow the Lord to work out the potential that He has in mind for their wives. And not suppress them

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with a smothering blanket, demands that they be locked in a cage of service to the husband alone. But to free them, from the standpoint that they are called to be whatever God is calling them to be.

The Lord does not lead us from the vantage point of His need to control, and He does not lead us through using fear as the basis of relationship. He does not lead us by making threats against us.

But He leads us by loving us and having faith in us.

It seems to me that these are some of what's involved when we talk about the husband living courteously with his wife as the weaker vase.

### **III. The healing husband comprehends his wife's spiritual equality.**

A third thing about the healing husband is that the healing husband comprehends his wife's spiritual equality. "Heirs with you of the gracious gift of life" (1 Peter 3:7). The wife has the same calling in Christ in the sense of redemption. There is neither male nor female. The wife therefore is not a piece of property, not a thing—something that was very opposed to the world's setting and the Roman, Greek, and even the Jewish world at the time of the writing of 1 Peter.

The women had so few rights in society. But the New Testament presented a higher ideal as the Spirit moved upon the writers. The wife is not a piece of property or a thing. The wife is a fellow heir of God's grace, a fellow citizen of heaven. One called alongside in our lives whom we can talk with and plan with and pray with.

### **IV. The healing husband guards the marriage relationship with God.**

Fourth, the healing husband in Peter guards the marriage relationship with God "so that nothing will hinder your prayers" (verse 7). This whole matter of thoughtful consideration and courtesy and a fellow heir—this whole matter leads to the fact that when husbands are responding to their wives as is outlined in Scripture, their prayers are not hindered. The word for "hinder" literally

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means “to cut into” or “to interrupt.” It may be his own personal prayers that are being interrupted because of not living with his wife in a godly manner. The prayers that are being hindered may refer to their prayer time as a couple, that when there is stress in the relationship the couple really does not feel at ease to pray together because there is such thoughtlessness and inconsideration. Perhaps one of the reasons your prayer life has been intersected or cut into is that there is not thoughtful consideration in your home, one for another. Your prayers are hindered. The hindering can be in the relationship between the husband and the wife. Or it can be between the husband and God. It can be horizontal or vertical. Peter here places a responsibility on the husband to live considerately with his wife that his relationship to God and their relationship to God might go on unhindered.

We’re not looking for a utopia in the Christian home. We realize that there probably isn’t a Christian home represented that is perfect. But we’re looking for Christian homes in which there is growth and caring. Dr. Shoemaker, in his book *With the Holy Spirit and Fire*, puts it this way: “A Christian home is not one in which the relationships are perfect, but one in which the imperfections and failures are acknowledged and where problems are worked out in prayer and in obedience to the light God sends.” In such homes there is great freedom for people to say what they think and express what they feel. People are allowed to grow up, to make mistakes, to be themselves, to laugh. And laughing is one of the great qualities of the Christian home.

Before a bride enters for her wedding, her way is strewn with flowers. The husband’s task is to go before his wife in life and strew the flowers of his love upon her path so that wherever she walks she may walk upon the grace and the kindness and the love that he has prepared for her. I think that’s exactly what Peter is talking about in 1 Peter 3:7. We are to live thoughtfully with

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our wives. We are to strew petals of flowers in their way that God might fill our homes and season them with His grace.

### **Closing Prayer**

Your first priority, Lord, is that we might on an individual level come to know You as Savior and Lord. Your second priority is that in our homes we might live then with Your presence indwelling us so that we become to one another as You have become to us. That You become in our lives the Lord that governs our conversation, that You keep us from throwing the angry and the bitter words. You keep us from the periods of silence. You keep us from the times when we are so angry that if we're not careful our own body can slip out of control in rage. You keep us from crudeness and rudeness. You cause our way to be indwelt by Your presence so that in the most central area of our life of discipleship, our behavior in our home, we are to reflect Your face, reflect Your language, reflect Your touch, reflect Your care. Grant, Lord, that these words today from Your Word may be a means of continued healing and wholeness in each of our families. For all Christian husbands we pray that as we grow into the stature of Jesus Christ we might grow more in the ways that this verse has for us. Throughout all of our family and personal relationships we may be characterized by the grace of Jesus Christ who is our example. In His name we pray. Amen.