

This Exiled Life – Part 3

Disobedient or Tender Husbands?

1 Peter 3:1,7

Mark Vroegop

¹ *Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives . . . 1 Peter 3:1 (ESV)*

⁷ *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)*

Do you believe that the Bible really works? I hope you do. I do too.

But I must tell you that it really helps me when I get to hear a personal example – a testimonial of how the Bible really does work.

I started with a new group of people in my sermon application team this week. As we were talking about the sermon on submission from last Sunday, a man in our group told us that he was living proof that 1 Peter 3 works. He had lived in that text, and he came to faith in Christ as he watched his wife's life. Brian was an unconverted religious man, and when the dramatic change happened in Lori's life, he was compelled to follow Jesus. With a bit of emotion, he shared with us how much he loved 1 Peter 3 and last week's sermon because it reminded him of what God had done for him through his submissive, obedient life.

And I know that he's not the only one. There are other stories like Brian's. So let's realize that what we are talking about in this series relates to real people, real marriages, and really important truths.

Marriage as Exile

Last week we resumed our study of 1 Peter by looking at the unique calling that God has given to women when their marriages become their place of exile. It is a painful situation that many Christian women find themselves in as they try to figure out how to follow Jesus while also following an imperfect man.

We learned that Christians are called to be exiles in some of the most practical areas of their lives. Their spiritual identity of being God's people does not give them license to rebel, but instead it calls them to a life of joyful, God-centered, and gospel-shaped submission. Whether it is the calling to be submissive to human institutions, to employers, or to disobedient husbands, Christianity can be a powerful force for change.

When the gift of submission is given, it becomes a powerful strategy to reach an imperfect husband, a marker of what true beauty really is, and part of the long legacy of women throughout history. Over the

last week, I heard from a number of women who are on this journey or who have come through it. These women need our support and encouragement. And we learn from them as they model the exiled life in its most intimate setting.

Our text today (or our verse for today) continues the focus on marriage, but now it directs the attention toward the kind of husband that married men should be. Rather than being marked by the kind of disobedience that we learned about in verse one, we see the picture here of the kind of man who lives out his exile in a unique way.

Now the instruction to men is set in a different context than it is to women. More on this in a moment. But I want all of us to take note of what is in this short passage.

If you are a married man, you need to listen carefully to what I'm about to say. There are a number of important passages about what kind of pace you are to set, what kind of tone you are to use, and what kind of actions you are to take. This is one of four or five passages that represent the essence of what it means to be a godly husband. At the end of this message, I'm going to specifically pray for you because I think having godly men who understand this text is essential for the church to be healthy.

If you are a single man or a young man, what I'm about to share with you is the model. This is what you need to grow into. These are qualities and the thinking which should be a target for you. You should find men like this around you (we have many of them at College Park Church) and take them out for coffee so that you can learn from them. This is who you need to be in the future, but also now as you show interest in young women.

If you are a married woman, this is what you should pray for your husband. This is what you should praise and help him achieve. And where he is lacking, you should do your best to help him without becoming disappointed or demanding. If you are an unmarried woman, this is the kind of man you should look for. Don't settle for some warm body because you don't want to be alone. Use this text as a framework.

And if you are not a Christian, I hope that you will listen carefully to see one of the ways that Christianity is transformational. I want you to see how a relationship with Jesus changes how a person thinks, what they love, and how they act in many ways, including marriage.

Now that I hopefully have everyone's attention, and you see how this text could have wide ranging applications, let's dig into verse seven. There is one command and three reasons why it should be embraced by the Christian men who are trying to live as exiles in their marriages.

One Command: Be Considerate

The main word from last week's message as it related to married women was submission. The main word for married men is for them to be considerate. It is the main way that they live out their exile. Let me show you how this appears in the text and what it means.

Notice that once again, the verse begins with the word "likewise." That is how chapter three began as Peter talked to the wives, and it is connected to the theme of Christlikeness in 1 Peter 2:22-25. Jesus provided exiles an example of how they are to live. They are to follow His example. Now for the wives, this

means that they are to follow His example by virtue of their suffering while being married to a disobedient man. But that is not the same application for husbands.

Instead, they are to follow the example of Jesus, not because they are suffering, but by using their position of authority to lay down their lives and to be Christ-like. They are to be something that the world would see as odd or even counter-productive. This is, yet again, an example of the remarkable upside down logic of the gospel.

This last week the Worship Arts Team and I spent a day together, as we have weekly for the last three years, talking about the intentionality behind what we are trying to do on Sunday. We were thinking and praying about how we can do our very best to make our Sunday services a place where people really meet with the Lord. Jake Brothers led us in a devotional to start the day, and it just struck us how powerful and unique the gospel is – that Jesus became sin for us. He went the distance despite who He was as the Son of God, and that becomes our model for how to live. It is what we celebrate so that we will know how to live in every arena of life, including marriage. So, part of the reason why you need to sing, pray when an Elder is praying, and listen when a sermon is being preached is because you get the opportunity to connect where you are living to the beauty of the gospel. Men, when you rehearse the gospel anytime, but especially during worship, you remind your heart as to what kind of man you should be.

With the connection to the example of Jesus in view through the word “likewise,” now notice the specific command. It is connected to the words: “live with your wives in an understanding way.”

The word “live” is a command, and it simply means to share quarters with or the sharing of a life between a husband and wife. It is a word that captures the essence and normalcy of what it means to be married. In fact, to live with someone in our culture is to act like you are married. When we say that the couple is “living together,” it is a polite way (too polite!) to acknowledge that they are acting like they are married but they really aren’t. Living together is what married people are to do.

It is the second word that is really, really, important because it describes the uniqueness and the exilic nature of what a Christian marriage should be. The Greek word is *gnosis*, which means knowledge. For those of you who grew up with the King James Version that should sound familiar because the 17th century translators render this verse as “dwell with them according to knowledge.” The NIV from the 20th Century says, “be considerate.” You need to understand both to get to the meaning of this verse.

In order to be considerate, you have to know something. They go together. In order to pay for the person behind you at Starbucks’ drive-thru, you have to know that they are there. To be considerate, you have to consider something and then respond in the right way. Another word for this could be thoughtful.

So, men, listen carefully: in order to fulfill this command, you have to use your brain. You have to think! You have to know some things. You’ll never be considerate if you are not seeking the right kind of knowledge.

What things should you be knowledgeable about?

Marriage – I think that this command simply means that husbands need to be “aware” that you are living with a woman – another human being. You need to be actively concerned about that other person. As a married man, you have taken on the added privileges and the burdens of having another person to consider. You are no longer single, and you have to “know” that.

Yourself – You need to know what you are really like. You need to know what about you is hard to live with. You need to know where your personality, passion, desires, idiosyncrasies, and weaknesses make life challenging for your wife.

Your wife – You need to know what makes your wife tick, what she loves, what is irritating, what she values, what is scary, and what makes her content. You need to know about her burdens, her pressures, her unique challenges, and her needs. You need to know her struggles, her emotions, the state of her soul, and what makes her thrive. Study the season of life that you are in and what her unique challenges are. Learn what is important to her and meaningful to her. Husbands, you need to study your wives. You study what you love, so if you love your wife, then be knowledgeable about her.

Communication – Watch her. Listen to her. Talk to her. Ask her questions. Figure out what she is really saying. Learn what she really means. Learn the different inflections of “I’m doing fine.” You need to know what to say and how to say it. You need to know when to say it, when to say nothing, when just to hold her, and when she’s looking for advice or for you to fix the problem.

Actions – You need to connect what you know with actions. Information and intentions are not considerate if they are not acted upon! You may know that your wife wants you to listen to her, and you may know that you should listen to her, but if you don’t act upon it – turn the TV off, put down your phone, look her in the eyes and really listen – you’re not being understanding or considerate.

I could go on with other categories like being knowledgeable about culture, other women in general, her relationships, common fears, sexuality, physical challenges, etc. I think you get the point. More than the particular subject, the lesson here is that you are living your life as “wife-aware.” And that results in a relationship with her that is characterized by consideration, understanding, and knowledge.

Any man can treat a woman like an object, a piece of property that he owns. Any man can be dismissive, degrading, condescending, demanding, or selfish. That’s nothing special. When you act that way, you are just saying that you are like every other man in the world. It doesn’t take courage to be a jerk. It doesn’t take character to be a lazy couch potato. It doesn’t take strength to cut your wife down.

But it takes a miraculous, gospel-driven power to “love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25). It takes the supernatural presence of the Spirit for husbands to “love your wives and do not be harsh with them” (Colossians 3:19).

This makes a powerful statement! Being considerate is the main way that husbands live out their Christian exile. Living with your wives in an understanding way takes the most important earthly relationship on earth, and it makes marriage a platform for the display of the gospel. Considerate husbands make the gospel clear.

Three Reasons to be Considerate

Peter continues in his line of instruction by adding weight and substance to what he is saying. These are helpful ways to plug any leaks in a husband's thinking and to remind those of us who are husbands that there are a number of reasons why we should embrace this posture with our wives. Perhaps all three will resonate with you today. Or maybe in the future, one of these will serve as an encouragement or a rebuke to you.

Husbands are to be considerate because of something important about their wives, themselves and God:

1. Who she is

The next phrase in verse seven serves to justify being considerate in light of who she is: "showing honor to the woman as a weaker vessel." When you read this verse, I'm sure that you immediately wonder what "weaker vessel" means. So do I.

Historically, the interpretation is all over the place. Some commentators suggest that it means that women are more emotional. Others have thought it means that wives are weaker from a spiritual standpoint or that they are more easily tempted. I'll stop there.

As I've looked at the various interpretations, I think that Peter is simply stating something rather obvious related to the differences between men and women. That is why he uses the word "woman" and not "wives."¹ What is the distinction?

In short, it is simply that men are generally physically stronger than women. There may be a few exceptions to this, but the divine design of men and women makes them fundamentally different. That is why there is an NBA and a WNBA. That is why there is a men's rugby team and a women's rugby team. Men generally have a strength advantage.

Now with that comes some implications regarding courage, protection, and leadership. If North Korea sent an armed force into California, we would not want to send out an army of women. It would be unwise and wrong. If you and your wife are sound asleep and you hear an intruder in the house, is it not the man who should be first down the stairs? Should not his wife be cowering behind him, not he behind her?

God designed women and men differently, and that difference comes with the responsibility to use that uniqueness in the right way. The text says that this distinction should create honor on the part of the husband toward his wife. The word means to treat with care, with protection, and with an assessment of value. The difference between them should create courageous care, not abusive authoritarianism.

Men, women are to be treated with honor. She is special, unique, and a treasure. She is valuable, and she should be protected, guarded, and defended. In different cultures and periods of history, honor is shown differently. I just want you to think about how can you show your wives honor. How do you use your strength to be sure that she knows that you treasure her? Do you ever open the door for her, vacuum the

¹ The NIV misses this by translating the word with "them."

house, help with dinner, text her that you are praying for her? Do you protect your calendar, giving her priority? Do your kids know that she's special by how you act?

Being considerate is demonstrated by how you honor your wife. Be a courageous care-giver.

2. Who you are

The second reason relates to a right understanding of who you really are. You might read "weaker vessel" and think that men are superior. That was a common thought in Peter's day. But this passage makes it very clear that while men may be stronger, they are not any more a spiritual heir than their wives.

The phrase "since they are heirs with you of the grace of life" is designed to level the landscape by virtue of a husband and wife's value. Husband, you are different than you wife, but you are not more valuable. She is just as much an heir of God's grace as you are.

Peter is pointing back to what we read in previous chapters. She has the same spiritual inheritance as you (1:4). She is part of the chosen race, the royal priesthood, and the people of God's possession (2:9). There is a spiritual and valuable equity among men and women, between husbands and wives.

In Peter's day, this would have been a very radical thing to say since men were generally regarded as superior. Peter is pointing to the eschatological future where women are going to receive a stunning spiritual inheritance just as men are.

Husbands, you need to realize that you are married to an heiress. She is royalty. She's Victoria and you are Albert, if you are a PBS fan. She possesses the same promise of the future that you have, and she needs to be treated as such. Don't confuse the difference between men and women as a distinction in value. She is a fellow heir of the grace of life.

Your wife has wisdom, insight, and understanding. She's empowered by the same Spirit that you are. She reads the same Bible, worships the same God, and pledges her allegiance to the same Lord. Being considerate means that you know that your wife is a fellow heir of the grace of life.

3. Who God is

The final reason for a posture of consideration is connected to a husband's relationship to God. How a husband treats his wife has implications for the state of his soul. The text says, "so that your prayers may not be hindered." How are his prayers hindered?

It could be that he is not able to pray because he knows how hypocritical it is to take his prayers to God when he is treating his wife sinfully. Or maybe he is so self-centered that he has no desire to pray. Self-sufficient and arrogant people do not pray.

Or it may be that this is a warning that God is not interested in his prayers due to his lack of righteousness. It may be that Peter is setting up 3:12.

¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 1 Peter 3:12 (ESV)

A husband who refuses to humble himself, to be Christ-like to his wife, or to treat her with tenderness is viewed by God as someone who needs spiritual distance from God to awaken his soul.

If you are a husband and your spiritual life is flagging and God feels distant, it may be that He is trying to woo you back to a life of godliness and He wants to start with your relationship with your wife. Could it be that even this morning God is trying to get your attention? Maybe the lack of insight into the Word or direct answers to prayer is because of how you are living with your wife. It may even be the case that God is putting things into your life and frustrating your efforts by not answering your requests because He desires for you to take a close look in the mirror.

Perhaps God is not interested in listening to you until you start to listen to your wife. Maybe He is withdrawing His presence in your life because you've withdrawn your presence from your wife. Men, mark it down somewhere in your mind and heart: how you treat your wife affects your soul.

What kind of vision do we have here? Whether you are a man or woman, married or single, this text is a really important model for what a courageous, godly husband is to be. This vision is what young men should strive to be, what young women should look for. This model is what wives should pray for and affirm in their husbands.

And husbands, living with your wives in an understanding way and being considerate is the main way that you make your Christian exile clear. It is how you are called to use your strength, your authority, and your God-given place in creation.

Tenderness is not weakness. Being considerate is not wimpy. This biblical and transformative vision is for strong, godly men to love their wives as Christ loved the church. The call is to platform the power of the gospel in the midst of a challenging culture by making your marriage the place where the courageous kindness of Christ is clear.

Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.

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