

1 Peter 3:7

1Pe 3:7 (NKJV) Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

In gaining a proper biblical perspective on this verse, how it links to the previous passages, as well as how it relates to our personal lives, it is crucial that we understand something about what we want to define as biblical “roles”. If someone has a particular role to perform at work, that role includes functions and responsibilities, as well as certain tasks that they are to perform with both competence and excellence. No one wants to have someone working for them or with them who is not able to function properly in their role. As a manager, I use to have people who worked for me who worked at a high level of performance, and then I had those who were low performers. They were never satisfied with where they were ranked, always complaining, getting to work late and leaving early to make up for it. They always had a way of impeding the progress of the team. I am always amazed when I watch a NASCAR race to see how fast they can fill up a gas tank with gasoline, jack the car up, wipe off the windshield, and take off four tires and replace them with four new ones in under 14 seconds. I can barely sneeze in 14 seconds. Why can they do that? Well, it is because everyone has a particular role to play and they perform that role with excellence. If one person fails in their performance, the team fails.

In a marriage, everyone has a particular role to play, and in reality **a marriage can never be any better than the combined effort of both partners fulfilling their God-ordained roles for the marriage.**

The husband has a role, the wife has a role, and the children have a role. If we look at [1 Peter 3:7](#) from the perspective of roles, the husband’s role is well defined. First, he is to have the same attitude about his wife that she is to have about him as defined in [1 Peter 3:1-6](#). He is to treat her with respect even if she is not obedient to the Word, he is to be moral in his conduct, he is to have a gracious and peaceful spirit towards his wife, and he is to also imitate Christ in his conduct by “**committing Himself fully to Him who judges righteously**”. On top of that, v7 says that he is to “**dwell with her with understanding**” and he is to always be “**giving honor to the wife**”. Then if you add [Ephesians 5:25-28](#) into the mix, he is to love his wife in the same way that “**Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her**” and he is to “**sanctify and cleanse**” her with the Word of God itself. [1 Corinthians 7:3](#) says “**let the husband render to his wife the affection due her**”. This is no small order, and each of these verses are monumental places where God has clearly defined the husband’s role in the marriage.

If I can say it a different way, the husband is to be a “role model” for his family. **The husband is to always be a reflection of Christ to his family, a representation and a prototype of godliness, a template and a standard for his family to follow.** Every area of his life is to both display and exhibit Christlikeness to his family. His life is to demonstrate to them and for them what it truly means to be godly, what it means to be committed to the things of God, and what it means to be unswerving in one’s faithfulness to Christ. If he is mediocre, casual, and/or fairly unexceptional in these different areas, neither his wife or his children will have any model to follow or imitate, and I would personally imagine that his children may never make it into God’s kingdom. The last thing that a father should ever want to happen is for him stand before God and find out that his unwillingness to model Christ to his family

was the primary reason that his children did not make it into God's family. What a tragedy that he loved himself more than his family.

These are the defining characteristics of what it means to be a godly husband and to be a godly father. If a husband is not allowing God to continuously develop these qualities into his life, then he has no right to complain about how his wife or children may treat him at times. The husband **MUST** understand that his role in the marriage is far, far greater than just providing leadership. His role is not merely management and always giving direction. If that is all that the husband thinks that he is to do, then he has completely missed God's role definitions in Scripture. In fact, if he thinks that the only thing that he does is to give direction to his family, I doubt seriously that his family will follow his leadership. Leadership in a family is always shared. As a husband, I never want to violate the needs and concerns of my wife in my decision making process. Biblical leadership in a family is critically interwoven with a husband's love for God and his ongoing love for his wife and children. So, it is not merely giving instruction. What the husband is doing is defining and modeling what it means to be fully committed to Christ, and what it means to be fully committed to his family. It is my opinion only that the greater his willingness to follow Christ, the less leadership he will have to provide. If he models Christ properly, both his wife and his children will be inclined to simply imitate his life. They will not only come to him for wisdom, but as they grow by watching his life, they will have a greater capacity for making godly decisions simply because they have had a rich and encouraging model to follow.

The problem that most husbands have is that they have set the bar and the standard way too low. They drink a little, curse a little, give lip service to the things of God, and love their recreational priorities more than they love God's Word and God's church. They place their personal priorities and goals above God's priorities for their life, and so that is the model that their family sees, and it is the model that eventually they will most likely follow. **Influence is infectious** – either good or bad. A godly man is always influencing people, always impacting their lives, always leaving his imprint on their life – and there is no greater impact that he can have than on his family. These two passages in **1 Peter 3** and **Ephesians 5** simply raise the bar, and from my understanding of these two passages there is no “out” for the husband. For instance the verb for “**love your wives**” in **Ephesians 5:25** is in the present tense, imperative mood, active voice. That is the simplest and the strongest continuing command parsing of a verb in the New Testament. In **1 Peter 3:7**, the words for “**dwelt with**” and “**giving honor**” are both participles in what is called the “imperative sense”.

Before we ever get into the exegesis and exposition of this passage, I want to make three critical observations about this whole subject of how a husband is to relate to his wife. There are many observations and remarks that could be made, but I want to emphasize these three and I want the husbands to take careful note of each one. Each one of these reflections has great value for both the husband and the wife and cannot be diminished in their value for the marriage.

First of all, whenever we read a verse like **Ephesians 5:25** and try to define the word “**love**” which is the Greek word “*agapao*”, it is a word that is the **epitome of sacrifice**. Christ demonstrated his love for us as believers by giving His life, by sacrificing His life – even when we did not deserve it. There may be times in your life when you do not “feel” that your wife deserves your sacrifice because you see no reason to give it to her. Listen very carefully. You are not sacrificing for your wife because she deserves it. You are making sacrifices for her because Christ deserves you doing so. His ultimate glory was

demonstrated in His sacrifice. If I can say it another way, glory cannot be achieved apart from the cross. No matter how we see Christ, no matter how we understand Christ, and no matter how we relate to Him at a personal level, we cannot divorce any of that from His cross, from His death, and from His sacrifice. **There is no glory in the Christian life apart from the cross.** There is no glory in a Christian marriage apart from a deep and abiding willingness for personal sacrifice for those God given to us. **Those that always have the greatest impact are the ones making the greatest sacrifice.** [Matthew 20:28](#) says,

Mt 20:28 (NKJV) **just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

Christ is always the model that a godly husband is to follow, and Christ's model is that He came to serve and to give His life away. When Christ was nailed to the cross, that greatest of all acts of love became my indebtedness, my obligation as a husband to love my wife like Christ loved His church and gave Himself for her. He is my model, and as much as is humanly possible, that is exactly how I am to love my wife – I am to give my life to her, to be fully and completely devoted to her in every way possible. This bar is so high that I have no other meaningful biblical options before me – none.

Secondly, **the greater devotion that a husband has to loving his wife, the greater will be the development of Christ-likeness in his personal life.** If you as a husband want to be like Christ, then learn to love your wife the way that Christ loved the church. Figure out what all of that means from a practical perspective, and then devote yourself to that reality. It involves sacrifice, devotion, cherishing her above all others, and nourishing her life spiritually. If you are failing in any of those areas, then you are failing as a husband. The church was Christ's bride and He was willing to do for her whatever it was that she needed. There was no sacrifice too great for Him. Husbands, your wife is your greatest testimony and the greatest evidence and validation of what kind of husband you really are. If for some reason you do not believe that she is what she should be both spiritually and as a wife, it is simply a reflection of your lack of impact and influence in her life. If you look at your wife in any other way, then it simply reveals that you personally have no understanding of [Ephesians 5:25](#). Stop blaming your wife for what you do not like about her. Be her model for whatever it is that you are looking for in her life. You become more Christlike, more sacrificial. If you want to see your wife, just look in the mirror. Are you to her what you want her to be to you?

Thirdly, **the husband is to find ways that he can help his wife when she is not expecting his help.** He is to find ways to build her up and encourage her spiritual walk with Christ. He is to be affectionate and tender and loving to her at all times. He is to be fully devoted to his wife in love with the same reverence and respect that she is to honor him. Do not demean her with words of criticism. To the contrary, build her up with constant words of love and admiration. Be affectionate, be caring, be helpful. Whatever the husband can do to relieve any kind of physical and emotional pressure off of his wife's life is what he should do. God says in [1 Peter 3:7](#) that she is the "**weaker vessel**" or physically weaker, so the husband's role is to always be helping her when she is weak and tired and stressed out from the chores of her daily life. I am personally convinced that raising children and maintaining a godly environment for a home is a much more demanding task than simply going to work each day. Between getting kids up and ready for school, cooking meals, changing diapers, washing clothes, getting kids ready for bed, teaching the children, going shopping for food, unloading the food, taking kids to ball practice, getting gas for the car – the list is utterly endless for a godly mother. No wonder a wife needs

her husband's constant support, his ongoing, daily encouragement and physical help for her life. Some husbands seem to think that when they get home that the wife is to wait on him because he has been at work all day, but in reality, when he gets home he is the one that should be helping his wife – not the other way around. **Whatever your wife may need done, do it.** It could be feeding the dog, setting the table, washing the dishes, and/or helping clean where the kids messed up. It could be anything or everything. The point is simple – do not expect or demand your wife to be your servant. To the contrary, you willingly be her servant. What you will find is that you will be creating the atmosphere in your marriage for the development of a genuine marriage of intimacy and oneness. This is what you do to ensure that your wife truly loves you. How do you do that? It is by serving your wife so that she knows that you are always willing to do whatever she may need to be done.

Okay, once again that is our backdrop for tackling the text. Men, this idea of loving our wives the way that Christ loved the church is no small issue and we will not treat it lightly. I am not going to let you off the hook with marital mediocrity. The first thing that Peter says to the husband past the word “**likewise**” that we looked at previously, is that he is to “**dwell**” with his wife “**with understanding**”. On the surface, the word “**dwell**” does not appear to have any special meaning, other than the fact that it is a participle in the imperative sense. What that parsing means is that the idea of living with your wife with understanding and respect is a command. It is not provided as something optional. However, what the word “**dwell**” implies is that we do not and cannot live our life independently of our wives. What we do impacts them greatly, so if for whatever reason we become indifferent to their schedule, uninterested in what they are doing, or just unconcerned about their life, then we have significantly missed what marriage is all about. This is about the two becoming one. [Ephesians 5:31](#), quoting [Genesis 2:24](#) says,

Eph 5:31 (NKJV) "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

We live with one another, we are together with one another, and we dwell with one another. We have a partner who is just as important to the marriage as we are, and we can never “**become one flesh**” if we live independently and autonomously from one another. I have seen husbands and wives who, except for living in the same house, are simply detached and completely disconnected from each other's lives. There is a kind of casual aloofness and distance that marks their marriage. The husband comes home, kicks off his shoes, and expects his wife to do everything for him. There is no intimate conversation, and many husbands simply do not understand the tremendous need that their wife has for intimate communication. No wonder marriages fail. It is only my opinion, but there should never, ever be a day in a husband's life where he fails to intimately communicate to his wife how much he genuinely loves her. This is not a peck on the cheek, and a casual “I love you” as he waltzes out of the house to do whatever he wants to do. This is a deep, intimate, innermost expression of love and respect for his wife. We will address this when we look at the word “**cherish**” in [Ephesians 5:29](#). It is the Greek word “*thalpo*” and means to warm, to brood over. It is used of a mother bird warming her young by covering them with her feathers. It means to foster with loving care like a mother cares for her children.¹

¹ Harris, *thalpo*, ep.

As much as is practical, the goal is to do everything together. Just at a personal level, I want to do everything with my wife – everything. I want her to go places with me, do things with me, eat with me, watch TV with me. I want to pick out her clothes to ensure they look good and proper on her. I still open the door for my wife. In fact, I have her so well trained that she rarely gets in or out of the truck unless I open the door for her. If I forget, she will just stand there or just stay in the car. I have always told her that since she is my queen that I know that the Queen of England never opens a car door, and neither should she. It is an attitude, a perspective, and a way of viewing our life together. So the word “**dw**ell” when referring to marriage demands consideration of our wife, thoughtfulness and sympathy towards her, and sensitivity towards her. The word “**dw**ell” is the Greek word “*sunoi*keo” and it simply means to live with someone. In fact, this is the only place that this particular word is used in the New Testament. The prefix “*sun*” means “with” and “*oi*keo” means “to live”, thus to live with, to live together in marriage – not fornication.² So, what do we want to take away from all of this.

First of all, **a marriage can never be any better than the combined effort of both partners fulfilling their God-ordained roles for the marriage.** Everything we are addressing is a team effort, a role oriented effort. For that reason, it is critical that both the husband and the wife understand their God ordained roles in the family.

Secondly, **the husband is to always be a reflection of Christ to his family, a representation and a prototype of godliness, a template and a standard for his family to follow.** Besides Christ, he is the ultimate role model for his family.

Thirdly, **those that always have the greatest impact are the ones making the greatest sacrifice.** The glory of the marriage resides in the sacrifices that each partner is willing to make for the other.

Fourthly, **the greater devotion that a husband has to loving his wife, the greater will be the development of Christ-likeness in his personal life.** Stop blaming your wife for what you do not like about her. Be her model for whatever it is that you are looking for in her life.

Fifthly, **the husband is to find ways that he can help his wife when she is not expecting his help.** Whatever your wife may need done, do it.

Lastly, **as much as is practical, do everything together.** Never allow yourselves to be isolated from one another because of your schedules or other priorities. Devote yourselves to being with one another all the time.

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² Zodhiates, 1345.