

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 this portion of our study, we want to look at the phrase “**giving honor to the wife**”. Unfortunately, in many cases, many men exercise their “macho” mentality and honestly feel like it should read for the wife to “*give honor to the husband*” just because they see themselves probably as the primary bread winner for the family. In [Ephesians 5:33](#) the wife is told to “**respect**” her husband which means to reverence him and to reverence his God-given role. She has to understand not just her role, but her husband’s role as well. If she is always impeding that with a contentious spirit, then she is grossly aggravating the divine design of marriage and is outside of God’s boundaries for marriage. So, to be completely fair to the entirety and completeness of Scripture, the idea of the wife honoring her husband is certainly implied, but it is not commanded her as the husband is commanded here. The emphasis of Scripture is clearly that of the husband honoring his wife. Obviously, all believers are told to honor God, children are told to honor their parents, we are told in [1 Peter 2:17](#) to honor all people and to honor the king, and [1 Timothy 5:17](#) says that the elders who rule well deserve double honor. The verb for “**giving**” is the Greek word “*aponemo*” and this is the only place in the New Testament that this particular word is used. It is related to “*nemō*” which means to dispense, distribute, apportion, assign, and manage.¹ It is the idea that the wife has a God ordained right to be loved and treated in a certain way, and it is the husband’s sole responsibility to do give that honor and that right to her. He has been specifically assigned to give honor to his wife. He is the only one that can because he is her only husband. So, if he does not do that, then in reality he is defrauding her of something that God wants her to have. He is stealing a portion of her God given inheritance as one of God’s children. Stated another way, he has become a spiritual thief. I mean, no wonder God says that his prayers will be hindered and plugged up. He has become a spiritual thief and is stealing from the very person that he should love the most. You would be in shock if my wife told you that she had found me going into her wallet and stealing her money. Well, for a husband to not give honor to his wife is the same thing. He is literally stealing from her a portion of her divinely ordained inheritance. If that is the case for you as a husband and you have not been giving your wife the honor that God commands you to give to her, then do not blame God when your prayers do not get past the ceiling.

I know this next statement is certainly outside of the boundaries of good exegesis for this passage, but if a young person, either boy or girl, decides to have pre-marital sex before marriage, then in reality what they are doing is stealing from that person their God given right to remain pure and unadulterated for their marriage partner. What pre-marital sex does is to destroy trust and faithfulness in the marriage and creates the seedbed for jealousy. It destroys purity for the future of the marriage. If you defraud your partner before marriage just for your personal pleasure, who is to say that you will not cheat on them and defraud the relationship after marriage? I have said it often, but God allowing you to do what you want to do is actually a form of judgment. In [Romans 1](#) it is described as “**God gave them over**” on three different occasions. He simply let them to do what they wanted to do, and eventually the people

¹ Harris, #626, *aponemo*, ep.

reaped what they sowed. Reaping the bad seeds of the sin that you sowed before marriage is never enjoyed after marriage, and is often times the culminated by a divorce or adultery.

The word “**giving**” is a participle in the imperative sense, the present tense, and the active voice. What all of that means is that “**giving honor to the wife**” is not a suggestion, not an option, not a recommendation, and not a proposal. This is a clear command from God. Peter is not saying that this is something that we can think about and if we find the time that we can integrate this into our life. If I can say it this way, this is the Christian life, this is how the Christian family and the marital relationship is to work, and this is certainly one of the key elements of any successful marriage. In fact, I would say that any marriage where the husband fails to honor his wife because he is too self-centered, too busy, or too spiritually ignorant and lazy to do so, is simply doomed to either marital failure or marital apathy, coldness, and disinterest at best. No wonder so many marriages fail to succeed. If you are married, as you grow older, your marriage should be flourishing both physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is designed by God to do so. It is the evidence of God’s divine work in your life and of your obedience to His commands. If your marriage is getting worse and not better, or barely, if ever, improving, then you simply are not paying any attention to what God has said in His Word. You are not doing your part as a husband. You have and are continuing to ignore God’s very best for your life.

There is nothing that is biblically optional about a verse like this. This is not something that God ever intended that we just casually read over and think to ourselves “*Hey, what a good idea*”. Listen very carefully. This is NOT just a good idea. This is NOT just a good scheme or plan. This is not the result of Peter and a couple of the other disciples having a biblical brainstorming session late one Saturday evening – not at all. This idea of the husband honoring his wife is a command and a biblical mandate and charge that simply cannot be casually dismissed because a husband is busy or tired or distracted. This is not some casual, informal, cavalier biblical option where the husband can just take it or leave it as he pleases. This is what marriage is made to be, this is how marriage operates, this is God’s biblical design and it is what makes the marriage work. As a husband, you may be able to come up with all kinds of reasons and excuses and justifications that you somehow think absolves you from giving your full attention to this command, but if that is the case, then you are sadly mistaken and are probably the primary culprit why your marriage is not what God intended. You may have found a reason to always be pointing the finger at the wife and blaming her for why things are not what they should be, while all along you are the problem. Listen very carefully. If you want your marriage to be what God intended for it to be, then you have to be a living model and example of obedience to the perfect will of God for your marriage. If I can say it this way, God does not give you the option of blaming your wife for a mediocre marriage. Do not go there with God. It is an egregious insult to His biblical design for marriage. Here is a great principle that you as a husband need to appreciate, so listen very carefully. The more that you integrate God’s divine principles for your role as a husband into your marriage, the greater will be your wife’s love and biblical response to you as a husband. If you want to have a deeply intimate marriage, one that cannot be explained by worldly standards, then simply begin to “**love your wife like Christ loved the church**”. Men, if you are not satisfied with your wife and your marriage relationship, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but in all likelihood, it is your fault. If you will love your wife the way that Christ loved the church, your wife will love you the way God intended for her to

love you. She will become everything that you wanted and everything that you need, but the primary responsibility rests on you and your willingness to incorporate these godly principles into your life.

We have seen that the participle for “**giving**” is in the present tense, active voice. What that means is that this verse is what the husband is to be constantly doing and something that he himself has to do. This is something that only you can do. Your wife cannot do this for you. As your pastor, I cannot do this for you. No one gets to take my place in my marriage. This is my divinely ordained and personal responsibility. As a husband, you have to pursue this, to be engaged in this all of the time. This is more than something that you do when you are in public or at church with your wife. In fact, the best indication that a husband is actually doing this is when no one else is watching except his wife and family and in the privacy of his home. What you are like in your home is the acid test of not only your relationship to your wife, but also your relationship to Christ. Right or wrong, I am personally convinced that simple obedience to the word of God is worth 1000 marriage counselling sessions for a marriage. My wife and I have personally counselled with couples for over one year with no results but a divorce. Why is that? In every case it was because the husband was NOT willing to be a husband that was going to love his wife like Christ loved the church - in every case!! There was not one single exception – not one. In fact, I feel so strongly about this that it would suit me fine if in marriage counselling that I never even spoke to the wife. I am so convinced that the husband is the key to all of this, that it is not even important for the wife to attend. Listen husbands – your wife just wants you to love her. I hope that somehow through this study that you get that. You may be sitting there thinking to yourself that I have no clue what you are going through in your marriage, but in reality the truth is that you probably have taken no responsibility to do what God wants only you to do. Your wife is just a reflection of your personal relationship to Christ and your resolve to be to her what God designed you to be. You can make all of the excuses that you want to make, you can rationalize that it is all her fault, but 95% of the time it is because you are demeaning your wife with all of your personal justifications and vindications of why she is the problem. Listen carefully. Those excuses have no legitimacy or weight with God. Why is that? Why can I make such a bold statement? It is simply because of what [Ephesians 5](#) says about the husband and the responsibility that it places on his role as a godly husband. Listen to these verses in [Ephesians 5](#).

Eph 5:23 (NKJV) For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

Paul is not just speaking of some kind of authority role in the marriage, but a model role, an example role. As the head of your family, as the divinely ordained leader of your family, you can NEVER demand of your wife what you are not personally willing to do for her. You can never demand of her that she be obedient to you and love you if you are not willing to be obedient to God and love Him. As the God-designed head of your family, you are responsible for creating the environment of love and affection that the marriage both needs and requires. Most husbands are looking to the wife to create that atmosphere – dress sexy, leave love notes all over the house, be sensual, wait hand and foot on him as the head, cook gourmet meals every evening after picking up the kids from school, washing dishes, washing and ironing clothes all day, cleaning the house, feeding the dogs and cats, helping the kids with their homework, buying groceries, and cleaning the toilet. I have a good word for that – BALONEY. I am the one that needs to leave notes all over the house, be the first in the morning to hug, love, and caress, and always

be waiting on my wife and meeting her needs as the weaker vessel. Here is the rule of thumb – **do everything that you can for your wife – everything**. Never expect your wife to do what you should be doing for her. Do not let her carry in the groceries, do not let her always clean up the table or wash all the dishes and pots and pans, do not let her always peel the potatoes, and do not expect her to fold all of your clothes real neat and put them in your chest of drawers. You name it, you do it for her. If she does it for you, then you do it so she does not have to do it. My oldest son is a great cook and he cooks for his family these incredible meals all the time. He washes his own clothes, folds them up, makes up the beds, cleans the house – you name it he does it. He has always been a good example to me in this area. What you will find if you are willing to start doing more than you have ever done for your wife is that she will NOT want you to do everything for her because she has figured out how much you really love her and are willing to sacrifice for her. She will start to want to do everything for you and have it done before you know it needs to be done. I beg my wife – do not fold my clothes, and she always does!

If my wife does all of these kinds of things for me and waits on me hand and foot without me ever helping her, then listen very carefully - I am the problem in my marriage, not her. I am convinced that the average husband has it all backwards from what God intended. As a husband, I am to be a full time example and model of what I desire from my wife. Think of it in terms of me being your pastor. It would be utterly foolish on my part to get up here Sunday after Sunday and preach and exhort you to do things that I am not willing to do myself. That would be the utter height of pastoral hypocrisy and deception, and I am convinced that God could never bless that kind of pastoral ministry. Why is all of that the case? It is because I am a divinely appointed, God-ordained pastor and it is just as much a part of my pastoral ministry to be a model of the Word of God as it is for me to teach the Word of God. That is my role. I cannot expect of you what I am not willing to do for you. I want to cut the grass, I want to work as hard as anyone on a workday, I want to help you, I want to be there when you have a need, I want to be your servant, I want to make sacrifices for you, and I want to constantly be telling you how much I love and appreciate you and how utterly invaluable you are to my life as your pastor.

Well, it is no different for the husband. If you as a husband are continuing to blame your wife for what you do not like in your marriage, you are the problem. You are immediately going to say to me, “*Well Gary, you just do not understand my wife*”. Oh yes, I do. In fact, I may understand her better than you do, and you are her husband. You are just full of excuses, full of all of your silly justifications, and you use the fact that you vacate the home in the morning and your wife just sits at home all day while you are slaving away at work. That is complete and utter nonsense. It would be good for you to just switch roles with her for a week and you stay home and do all the chores that keep the family going. My friend, you may not last a week doing everything your wife does – and she is the “weaker vessel”!! [Ephesians 5:27](#) says,

Eph 5:27 (NKJV) that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

There is no way around this verse – none, zero, zilch, zippo! Why is that? It is because of the word “So” in [Ephesians 5:28](#) which says,

Eph 5:28 (NKJV) So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

You could just as easily translate the word “**So**” as “**Likewise**”. The NIV, ESV, ISV, NLT, NRSV and HCSB all say “**In this same way...**” or “**In the same way...**” In the same way that the goal of Christ is to present His bride to His Father as a glorious bride, so the goal of every husband is to present his wife to Christ as a glorious wife. It is not the wife’s responsibility to present her husband to Christ as a glorious husband. That is not even intimated in this passage, or any where else for that matter. There is not one word in this passage that even comes close to saying that. The responsibility is ALWAYS on the husband – always. In fact, Paul says twice in [Ephesians 5:28 and 33](#) that the husband is to love his wife as if she is his own body. Look at v28 again.

Eph 5:28 (NKJV) **So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.**

Eph 5:33 (NKJV) **Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband.**

The word there to the wife for “**respects**” is the Greek word “*phobeo*” and it means to reverence the role that God has given to the husband. This word is used 93 times in the New Testament, and in 92 of the times that it is used, it is translated as fear, feared, fearing, or be afraid. However, in this verse, it is translated as “**respects**” ninety percent of the time. It is translated as “**reverences**” in the KJV and YLT. Her responsibility is to respect and reverence both her husband as well as the role that God has given to him. She has to understand his God-ordained role as being the head of the family. He is not the dictator of the family, not the tyrant of the family, and not the totalitarian autocrat of the family. He is to be the loving head that exemplifies Christ in all that he does. Husbands, how about that for a huge responsibility?

Okay, next week we will address the word “**honor**” and try to determine the practical ways that that can be accomplished in the marriage and home setting.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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