

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.

This morning we want to begin to address the phrase “**as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered**”. When I read these two phrases, I fully realize how very spiritually equal my wife and I really are in God’s sight. The outcomes, the effects, and the results that God wants to create between a husband and a wife are staggering, but both of the partners must understand the utter necessity of being what God wants them to be individually. In order for a couple to experience God’s best in their marriage, they have to understand the critical nature of actually living a very Spirit-controlled life. No Christian marriage will ever be successful apart from learning this lesson – not one marriage, not one couple. Every marriage, and both partners in that marriage have to appreciate that what God designed marriage to do was to make that couple to be “**one**” – not two. For instance, [Matthew 19:4-7](#) says,

Mt 19:4 (NKJV) And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning 'made them male and female,' ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

[Ephesians 5:31-33](#) 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." ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ 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.

I love what it says in v32 that “**this is a great mystery**”. I.e., this is not something that someone can just simply understand. This is not a sexual thing or a physical thing or an emotional thing. This idea of spiritual oneness is so unique and so irreplaceable that God calls it a “**mystery**”. In this context, the word “**mystery**” refers to that which is sacred, and because of that, it is something that is virtually unknown to the lost man’s human reason, to his human understanding apart from the revelation of God being manifested to them.¹ This idea and this experience of oneness is almost non-existent among the unconverted and the unsaved, and in many cases, virtually unknown among many Christians. Our culture has so numbed us, so sedated us, and so deadened us to this amazing truth, that our lives always just seem to revolve around us, around what we want – and if we do not get what we want, we get angry, we become irritated, and we become very difficult to be around.

What these two verses are saying is that these two married people become something incredibly unique, something where the two exist as a single unique identity. It is that when you see them that you see them as utterly inseparable, as two people that function as one person. You cannot imagine them not being together. It is the idea that this man and woman genuinely and truly represent a sum that is greater than

¹ Zodhiates, 1000.

their parts. It is the idea that they are much smarter, much better, and much stronger as two than they would ever be as one. What one lacks, the other possesses. What one needs, the other provides.

Now, I want you to notice that there is a very unique relationship between two passages of Scripture - [1 Corinthians 7:5](#) and [1 Peter 3:7](#) - relative to what makes a couple strong, as to what makes them powerful. It is the idea of them being spiritually united in prayer and fasting.

1Co 7:5 (NKJV) **Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.**

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.**

When a couple is struggling, when there is tension and disunity in their marriage, one of the very specific priorities that God wants them to do together is to spend time together in meaningful and purposeful prayer, and even fasting if need be. It is one of God's ways of getting that couple to focus on what is important. What generally happens is that when a couple is experiencing disunity and difficulty in their marriage, they may pray, but it is always separately – as if they are more spiritual than their partner who they probably see as the single cause of the tension. That is virtually never the case. Praying together is like God's glue for the marriage. You cannot continually be in the presence of God with your marriage partner, and constantly be criticizing them to God. We all know that that is not what God would want – to use prayer as a weapon against our mate. So, praying together, even though it may be difficult for a couple in crisis mode, is what God so often uses to unite their hearts toward Him. It is something, that when done purposefully, sincerely, and regularly creates a unity that cannot be achieved through purely mechanical means. You have to be intentional and deliberate about doing this. Most couples that are going through difficult moments NEVER pray together because they really do not want to be together, and in so doing they never give God the opportunity to bind their hearts to one another. It is very clear in [1 Peter 3:7](#) that if a husband is not right with his wife that his prayers will be hindered, and I think it is equally clear that if a wife is not right with her husband, that her prayers will be hindered.

The Greek word for “**hindered**” is “*enkopto*” and it means to cut down, to strike, to impede, to delay, to make fruitless.² It is a word that means to hinder God's spiritual activity in a person's life. It could be their obedience, ministry, prayer, fellowship, oneness and unity in their marriage – you name it, it will be made fruitless.³ It is the idea that your prayers are ineffective, unsuccessful, unproductive, and almost futile. This is so serious of a word that The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology says that it is something that can bring the Christian life to a virtual standstill.⁴ If I can say it this way, it is almost as if you are simply wasting your time even praying. In the context of [1 Peter 3:7](#) it is clearly talking about the ill-behavior that a husband may be demonstrating towards his wife, but this verse and this truth and this reality are just as applicable to the wife as it is to the husband. This word originally was a military term and was used to describe a road being cut into and torn up in order to impede the

² Zodhiates, 499.

³ Harris, #1458, *enkopto*, ep.

⁴ Verbrugge, 160.

progress of the ensuing enemy.⁵ Logs would be placed in the road, massive holes would be dug, traps would be set – anything to hinder the enemy from making progress. In this context, it refers specifically to that which impedes spiritual progress in a person’s life.

One of the very simple ways that God releases His supernatural healing power in a marriage is through prayer that is not “**hindered**”. In a marriage, you have to figure this out simply because this hindrance, this interference, this interruption, this difficulty, this obstacle, this obstruction in the marriage is directly linked to how we actually treat our marriage partner. The problem that most couples have is that when a conflict arise, they only see the conflict from their perspective, from their personal vantage point. Now, I know exactly how you may be thinking about that statement. You are saying to yourself,

“Yea Gary, that sounds great and spiritual and all of that stuff, but you just do not know how difficult my marriage partner can be at times – you just do not know. You don’t have to live with them and if you had to live with them, you wouldn’t like them anymore than I do. If you could just be with me for about five minutes during a conflict and see what is happening through my eyes, through my life, then you wouldn’t say what you just said.”

That is exactly what both partners experiencing conflict in their marriage would be saying to themselves. The problem is that you probably think that I am going to continue to say something like “*Well, you have to also see the conflict from your partner’s vantage point. Marriage is always a two-way street.*” The problem is that I am not going to say that. Here is what I am going to say, so listen carefully. **You have to see the conflict from God’s perspective and NEVER your own.** Your perspective will be personal and self-seeking, and in most cases actually undermining to the marriage. You will justify everything that you do, everything that you say, how you think, and everything that you do not like. No matter how spiritual you think that you may be, you will begin to destroy your marriage with your words. You cannot prevent this if you do not have God’s perspective in your heart, if you just have to have things your way. As a pastor, I constantly struggle with why this seems so difficult at times for couples to grasp and embrace. Listen to [Luke 6:45](#) which says,

Lk 6:45 (NKJV) A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

If you put the wrong things in your heart, and if you harbor ill feelings and have resentment and bitterness in your heart, those very negative qualities will always come out of your mouth – and it will hurt both yourself and your marriage partner. Your demeaning words, your ugly words, your impatient words, your demanding words, your words of frustration and irritation, they have the inherent and intrinsic power to literally destroy your marriage. Why is that? It is because destructive and even satanic things are in your heart. You have not yet learned to see conflict from God’s perspective. You have not yet learned to let God’s Word both humble you and change you. You are still living for yourself, and that is a guaranteed way to lose everything that God has designed for you.

This is the reality of doing things our personal way. Our whole life **MUST** be built around doing things God’s way, and not our own way. If you have do things your way, if you have to have everything your

⁵ Verbrugge, 160.

way, then you will always justify your bitterness, defend your anger, rationalize your frustration, and vindicate your dissatisfaction with the marriage, and before you know it you will be looking for ways out of the marriage. The divorce numbers among Christians really validate this. Rather than doing that which strengthens the marriage, you will find yourself saying things and thinking things that weaken and destabilize the marriage, and that actually dishearten and discourage your partner. Trust me, but the average Christian is going to say what they are thinking, and if these kinds of things are in their heart, the results will never be good. The reality is that when this happens and when you do not see the conflict from God's perspective, YOU actually become a greater hindrance to the marriage than the actual problem. Listen very carefully. Conflict and struggles are ALWAYS, ALWAYS God's way of developing Christlikeness in each of us personally. None of us can escape this reality. It is always His way of developing and producing His character in our life. It is always His way of helping us to become just like Him. It is always His way of doing in us what we have not allowed Him to already do in the past. His holy character being developed in our life is much, much more important than anything that we may want from our marriage partner. We must see this. It is much more important than my ungodly and unhealthy conduct and words being vomited on my marriage partner. If you forget that simple principle, there is a good chance that God cannot help you. If you do not put Christ first, absolutely first, always first, then you will put yourself first, and that simply is NOT what it means to live out the Christian life.

I want you to listen very carefully to what I am going to say next. I have said this and taught this often, but I am not sure that most people ever get it in their entire life. They go through their Christian life and never figure out what is God's absolute best for their life or what is God's method for achieving His absolute best in their life – so listen carefully. YOU CAN ONLY FIND YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU ARE WILLING TO GIVE YOUR LIFE AWAY. [Luke 17:33](#) says it this way,

Lk 17:33 (NKJV) Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.

If you want to lose your life and if you want to miss everything that God has designed for you, then just live your life for yourself, just let your life revolve around you and you can be guaranteed that you will completely miss out on God's absolute best for your life. If you want to go through the rest of your life having to have your way in every decision, having everything on your terms, then go ahead. However, do not blame God for the results.

There are two people to whom you must give your life away, so do not miss this. Those two persons are Jesus Christ and your marriage partner. If you want to lose your life, then seek to save it. Go ahead, try it and see what happens. I can assure you that it is not anything good. However, if you want to find your life, then learn what it truly means to give it away to Jesus Christ and to that one person in the entire world that God wants you to love and care for the most – your mate, your wife, your husband. Give your life away for their benefit. Do everything you can possibly do to make their life the most amazing life possible. Love them like they never believed that they could be loved. Be fully intentional about this, be utterly deliberate about this, be completely purposeful and calculated about this in your life. If you are not willing to die to yourself and to give yourself to both Christ and to your marriage partner, you will lose your life in the process. Your spiritual life will not even be mediocre.

This is exactly what God has been saying to every single married couple through these verses as we have slowly worked our way through them. These verses on the wife and on the husband are so vital and so important for the Christian life, that I simply cannot overstate their importance and their impact on a person's life and their marriage. **GIVE YOUR LIFE AWAY!** The reality of what I am addressing is not actually how much you love your husband or your wife, but how much you love God. That is what these verses are actually addressing – my personal love for God and my personal resolve to put Him first in my life. I have never met anyone who was self-centered and self-absorbed with everything revolving around them that was happy – not one single person ever!

As a husband, my wife is a co-heir of the “**grace of life**”, and if you as a husband want you and your wife to actually become “**heirs together**” of this grace, it will take many things from you. It will take understanding - which we have previously studied. It will take being sensitive and tender to your wife's needs. It will mean that you do not take a verse that deals with her submission to your authority to mean that you have the right to even think that you are in some way more superior or more important than she is. If that is the case, all it means is that you have no clue as to what [Philippians 2:8](#) means for your life.

Php 2:8 (NKJV) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

As a husband, as a father, as a friend – Jesus Christ is always our model as men. He was as humble and self-sacrificing as anyone could ever be. He was willing to literally die for those God had given Him to love. Listen husbands, your wife deserves the greatest love that you can give to anyone, anywhere, at any time. She is the pinnacle of where your love is to go and of where it is to be demonstrated. What if she is not perfect, what if she is difficult at times? Nothing changes about how God wants you to love her and care for her – nothing. Your love for your wife can never be based on your wife, but always on your love for God and His Word. What [1 Peter 3:7](#) means is that you as a husband have been given the responsibility to be devoted to your wife's complete well-being and it has become your amazing responsibility to lead both yourself and your wife to the fullest possibilities of this glorious oneness that God has designed for you.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Harris, Ralph. W., ed. *The Complete Biblical Library: Greek English Dictionary*. Springfield, Missouri: World Library Press Inc., n.d.

Verbrugge, Verlyn D., ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Abridged. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Revised Edition, 1993. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.