

Likewise Husbands...

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

Being understanding and maleness, since when did these two ideas become compatible? The domestication of the human male continues to baffle even women. While women have been able to have men do what they want, they have not succeeded fully in his domestication—for him to live with her in proper understanding. From the beginning God has entrusted the woman into man's protection and care. God created woman to be "a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18). This does not make her his inferior but his complement—she completes what he lacks living by himself. The pair works as a single unit even though they are two. In a sense, marriage reflects the corporate nature of God as male and female live together in concert each playing many parts but playing the same music.

Notice how God does not command the woman to be understanding, but he does demand the husband to do so. This is born out in Peter's example of Sarah making Abraham her lord. It is Abraham that uses Sarah as a shield whenever he comes into a new land. She pretends to be his sister so he is not killed because of her beauty. This great man of faith has limits to his faith as I suspect we all do whenever we come into new situations. Abraham reasons, probably correctly, that the people in this new place do not know the Lord or regard his ways. He is uncertain that God will protect him in this new setting so he tells a partial truth for self-preservation. This cuts against what Peter tells us when he instructs husbands to honor the woman as the weaker vessel.

Peter does not say women are weak. If a woman is entrusted into a husband's care, then he has certain obligations toward her that he must honor. God brought woman to man's side to be his companion because true companionship can only take place among equals. Out of all God's creation, she alone fills the void in the man—she is just what he needs, and he is to treat her as such. This point has been missed when the focus has been on the woman being the weaker partner. Peter does not say this. Rather, he says to live with her showing *honor* to her as the weaker partner. The focus should be on what God commands the husband to show his wife, which is honor. Weakness is not at the heart of his passage.

She is a fellow heir in the grace of life. God has entrusted her care into the husband's keeping. This is charge God gives to the husband of equals. In other words, this is not the slave-master relationship spoken of in the previous paragraph. She has received possession of the grace of life together with her husband. Again, Peter underscores that she is the man's equal. She submits to his caring for her and honoring her as the weaker vessel. He does this in an understanding fashion. God takes this charge so seriously that Peter warns husbands that any failure to be understanding and honoring her will be met with unanswered prayers. God will not answer the prayers of a man who does not understand and honor his wife.

For whatever reason, women tend to have the knack for making a home home. Husbands are not always cooperative in this realm. I suppose this is why the meaning of the last two verses of Malachi has escaped me for so many years. I think its meaning is just now beginning to don on me especially in a society where the father continues to be absent as both husband and father from the average American family. If we are to see a change in our culture, then Christian men must learn to honor their wives and turn their hearts to their children.

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