

“UNDERSTANDING HUSBANDS, II.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for the Sermon: I Peter 3:7

Prayer: Holy Father, may the words of my mouth and the responses of all our hearts glorify you, exalt Jesus, honor your Word and edify your people. Come, Holy Spirit, help us I pray.

Introduction.

Two weeks ago I pushed the pause button on my sermon on I Peter 3:7 about living with your wives in an understanding way. This morning I am pushing the play button and resuming that sermon. But it might help to hit fast rewind and do a fast forward just to remember the highlights. You can also read or listen to that sermon on line at the church website.

Live with your wife, physically present.

Live together, dwell together, be together. Don't be ships passing in the night. And to this I added, forsaking all others, real or virtual, and living only with your wife.

In an understanding way, mentally present.

Because wives are completely different it means you won't be able to live with your wife in an understanding way without a lot of work and effort. Being casual or lazy on this won't work.

Living with your wife in an understanding way means understanding who she is and who God has created her to be and what God has created her to do.

You will have to ask lots of question about her fears, her frustrations, her desires, her goals, her deepest hurts, preferences, moods, needs, ideas. You need to study her and learn to read her eyes, notice her countenance and body language.

Showing honor as the weaker vessel, emotionally present.

Part of understanding is showing honor and esteem. Showing and speaking honor is a good way to guard your heart and your relationship from anything even approaching disdain or disrespect.

Wives need to be protected. The default action of the man is to defend and protect, to lay down the life. Men are the warriors. Honor means protecting, not just physically, but emotionally, protecting her from shame, from condescension. Their God given weaknesses are never to be used against them.

Understanding her strengths and weaknesses means you don't make her feel like a failure or inadequate.

Peter concludes this word to husbands with two reasons or motivations.

Since you are fellow heirs of grace and so that your prayers may not be hindered, spiritually present.

This spiritual aspect of a husband's job is probably the scariest for many men. For many of us our wives are more spiritual than we are. Many of our wives are more in touch with their souls and they are more free spiritually.

Men tend to be more soul modest, more private or withdrawn. We don't feel very spiritual so we cover it up or hide it by just not going there. But the rub is our homes need spiritual leadership and our wives want spiritual leadership. But we feel incompetent, so what do we do? Nothing.

What we don't realize is that you can give leadership in an area you are incompetent in if you will be willing to humble yourself a bit and delegate and ask for help.

Your wife may be a weaker vessel physically but she is every bit your equal spiritually. Ask her for help. Some translations say she is a fellow heir or joint heir with you of the grace of life.

What does that mean?

Fellow heir means mutual equality.

Heir means mutual dignity.

Grace means mutual humility.

Life or eternal life means mutual destiny.

You and your wife mutually and equally share in the promise of I Peter 1:3-4.

I Peter 1:3-4 According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

You are sleeping with a princess, an heiress of heaven. You are both co-heirs of the kingdom of God. She is more like you than you realize. She is not your inferior, she is your equal before God when it comes to grace, she receives the same grace as you.

For this our wives should be honored, just as God honors them. Look at her the way He does. She is eternally precious and valuable in God's eyes and He takes it personally how you treat her, just as you would take personally how someone was treating your daughter.

We are co-heirs of grace, something we both need a lot of, we should give it and receive it in generous amounts, remembering God is rich in grace and inexhaustible in giving it.

Because she is a sister in the Lord we must bear with each other's weaknesses, make allowances for one another, and extend grace and forgiveness.

Let me say one more thing about spiritual leadership in the home. It's a partnership, a team effort, play to each other's strength.

I have used this example before of how a husband can give leadership by delegating. So the husband announces to his family that they are going to start having family devotions at the end of dinner or in the evening and he gets them together and either he reads or he has his wife read some Scripture or from a devotional and then one of them prayers. He is leading even if he isn't doing it all.

So that your prayers may not be hindered.

While there are lots of earthly and human reasons and benefits for living with your wife in an understanding way, Peter ends with a big one.

There is nothing more powerful than a husband and a father who prays. A praying man will know how to lead his family wisely and well and in a way that is worthy of their respect and following. But a praying man is hard to find, and unhindered prayers are hard to find.

No lasting spiritual good will come to the home without effective prayer. God says no husband can expect any good to come unless he is learning and striving to live with his wife in an understanding way and showing honor to her.

What is it that hinders our prayers?

In two weeks we will come to I Peter 3:10-12 which is a quote of Psalm 34 that is addressed to men and women and gives a list of things that hinder our prayers.

I Peter 3:10-12 "Whoever desires to love life and see good days,
let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit;
11 let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.
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."

There are ways of living that help our prayers and there are ways of living that hurt our prayers.

Psalm 66:18-19 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.
19 But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

This doesn't mean God never hears or will never answer, He might, but you can't presume on Him. If we are in rebellion against God and His will for our life, how can we expect blessings?

What hinders our prayers? What puts up barriers or obstructions? Unrepentant sin, anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, pride, stubbornness, strife, lack of self-control, being selfish, thinking only of our self.

The man who is unloving and unkind and demeaning and unsacrificial and un-Christ-like has no reason to expect God's favor or kindness toward him. How can a harsh or cruel or critical husband pray well, except to repent and plead for forgiveness?

When we are sinning it is hard enough to pray, let alone pray together? How can two pray together if there is something between you? God is our only refuge and strength and hope, don't cut off your only path to that help by being contentious with your wife.

There is a way of living with our wives that plugs up our prayer lives and there is a way that opens the pipeline.

If you neglect your wife, don't listen to her, don't care what she thinks, are disrespectful and unloving, harsh, critical and then all of a sudden you want something, you want her to do something for you, do you really think she should just ignore all that bad treatment and give you what you want? Do you really think that?

Think about it. If you have been ignoring God, you don't have time for Him, you don't care about what He thinks, you are uninterested in worship and Scripture and prayer, you have pushed Him to the margins, then all of a sudden you need Him and you come asking for a big favor, a blessing, how do you think He is going to respond?

If we boil it down the hindrance to our prayers is sin. So let's learn to deal with sin the way the Bible says we should.

This is another important part of spiritual leadership and headship in the home. Husband's should lead the way in confessing sin and setting an example for his wife and children in humbling himself before his family when he sins.

This means he needs to say what his sin is when he sins against them, call it sin, and ask for forgiveness.

This means not saying it was a mistake or he messed up or even just that he's sorry. We are too casual with sin or we are too quick to hide it or cover it up or excuse it. If we will repent honestly and quickly we can be clean quickly and free from the devil's hooks of shame and guilt and wounded pride.

Satan is so deceiving and we are so proud, we fight to hang on to our pride when that's what keeps us in bondage. There is a lot of spiritual depression and misery we inflict on ourselves and others when we won't treat the disease with God's medicine.

Let us learn to say "I sinned when I did this or said that, will you please forgive me." And let all of us learn to respond "I forgive you in the name of Jesus."

That's leadership. Let's live and practice the Gospel, not as an excuse to keep on sinning, but as the power to keep on fighting sin.

Why is there so little of this kind of talk when you consider how much we all sin every day, and how much we sin in our families every day.

I should add to my little list of three things to do every day. A hug, a kiss, an I love you, and please forgive me. And then the occasional let's eat out.

And how about let's pray. Men, I know it's scary, I know it's threatening. The only reason I can say today that Phama and I been praying together every night for over twenty years is because there was a first time and I remember it like it was yesterday. I was convicted of its importance and so I finally screwed up the courage one night to ask Phama if she wanted to pray together.

The first two or three weeks were rough, awkward, but I pushed through and Satan finally stopped trying to stop it. The prayers aren't flowery or fancy, they are just meat and potato kinds of prayers, for life issues and situations, kids, school, church, health, sin and thanksgiving, gratitude for grace, prayers for each other. Humble prayers, prayers that deal with the hindrances.

Few things will contribute to living with your wife in an understanding way more than this. But wives, you would best leave the decision and leadership on this to your husband.

Implications and Application.

First, let me say it as clearly as I can to husbands, no one in your life should be shown more honor and respect than your wife. You should not treat people at work or strangers better than your wife. I know we all do it, but no one else is your co-heir of grace.

Second, regarding the weaker vessel matter, there is absolutely no room in the Christian home for abuse of any kind, physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual. No violence of any kind should be tolerated against our wives, daughters, sisters or any women.

Let there be no tolerance of that in our midst, but expose it to the light of God's redemptive truth and let repentance follow. If there is any abuse get help, draw someone else in, stop the cycle, get help. A pastor, an elder, a trusted spiritually mature friend, someone.

I Peter 3:7 is the call of God to Christian men to protect and defend, to honor and esteem. Be an example of it and teach it to your sons and grandsons.

Husbands, look at the ring on your left hand. The person who put it there did so because she believed you loved her and that you would love her the rest of your life. At the time she was crazy about you. This ring represents a challenge and a test, a reminder to love her selflessly, sacrificially, like Christ.

Brothers in Christ, fellow husbands, beginning this day let us seek God's grace and help and strive to live with our wives in an understanding way, showing honor to them as weaker vessels, because they are fellow heirs with us of God's grace and let us do that so that our prayers may not be hindered.

Prayer: Lord, have mercy on us all and help us I pray. Help us husbands to want to live with our wives in a manner that our prayers are not hindered. Help us seek and strive to understand our wives, to be to her what you want us to be, to honor her, to live with her like an heiress of heaven, like a fellow heir of your grace.