

Taking the Right Path I Peter 3:7

After the typical processional and invocation of a wedding the officiating minister will share some words similar to those found in the *Minister's Manual*: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God to join together this man and woman in holy matrimony. It is an honorable estate, instituted of God, signifying unto us the mystical union that is between Christ and His church, that holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with His presence and first miracle in Cana of Galilee. It is commended in the Scriptures to be honorable among all, and therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons come now to be joined."

At that point in the ceremony there is the giving of the bride by her father after which there is a declaration of intent directed first to the groom and then to the bride. It typically goes like this: "John Ralph Johnson will you take Jane Susan Smith to be your wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her, so long as you both shall live? Please respond, 'I will.'"

Vows are exchanged along with the giving of rings, and a message of sorts to the couple – a final public counseling session if you will, as reminders of committed love and devotion. There is a declaration, a pronouncement and final prayer.

A comedian once said that a marriage is like a deck of cards. You start out with two hearts and a diamond and you end up with a club and a spade.

I believe it doesn't have to be that way and it shouldn't and won't if you follow the advice given

to husbands in our text today. It is in this passage, men, husbands that we are now in the hot seat. But I also want to suggest that these principles are good whether you are the husband or the wife, married or not. Turn to I Peter 3:7 where the men, particularly the husbands will now have the burner turned up. It is time now for us to be put under the microscope of God's Word and see how we are doing. But, everyone can benefit and apply what we learn from this passage.

Here's what I would like to talk about today.

A binding path

A better path

A bitter path

Let's first consider a binding path.

I. A BINDING PATH

If you have been around me for any length of time you know I love sweets. There's not much in the way of candy or cookies that I don't like. Recently shopping at Sam's club I decided to pick up some packaged cookies because David would need some for his bus ride to Camp. It was with little hesitation that I selected Oreo cookies. The picture on the package is so enticing. Bursting with creamy goodness to the edge of a two crispy chocolate wafers, who could resist? I bought a box for David – and me. I put a pack in my lunch and couldn't wait to tear open the foil wrapper. I'm not a dunker but I like a glass of cold milk with my cookies. I tore open the package and found that the cookies looked nothing like what is on the package. Now they may have started out like that way back in the day but cut backs have reduced the amount of creamy goodness you find inside that a quarter could cover up.

I use that to illustrate this point. A young lady will look at a young man and come to believe that the package looks really good. However long the courtship thing lasts he really puts forth a great

effort to woo this little lady. He's kind, respectful, complimentary, generous, loving, caring, good looking - the whole nine yard. They decide to say 'I do' after which things slowly begin to change. What she thought was on the package wasn't what she found to be on the inside once they settled into marriage. Incremental changes over time revealed what was really on the inside of the package.

Peter gives us some advice guys that we need to heed. Ladies, you may think that it doesn't seem fair that the husbands only get one verse devoted to them while you have six, but I assure you that it is both compact and hard hitting. I also want to say to ladies who are married. There is to be no elbows to the side or giving him the look. All of us can apply these principles. What he says in this one verse can fill volumes and produce significant changes if there is a willingness to apply the truths.

Notice that it is first a path that lives.

A. A Path That Lives

"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you LIVE WITH your wives."

I have read a lot of books and articles on marriage where one spouse or the other said they got to a point where they lived under the same roof and it was just like having a roommate – nothing more. They stopped talking together, eating together, sleeping together, going out together. I find that incredibly sad and discouraging to think that two people who were madly in love at one time got to a point in their relationship that they just existed under the same roof. There's no emotion, no intimacy, no relationship. There is lost love. Peter wants to change that, ensure that it doesn't happen. I want to suggest that it begins with the guys.

The KJV uses the term "dwell" where the NIV uses the term 'live'. It is a word that implies more than just living at the same address. Ephesians 5, which

we will come to in a minute, reminds us that we are to love our wives. At its core marriage is a physical relationship between husband and wife fostered by a love the husband has for his wife.

About this Warren Wiersbe writes: "A truly spiritual husband will fulfill his marital duties and love his wife."

The word "dwell" or "live" implies, now get this men, it implies providing for her physical, emotional, material, and spiritual needs. That's quite all-encompassing with tremendous responsibility.

And guess what guys, that takes work. It takes a lot of effort. Would you agree? It takes work because we don't know what kind of mood she may be in when we get home, so be prepared. In too many marriages the husband doesn't want to work at it, he treats it like school – what's the minimum required. Marriage is a lifetime commitment of meeting the needs of your wife. There are nights you come home from work after a long day and you just want to veg a bit with the newspaper or favorite show. If you're retired maybe it's getting really involved in a hobby that requires lots of time.

We have the responsibility to meet the needs of our wife. That's what it means to live with them. It means to live with them in intimacy. Now, I don't want to imply that you can't go out and hang with the guys once in a while on the lake or under the hood of a car or in your shop, but if you would rather be there all the time than spend any time with your wife, then you are not living with your wife as Peter intends you should.

The Contemporary Christian group 10th Avenue North wrote a song that suggests what it is to live with your wife. The husband looks at what he thinks is a good life, but then sees their relationship through the eyes of his wife. In a word it's just like a package of Oreo cookies.

I look around and see my wonderful life
 Almost perfect from the outside
 In picture frames I see my beautiful wife
 Always smiling
 But on the inside, I can hear her saying

"Lead me with strong hands
 Stand up when I can't
 Don't leave me hungry for love
 Chasing dreams, what about us?"

Show me you're willing to fight
 That I'm still the love of your life
 I know we call this our home
 But I still feel alone."

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A path that lives together as intended is a binding path.
 Husbands, are you really living with your wife?
 Another part of a binding path is a path that loves.

B. A Path That Loves

Ephesians 5:25-33

Love is an act of the will. It is a choice we make each day on how we will treat our wife, and everyone else for that matter, with love. That is after all, the second part of the greatest commandment. We are to love our wife as much or in the same way we love God. I want you to notice that we could take the first part of that verse and just say "Husbands, love your wives". Put a period right there and it would be a complete sentence.

There aren't any exceptions or expectations that go along with it.
 It doesn't say love your wife if she cooks you a 5 course meal every night.
 It doesn't say love your wife only if she loves you in return.
 It doesn't say love your wife only if she submits to you.
 It doesn't say love your wife if she doesn't nag.

Husbands, love your wives – period, just as Christ loves the church.

I jotted some notes in my study Bible.
 This kind of love goes all out.
 This kind of love is selfless.
 This kind of love is sacrificial.
 This kind of love protects her.
 This kind of love provides for her.

In any relationship and especially the marriage relationship Paul couldn't be any clearer on what this kind of love should like.

I Corinthians 13:4-8a

Are you getting the idea that this kind of love can be applied by anyone not just a husband to his wife? A binding path loves in this way.
 Husbands, are you loving your wife?
 But before you nod your head and say that all sounds like what you do, take a moment and ask her. She'll be quite honest if you really want to hear what she has to say. Learn from her how you can love her better.

A third path to a binding relationship is a path that laughs.

C. A Path That Laughs

Husbands, really all of you, do you laugh?
 Husbands do you laugh with your wife instead of laughing at her?

I love to laugh and you know I love to tell jokes, even the groaners.
 Did you hear about the guy who had a hard time working at the orange juice factory?
 He couldn't concentrate.

I have a shelf full of comic books.
 Dilbert
 Calvin and Hobbs

The Far Side (That alone should tell you I'm a bit off)
I have joke books on clean jokes and church jokes.

Sometimes I'll hear a joke on the Christian radio station and I have to call Robyn right away because it's so funny and I don't want to forget.
In the evening we might be catching up on Facebook and I'll read something that just cracks me up that I have to share with her and we just bust out laughing, sometimes to tears.

Guys, don't be so serious all the time, kick back on a path that laughs.

Solomon wrote in Proverbs 17:22 that "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Your wife may have dry bones because her spirit is dried up and you may be the reason, so, as Christian comedian Ken Davis would say "Lighten up and live." She's had a hard day too. Get her to laugh.

Living, loving, and laughing will take you down a path that is binding. I think if more marriages followed this paths there would be a lot less struggle and strife.

Peter then suggests that there is a better path.

II. A BETTER PATH

He is now going to cut to the heart of the matter. Husbands, how should you treat your wives? Let's remember that in the Roman culture the husband could rule with an iron fist. What he said was what got done and how it got done. The wife had to submit regardless. He could apply as much pressure on his wife as he wanted. He could be foul or fair with her. He could be abusive or affectionate. He could make her life miserable or meaningful. And she had no legal recourse.

Now, let's also understand that in the context of Peter's audience he is talking to Christian husbands. How they were to treat their wives was entirely different than what was culturally acceptable. He suggests a better path. It is a path that shows regard.

A. A Path That Shows Regard

Look once more at our text.

"Husbands, in the same way be considerate..."

The KJV uses the term "according to knowledge". One author wrote that this means with an intelligent recognition of the nature of the marriage relationship.

In today's vernacular that would mean "Gentlemen, if you are smart..."

In a word Peter is saying that we need to know our wives, I mean really know them. We can't provide and protect their emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being if we don't take time to study them and know them. We need to understand them. But you say "Pastor, that's like trying to figure out quantum physics or solving story problems in math or figuring out what the weather is going to be 3 weeks from now at 10a.m. It's impossible."

She may be complex, but our task is to study her and know her. That is a daily task. That is a life time task.

The word considerate implies that we aren't bossy, we don't bully or berate or beat her. We are not condescending, critical, or condemning.

One of the things I really stress to couples who come in for pre-marital counseling is that both should NEVER talk negatively about the other spouse either in public or in private. If he talks negatively about you when you're around, you can bet he'll talk more negatively about you when you're not around. If you are critical and condescending about her you cannot be considerate.

That may have been acceptable in Roman culture but Peter is stating that there is a better more favorable path to take. Be thoughtful of her. If you aren't she will feel insecure emotionally, physically, and spiritually when you talk about her negatively to her or about her with others. It will slash her trust, intimacy and openness with you.

John Phillips has this thought: "Few women would find it difficult to be subject to a husband who was so considerate and who treated her like a princess."

So, how well do you know your wife, even if you have been married a long time? Are you a lifelong student of her? Do you seek to understand her needs, thoughts, and desires? Could you list the top three things she enjoys doing?

It's difficult to be considerate if we don't know what her needs are. It means spending time listening to her. Men are fixers and doers and all too often we want to jump in with a solution to her problem when all she wants is for us to listen, so unless she asks to offer a fix.

A frustrated husband decided it was time to seek some professional help for his marriage so he went to a counselor. After listening to the guy talk about his marriage the counselor offered some suggestions that would surprise his wife and rekindle their relationship. That night he arrived home after work dressed up in a suit. He put on some nice cologne, bought a bouquet of flowers and a box of candy. Walking up to the house, he rang the bell and waited. His wife opened the door, took one look and burst into tears. Sobbing she said "Oh, I can't believe it! Little Johnny has been throwing up all day, the dishwasher just broke, your parents are coming to visit this weekend and to top it all off, you come home drunk!

So gentlemen, if you are smart, get to know your wife. Knowing her isn't just intellectually understanding her emotional, physical and spiritual

needs. It implies acting on that knowledge as well. Be sensitive by taking a path that shows regard.

That leads to another path Peter suggests.

B. A Path That Shows Respect

I read an article this week about a woman who wanted to be the Enjoli woman in the 1980's commercial who demanded respect because she could bring home the bacon and fry it up in a pan, take care of her kids and her husband, because she was a woman. As a journalist she thought she could conquer it all, but quickly became disillusioned by the whole thing. She said that instead of an 8 hour perfume she needed an 8 hour caffeine injection from all the hyper-activity.

Many of you will remember Aretha Franklin's hit in 1967 R-E-S-P-E-C-T. It was a different version of the original written by Otis Redding in 1965. Redding's version was a plea from a desperate man who would give his woman anything she wanted even if she did him wrong as long as he got respect from her. Aretha Franklin's version was a feminist declaration demanding respect from men, one who knew she had everything her man wanted.

A husband was advised by his psychiatrist to assert himself. Don't let your wife henpeck you. He was told to go home and show her who was the boss. Taking the doctor's advice he rushed home and told his wife that from now on he was the one who was going to give the orders. He demanded his supper right then, after which she was to march upstairs and lay out his best clothes because he was going out with the boys that night. Then he asked her who she thought was going to comb his hair, give him a shave, and put on his tie. To which she replied the undertaker.

They all miss the mark. Peter says that the husband is to show his wife respect.

Proverbs 31:10-31 gives us plenty of reasons to respect our wives beginning with her noble character and then the litany of daily accomplishments that leave our heads spinning.

Proverbs 18:22 “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.”

Respecting your wife means honoring her, valuing her not just in what she does and for her character, but also for her opinions.

Notice two ways mentioned in our verse that show you respect her.

1. Respect her state

“Treat her with respect as the weaker vessel.”

The women’s movement does not like this verse. They want equality in every respect. Maybe some of you women don’t like it either. But I didn’t write it, God did. But please understand this is not referring to being intellectually or morally or spiritually inferior in any way. This is referring to your physical nature. Notice that Peter uses the term vessel to describe her. The implication is that the husband is also a vessel. We are both made out of the same material, both made in the image of God, but the woman is the weaker vessel physically.

When I started running road races my goal was not to get beaten by a woman. As I got older and slower my goal changed. It became don’t get beaten by any woman in my age group.

I read recently about a boy who wasn’t fast enough to compete in the 100 meter dash with boys his age so he self-identified as a girl so he could run and win.

In the beginning God made them male and female and Peter adds that the female is physically not as strong as the male. But God also said that in the marriage relationship they are partners. Robyn may

be weaker physically but she is still my partner, because God says when they leave and cleave and weave together a new relationship where we are not two but one, but she is still the weaker vessel.

I love that Robyn tries stuff. She handles the big rototiller, never mind that it got away from her once and it ended in the creek but that’s for another time. She can change the oil in the car and is doing the chinking on the house and that’s one thing I don’t have on the honey-do list. But one thing she won’t do is move the tall extension ladder. She recognizes that she is the weaker vessel and needs me to do that for her.

Respect your wife and well, any woman for that matter.

Honor is giving her first place and that takes humility men, to put her needs before our own. She should be first to enter the room. She should be first to enter the car.

Respect her state as the weaker vessel.

The second way we show her respect is to respect her standing.

2. Resect her standing

“treat them with respect as the weaker vessel and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life.”

When it comes to her inheritance and eternal life the wife is not a second-class citizen. You receive the same, saving and glorifying grace. Both the husband and wife receive it equally. The same grace given to you is given to her.

Remember husbands, she may be your wife, but as a fellow believer, she is also your sister in Christ. Treat her with the R-E-S-P-E-C-T she deserves.

J.I. Packer writes “We cannot love what we do not in some way respect.”

We will respect our wife more when we realize that she was bought with the same blood of Christ that we were bought with.

So why does Peter tell husbands they should treat their wives this way?

Our final point gives a sobering warning for us to consider. If we don't heed his warning it will not be a better path we follow but a bitter path.

III. A BITTER PATH – v. 7

Think about it this way.

There will be hindered requests

There will be hindered relationships

There will be hindered results

The word hindered was used to describe breaking up a road. If a king heard of another king approaching to attack he would purposely throw obstacles and dig holes in the road to hinder the advancing army, to slow them down to give the king more time to prepare for the invasion..

In Acts 2:42 we read that the new believers continued praying together daily.

Men, if you sometimes ask yourself why your prayers aren't answered, look no further than this verse and ask if you are treating your wife with consideration and respect. If you are failing in any one of these areas your prayers won't get answered.

The doors of heaven will remain locked to your requests so long as you are not being considerate of your wife, being respectful of your wife, honoring your wife. It may be that you need to go home and get some things right with God and her if you want the storehouse of heaven to be unleashed for you.

Your prayers are affected.

Your relationship with your wife is affected.

Your results from prayer will be affected.

What is implied in this verse is that we must do what we need to make it right with our wives.

Let me add this thought because I think it's important. Your hindered prayers in the family will affect your prayers for the church.

I have been thinking about prayer this week and have come to the conclusion that it is one thing to pray for the church and something entirely different to pray with the church.

It's the same in the marriage relationship. It's one thing to pray for your spouse, or in this case your wife, and something entirely different to pray with your spouse.

If you want to know the heart of your wife, pray with her, but if we don't treat her the way we should as outlined here, know for certain that our prayers will not be answered. The reward however is a rekindled relationship and answered requests.

John Piper suggests that living right helps us pray otherwise our prayers will be clogged.

It's a terrible feeling when you think your prayers aren't being heard. It means you aren't connecting with God. He seems far away and unconcerned.

Do a little self-assessment and ask how you are treating your wife or for that matter it could be applied to any relationship, not just in marriage.

How are you treating your boss?

How are you treating your neighbor?

How are you treating others in your family?

The Psalmist says if we harbor sin in our life the Lord will not hear us. (Psalm 66:18)

In a way we are like a package of Oreo cookies. Is the inside the same as the picture we portray on the outside? It all depends on which path you take.