

HOW TO EXCEL AS A CHRISTIAN HUSBAND
I PETER 3:7

NEED: HUSBANDS WHO WILL MAKE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR WIFE A PRIORITY.

PROPOSITION: A CHRISTIAN HUSBAND IS TO MAKE HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS WIFE A PRIORITY.

OBJECTIVE: TO MOTIVATE CHRISTIAN MEN TO BE EXCELLENT HUSBANDS

INTRODUCTION:

The Bible makes clear that a Christian marriage is a partnership. This means that it takes two to make a marriage succeed, but only one can make it fail. In these words of instruction Simon Peter devoted six verses to giving encouragement to Christian wives to do their part in a Christian marriage. He then devoted only one verse of instruction to Christian husbands, but in this one verse he lays as much responsibility upon the men as he did in the six verses to the women.

Succeeding as a Christian husband is an important part of the Christian life. Nothing is more important before God than the health and the welfare of our families. It is impossible to have a healthy family without a responsible father and husband. He has a heavy responsibility laid upon him.

The most important ingredient in a healthy family is the relationship between the husband and the wife, the father and the mother. If the relationship between the husband and wife is a healthy relationship, it will bless the children and the grandchildren into years to come. This is the reason that Simon Peter addresses these urgent words to Christian

husbands. Your relationship with your wife is the most vital relationship other than your relationship with God. He lays before you and me three essential things if we are to excel as Christian husbands.

I. GAIN UNDERSTANDING OF HER UNIQUENESS.

The word of instruction reads, “Husbands in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives.” The word that the translators read “be considerate” literally means to dwell with your wife “according to knowledge.” The word “dwelling together” defers to sharing the marital association and relationship together. It is sometimes used in the context of forming a community or marrying. It was even in some instances used in the Greek version of the Old Testament of the physical aspect of marriage, marital intercourse. The emphasis in this statement is that the husband is to live with his wife with a special personal knowledge as a person and the needs of her life.

This addresses one of the most serious problems found among Christian men. A friend of mine has a large, nicely bound book on his shelf with the title, “What I Know About Women.” When you open the book, there are about 400 blank pages. It has been the contention of men for a long time that it is impossible to understand a woman. And it can be safely admitted that many men do not know much about women.

However, if we are to excel as husbands, we must gain an understanding of her as a person. A good place to begin would be with a fresh study of the scriptures. We would learn early in the Bible that God created woman to be a complement to men. Eve was not

like Adam but was created differently so that she would meet the need that Adam had. She was his complement physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Yet, it is the tendency to relate to their wives as though they were another man.

One marriage counselor in his premarital counseling would give the couple a piece of paper and ask them to write down the three things that each one thinks the other enjoys doing the most. He discovered that usually the prospective bride made her list immediately; the man would sit and ponder. Usually the girl was right about the things that the man would enjoy most, but the man was almost always wrong. The tragic thing is that many men would still have the same problem after ten years of marriage. They have not taken seriously their responsibility to live with their companion “according to knowledge.” You will never be able to meet the needs of your wife if you do not understand what those needs are. You will never be able to help her find happiness in life if you do not know what it takes to make her happy. In the book, Ditka, Monster of the Midway, the author gives us some insight into the home life of this hero of the gridiron. He says of Ditka marriage, “The Ditka marriage (to Marge), like many others of that time was dysfunctional from the start. I don’t think it was ever any good. Mike and Marge, I mean, you could put it in a nut shell. Mike and Marge never got along. You know, I think the deal was that was that when they got married with the idea of being married forever. I mean, there was nobody else he wanted to marry and he thought he was suppose to get married. Both are very strong willed and they are very much alike, and Marge tried to go by the rules for a long time. The rules being he is the boss and we do everything his way. And if he doesn’t feel like being here for whatever period of time he

doesn't have to be." This pictures a man who entered a marriage with a very self-centered perspective who felt no obligation to understand his wife or to meet her needs.

It should not surprise us that Megan Ditka, Mike's daughter, shared with the author of the book when she was twenty-nine years old, "I have very few recollections of my father. My mom basically raised us by herself. I love my mom a lot. She is a real brave woman. I couldn't ask for anybody better. My dad was never really around a lot. And even when he was, he wasn't. We were always pretty much afraid of my dad. My dad is just like his dad. You didn't have conversations with him. He is a little intimidatating when you are a kid.... I don't think he knows how to love." This is a record of a man who took a team to the Super Bowl on the gridiron but took a family into ruin. He never took seriously the responsibility of a Christian man to understand the uniqueness of his wife and to meet her needs.

II. APPRECIATE HER WORTH.

The second word shared with us by Peter addresses this responsibility of a man, "And treat them with respect as the weaker partner." The older version reads, "honor." The idea is that the husband is to assign honor and respect to his wife as the "weaker vessel." The word translated honor comes from the root idea of precious. It means to value, esteem, hold and honor, prize, count as dear. He is to do this in light of the fact that she is "a weaker vessel."

The words translated weaker partner or weaker vessel point not to the inferiority of the wife in any way, but rather simply to the fact that she will normally be weaker physically. God so constructed men and women that they differ at the point of physical strength. However, this does not reflect on her worth. In our home if you go in to our kitchen, the stronger vessels are not necessarily the most valuable vessels. Alice has a stainless steel skillet but it does not compare in worth or value to some of the expensive crystal that she has on the shelf. That expensive crystal could be shattered almost with a touch and it would be almost impossible to crush the skillet. This word from Peter is that we are to relate to our wives giving them the respect and honor that a housewife would give to a very prize piece of crystal. She is to be treated as a person of worth and value.

This stands in contrast of what we are reading about today concerning husband and wife relationships across our country. Our country has been exposed to some rather bazaar and brutal cases of wife abuse. Battered wives have become a rather common part of our society. To verbally or physically or emotionally batter a wife violates the spirit of what Peter is laying upon the Christian husband. He is to cherish her and honor her and value her as a person of special worth.

In contrast with what I shared with you concerning Mike Ditka and his failures as a husband you may have read about David Williams who played football for the Houston Oilers. Three or four years ago his wife was expecting a child and was due to give birth on the Sunday that his team was to play the New England Patriots. On that weekend he

skipped the team's trip to New England and stayed at home with his wife who had just given birth to their first child.

The management of the Oilers was not amused and docked his pay \$111,111.00.

Offensive line coach Bob Young compared Williams' action to a soldier deserting his comrades in warfare but Williams responded, "I don't regret what I have done. My wife and my family comes first." His wife had gone through a miscarriage the year before and it had left her emotionally vulnerable and he knew this. He so valued his relationship with her and her worth as a person that he wanted to stand beside her in her time of need.

Does your wife know that you honor her? Has she heard you speak appreciatively of her publicly? Has she received words of appreciation and commendation from you privately? Do your children know that she is the most important person in your life? If you want to excel as a Christian husband then you must give to your wife respect and honor.

III. ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PARTNERSHIP WITH HER.

The third statement made by Peter in this word of instruction is, "As heirs with you of the gracious gift of life." This word means that you as a Christian husband relate to your wife as a "co-heir" of the grace of life. One idea in that word "co-heir" is partnership.

The significance of this is rather obvious. When it comes to the things of God, the husband has no advantage over the wife. When they stand before God, they stand on

equal ground. They are equally children of God and recipients of God's savings grace and provisions. Their role spiritually is that of a partnership."

The implications of this are far reaching. Those of us who are sensitive to our wives know that God has been pleased to minister to us often through our wives. As a partner in this walk and relationship with God they are used by God to help us become what we would never be without them. Only God knows the measure of indebtedness that I have to Alice as she is my partner in the grace of life. This means that she has had a significant part in everything that God has allowed me to do in the Christian ministry. Without her it would not have been possible. The same is true for every man whether he is involved in ministry or not. God has given to you a spiritual partner to walk by your side and to share with you fully in this service that we render unto God.

We can find around us notably examples of men who realize this. Whenever I think of Billy Graham I almost instinctively think of his wife Ruth. I recently read the autobiography of their son, Franklin. In the reading of that book it becomes obvious that Ruth Graham has made a very significant contribution to the family as well as to the ministry of the world's most famous preacher. It is a blind and foolish man who is reluctant to acknowledge that his wife is his equal and partner in the grace of life.

Another implication of this is as a husband you should be quick and always ready to listen to your wife. God may often give to you wise counsel and caution through this partner that he has placed by your side. She has a special capacity to hear the voice of God and

may at times even be more sensitive to Him than you are. If you want to excel as a husband you will be careful to treat her and to relate to her as a partner in this great journey of life.

Maxey Dunnam is correct when he says that the biggest hearsay in marriage is an alphabetical one - "Big I, little u." _____ tells of a cartoon he saw that pictured it at a superficial but probic level. "Husband and wife - from their appearance, still in their teens - are in a marriage counselor's office. The girl clutches a teddy bear close to her breast, and the boy says with a superior air, "I think you know our problem, doctor. She keeps taking the teddy bear away from me." It is funny but tragic, because it describes a cancer which will devastate any marriage: selfishness. On the part of a husband it may be pride as well as selfishness that keeps him from expressing an awareness of his partnership, co-dependence, with his wife before the Lord.

Peter closes these admonitions to the husbands with a warning, "So that nothing will hinder your prayers." It is the understanding of Peter that if you neglect your relationship with your wife it will make your prayers ineffective. It will prevent you from being able to share prayer with her, which is a significant loss. But it will also hinder your own private time of prayer with God. Your relationship with God is not going to be any better than your relationship with your wife. When your relationship with your wife is what it ought to be, it adds something special to your relationship with God. When your relationship with God is what it ought to be, it adds something special to your relationship with your wife.

My challenge to us as Christian husbands is that we excel. The world around us needs some models to go by. We have the opportunity to provide those models. May God help us to be faithful in doing this.