

MARRIAGE: The HEAVEN of the Home

1 Peter 3: 1-7

Introduction: A couple came upon a wishing well. The wife leaned over, made a wish and threw in a penny. The husband decided he would make a wish, too. As he leaned over, he leaned too far and fell into the well. The wife just stood there looking down into the well and then finally said, "Well, I'll be. It really works."

Someone has said, "Every wife wants a husband who is handsome, understanding, patient and romantic. But the law only allows one husband."

Another has said that there are three rings of marriage. "There is the engagement ring, the wedding ring and the suffering."

A little girl had learned the story of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." She was telling the story to her mother. When she got down to the place where the prince kissed Snow White and woke her from her sleep the little girl said, "Mother, do you know what happened then?" The mother, knowing the story, replied, "They lived happily ever after?" The little girl said, "No, they got married!"

I think of an ad in the classified section: FOR SALE
Wedding dress. Never worn. Will trade for a .38 caliber pistol.

Another read: FOR SALE
Complete set of Encyclopedia Britannica. Excellent condition. \$1000 or best offer. No longer needed. Got married last weekend. He thinks he knows everything.

Sad to say, many share the sentiments of the old man who asked a wizard if he could remove a curse he had been living with the past 40 years. The wizard replied, "Maybe, but you'll have to tell me the exact words that were used to put the curse on you." The man replied, "I now pronounce you husband and wife."

Sadly enough, many have discovered marriage to be less than they anticipated and it falls short of their expectations. Yet, as we look into God's Word we see that marriage is described as one of the most edifying, satisfying, and gratifying relationships that a human being can experience.

Apart from a relationship with Christ, there is no other relationship that can be more enriching than marriage.

Prior to the 1960's, 25 percent of all marriages ended in divorce. Since then, divorce rates have soared to 56 percent. According to Dr. Harold Bloomfield, an expert in step-families, over 1 million children a year have watched their parents separate and divorce since 1970.

More than half of these children have also watched at least one of their parents re-marry. Tragically, 70 percent of remarried couples will divorce in the next 10 years.

What is even more tragic is that 41% of born-again Christians have experienced a divorce. That number is identical to the number of non-Christians. George Barna shows that nearly 1/4 of married Christians divorce two or more times.

How tragic when God, through His Word, has demonstrated how precious the sacred institution of marriage is to His heart. I can't help but believe that it breaks the heart of God to see Christian homes/marriages dissolve.

Let's look to God's Word and see, as a husband and wife:

1. How to LOVE!

- A) *The Beauty of a Heavenly Love*
- B) *The Bond of a Human Love*

2. How to LIVE!

- A) *Her Godly Obligation*
- B) *Her Golden Opportunity*

3. How to LAST!

- A) *Physical Habitation*
- B) *Emotional Consideration*
- C) *Spiritual Participation*

1. How to LOVE!

M. R. Dehaan said, *"The nearest thing to Heaven on Earth is the Christian family and home where the husband and wife live in love and peace together, for the Lord, and for each other."*

The first step for a successful Christian marriage is found in knowing how to love each other.

A) The BEAUTY of a HEAVENLY Love

In Ephesians 5: 25 the apostle Paul outlines the type of love that a husband is to have for his wife. ***"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."***

He continues in verses 28-29, ***"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. [29] For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."***

When Paul spoke of a husband's love for his wife he gave the example of Christ's love for the church. He loved it so much that He died, and gave Himself for it. That is the love which is to exist between a husband and a wife. It is a heavenly love. It is the love of God in Christ.

It is not a selfish love, but a selfless love. It is not a superficial love, but a sacrificial love. It is a sacred love that is to become a shared love so that it might become a supreme love.

B) The BOND of a HUMAN Love

One dad said to his son, "Son, be careful about puppy love, because it can turn into a dog's life."

God's plan is not for a marriage to be built on human lust, but on Heavenly love. That love then binds their hearts together as *"one flesh."*

I am reminded of the couple who had been married for years. One day, they were sitting on the porch and Ethel said, "Homer, it's been a long time since you told me you loved me." Homer replied, "Ethel, I told you that I loved you 59 years ago, when we got married; and, if I ever change my mind, I'll let you

know."

I would encourage you husbands, and wives, never allow the words "I Love You" to become a foreign language in your home. Tell each other frequently, sincerely and consistently. Allow the love of God, in Christ, to fill your home, flood your home, and fashion your home. Allow God's love to be the glue that binds your hearts together.

2. How to LIVE!

1 Peter 3 is some of the most practical marital advice found in all of God's Word. It applies to both husband and wife concerning the matter of a happy, a healthy, and a holy marriage.

The first 6 verses focus on the responsibility of the wife in the marriage:

A) Her GODLY OBLIGATION

We read in verse 1, ***"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."***

The word *"likewise"* means, "in the same manner." It connects the previous thought in chapter 2 concerning the example of Jesus to ***"bear our sins in his body."*** The idea is of his submissiveness to the will of the Father.

Peter is saying that, in the same manner, wives are to demonstrate the same love and loyalty to their husbands by being in "subjection" to them." The word "subjection" is a military term. The Greek word is *hyptasso*, and it literally means, "To place under rank."

God is a God of order, and He has ordered several levels of authority. The first order of authority is for the husband to the head of his wife. Now, headship does not mean dictatorship. The husband is not to be a DIC-tater, but the HEAD-tater who is a SWEET-tater.

In other words, God has ordained the husband to govern his home in such a way that the Lord Jesus Christ is honored, and the wife is to submit to that authority. Our culture has perverted God's order of authority. Some, if not

most, of it is due to husbands failing to accept their God-given role as the head of their home; and, some of it is due to wives who refuse to submit to their husband, or ultimately to God's order of authority.

We have gone full circle from Adam's Rib to Satan's Fib to Women's Lib.

And the chain of God's order has been broken.

Everyone, as believers, must submit to God's authority; thus, it is not a degrading matter for a wife to submit to her husband's authority. However, men, if you are not submitting to the Lordship of Christ, then you have no right, or reason to expect your wife to submit to your authority.

If your husband loves God, serves God, and is surrendered to God, then submitting to his authority is not an option, but an obligation.

B) Her GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Peter gives a word of encouragement to a wife who is married to an unbelieving husband. He gives hope that the husband can be won to Christ, and you have a golden opportunity to play a part in his conversion.

How? First, by **your OUTWARD BEHAVIOR.** We read in verses 1-2, ***"if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;[2] While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."***

The word "conversation" simply means, "behavior." In other words, Peter is saying that **an unsaved husband is not won to Christ by the wife's criticism, condemnation or complaining; but, by the wife's character, conversation and conduct.**

One of the greatest examples of a godly wife, in church history, is that of Monica, the mother of Augustine. God used Monica's witness, and prayers, to win both her unsaved husband and son to Christ. Augustine said of his mother, in his Confessions, ***"She served him as her lord; and did diligence to win Him unto Thee...preaching Christ unto by her behavior, making her reverently admirable unto her husband."***

If your husband is unsaved, don't go home and shove Jesus at him; but, go

home and SHOW JESUS TO HIM by your outward behavior.

He also speaks of **your INWARD BEAUTY.** He describes it in verses 3-5, ***"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;[4] But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. [5] For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands."***

The word "adorning" is the Greek word *kosmeo*. It gives us our English word "cosmetic." Don't misunderstand Peter's counsel. He is not saying that it is wrong for women to use cosmetics; but, he is saying that **HOW SHE LOOKS ON THE OUTSIDE IS NOT NEAR AS IMPORTANT AS WHO SHE IS ON THE INSIDE!**

You've heard it said, *"Beauty is skin deep, but ugly goes all the way to the bone!"* I've met some women who were outwardly beautiful, but they were inwardly ugly to the bone, not because of how they looked, but because of how they lived.

A lady once asked me, "Pastor, do you think it is a sin for a woman to wear make-up?" I thought for a moment and said, "No ma'am. I think it's a sin for some women not to wear make up."

One of the basic needs of a man is to have an attractive spouse. Ladies, you ought to take pride in what you look like. In fact, if you will take the time to keep yourself attractive, your husband won't have to look for someone more attractive at the office.

But, don't allow the outward beauty to replace the inward beauty. Don't place a premium on what he can see on the outside, but on what he can't see on the inside. Allow the *"hidden man of the heart"* to shine through with a *"meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."*

If your husband is unsaved, or away from God, Peter gives you a promise that your outward behavior, and your inward beauty will win Him to Christ.

3. How to LAST!

Some of the people that I have the most admiration for is those couples who have been married 40, 50, or 60 years. They have loved together. They have lived together. They have lasted together.

I recently read about a farmer that walked into a lawyer's office wanting to file for divorce. The lawyer asked, "Do you have any grounds?" The man said, "Yes, I've got 140 acres." The lawyer said, "No, you don't understand, do you have a case?" The man replied, "No, I've got a John Deere." The lawyer said, "Sir, you still don't understand, do you have a grudge?" The man said, "Yes, I've got a grudge. That's where I park my Mercedes." The lawyer said, "No sir, you still don't understand, do you have a suit?" The man said, "Yes sir, I got the one I wear to church every Sunday." The lawyer asked, "No sir, you still don't understand, does your wife beat you up?" The man said, "No sir, we both get up about 4:30."

Husbands, the focus is on us as we come to verse 7. It gives us the counsel on how our marriages can last to the glory of God. First, he speaks of:

A) PHYSICAL HABITATION

I often try to remind Kim of verse 6, ***"Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord."*** However, in all of the years, she skips verse 6 and takes me straight to verse 7, ***"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge."***

The word "likewise" again connects us back to the previous thought. Peter is saying that just as the wife is to accept her responsibility to the Lord and her husband; so, too, in the same manner, is the husband to accept his responsibility to the Lord and his wife. He is to *"dwell with her according to knowledge."*

The word "dwell" speaks of habitation. However, he is speaking of much more than just sharing the same address. He is saying that a husband is to "dwell" with his wife in an understanding way.

Men, don't lose heart here. I don't know of any man who FULLY understands his wife. (Nor would I recommend you even try to FULLY understand your

wife) However, you do need to understand that she is completely different from you, and she possesses a completely different set of needs than you.

Thus, Peter is saying that the marriage which enjoys the blessings of God is the one where the husband and the wife live together in an understanding way.

B) EMOTIONAL CONSIDERATION

Peter continues by saying that we are to dwell with them by ***"giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel."***

Men, we are to *"give honor"* and respect our wife's feelings, thinking and desires. IN other words, "chivalry may be dead;" but, Peter seems to say that every husband should seek to be their wife's "knight in shining armor."

When he speaks of the wife being the *"weaker vessel,"* he is not implying that she is a doormat or inferior to her husband. Rather, the word implies that she is simply different from her husband, mentally, morally, spiritually and physically. However, it is not a difference that we should evade; but a difference that we should enjoy.

I will be honest with you; my wife is more sensitive to the Holy Spirit than I am. Many refer to it as "women's intuition," but I believe it is because she is more in turn, emotionally and spiritually, to the things of God.

That is not something I try to avoid, it is something that I love to accept, because she is different from me.

When Peter says that our wife is the *"weaker vessel"* he is saying that husbands are to *"give honor"* to that because she needs her husband to love her, lead her and lift her in the things of God.

C) SPIRITUAL PARTICIPATION

Verse 7 concludes on a spiritual note. He describes the pinnacle of the marriage relationship in terms, ***"as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."***

It's almost as if Peter assumes that a husband/wife pray together. As they do, they not only grow closer to the Lord, but they grow closer to each other. However, when the marriage relationship is not what it should be, Peter says that the "prayers" will be "hindered." In fact, this is one of the most serious hindrances to the prayer life of many husbands/wives.

The word "hindered" is the Greek word *ekkopto*. It literally means, "To cut off, or strike out." Peter is saying that if the marital relationship is not right, then their prayer life will be cut off, or strike out.

There have been times when I was attempting to study, or getting ready to preach, that my prayers would go no higher than my head. It was because my relationship at home, with my wife, was not what it was supposed to be. Thus, I have proceeded to pick up the phone and apologize to her; and, then I am able to prepare my heart for the work of God.

Sir, if you are at odds with your wife, you need not even attempt to pray, because you will strike out. Ma'am, if you are at odds with your husband, you will not be right with God, until you get right with him.

God expects physical habitation and emotional consideration; but, most of all, He expects spiritual participation.

In many pre-marital or marital counseling sessions, I draw a diagram of a triangle. At the bottom base angles of the triangle are a husband and wife. At the top angle of the triangle is the Lord Jesus Christ.

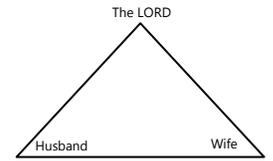
At the bottom, the husband and wife as far apart as they can be from each other. However, as they begin to put God first in their lives, and make Christ the central part of their relationship, they begin to grow closer to Jesus by moving up the triangle.

Conversely, as they grow closer to Jesus, they automatically begin growing closer to each other.

That is God's master blueprint for your marriage or any marriage.

If you are a single adult, let me say that, right now, you need to begin to pray that God will give you a godly wife who loves Jesus. Furthermore, you need to approach dating with the principle that, "Every Date is a Possible Mate!"

If you are married to an unsaved husband, let the light of Christ, the life of Christ and the love of Christ shine throughout your home. You may not be able to bring your husband to Jesus, but you can bring Jesus to your husband.



If you are a Christian husband/wife, then allow the presence of Christ, the person of Christ and the purpose of Christ saturate and dominate your marriage.

The sea of matrimony is the **fellowSHIP**, and the **relationSHIP** doesn't have to be a godless **battleSHIP**; but, it will be a godly **partnerSHIP** whenever you allow Jesus Christ to become the captain of the **SHIP**!

God never intended for your marriage to be hell on earth. He expects you to learn how to love, how to live and how to last so that you have a little bit of Heaven on earth.