

Dwell Together by Intimate Knowledge

1 Peter 3:7b, Live with Your Wives in an Understanding Way

A Sermon by Chris Mueller

A husband-shopping center (Husband Mart) has just opened where a woman may go to choose a husband from among many men. The store is comprised of six floors, and the men increase in positive attributes as the shopper ascends the flights. There is, however, a catch. As you open the door to any floor you may choose a man from that floor, but if you go up a floor you cannot go back down except to exit the building.

So a woman goes to the shopping center to find a husband. On the first floor the sign on the door reads: "Floor 1—These men have jobs." The woman reads the sign and says to herself, "Well, that's better than my last boyfriend, but I wonder what's further up?" So up she goes.

The second floor sign reads: "Floor 2--These men have jobs and love kids." The woman remarks to herself, "That's great, but I wonder what's further up?" And up she goes again.

The third floor sign reads: "Floor 3--These men have jobs, love kids and are extremely good looking." "Hmmm, better," she says. "But I wonder what's upstairs?"

The fourth floor sign reads: "Floor 4--These men have jobs, love kids, are extremely good looking and help with the housework." "Wow!" exclaims the woman, "very tempting, but there must be more further up!" And again she heads up another flight.

The fifth floor sign reads: "Floor 5--These men have jobs, love kids, are extremely good looking, help with the housework and have a strong romantic streak." "Oh, mercy! But just think . . . what's next?" So up to the sixth floor she goes.

The sixth floor sign reads: "Floor 6--You are visitor 1 billion, 12 million, 3 hundred 45 to this floor. There are no men on this floor. This floor exists solely as proof that women are impossible to please. Thank you for shopping at Husband Mart and have a nice day."

I don't think that's true--the wives of our church have contented themselves with far less than the top floor.

How do husbands and wives get to the place where they are really blessed with their spouse? How can marriage become the grace of life--the best this world has to offer? The answer is found in 1 Peter 3—turn there and take your outline. For six verses Peter has been instructing wives how to be women who glorify God, please Christ, and honor God's Word. He invests more time with the wives because they had the most difficult circumstances. Some of them were saved but their husbands were not--so now these wives worship only Christ, but they live under the authority of a husband who followed Rome's gods or even worshipped the emperor. They were in a tense situation.

So Peter tells these wives in 2:21 to 25 to imitate Christ when it gets tough, in 3:1 to fill out their God-designed role, in 3:2 to make sure they live the truth not merely talk the truth, in 3:3 to 4 to focus on internal character, and in 3:5 to 6 to model after Godly Biblical examples. Now uniquely in the context, Peter addresses the wife's immediate authority, her husband, and even though it's only one verse, it is packed with practical truth. Last week . . .

Verse 1 To FOLLOW CHRIST as your model for marriage

To be Christ-like--from “you husbands in the same way”

Verse 2a To BUILD A HOME with your wife

To be CONSIDERATE--from “live with your wives in an understanding way”

Verse 2b To KNOW your wife intimately

To be COMMUNICATIVE--from “live with your wives in an understanding way”

Verse 3 To PROTECT your wife

To be CHIVALROUS--from “as with someone weaker, since she is a woman”

Verse 4 To TREASURE your wife

To be an intimate COMPANION--from “and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life”

Verse 5 To GUARD your marriage

To be CAREFUL--from “so that your prayers will not be hindered”

Read verse 7 with me and emphasize the phrase that’s underlined. “*You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.*” Live with your wives in an understanding way literally means in the Greek house/dwell together under intimate personal knowledge.

And what Peter is commanding all you husbands to do is this, see your wife accurately--build a home with her as one and know your wife intimately. Be considerate and be communicative, but make sure you look at her through God’s lens and not this world’s, and not your own. Men, do you see your wife accurately? Single men, do you look at women Biblically? What lens do you use to look at your wife? How does she come into focus?

She bugs me, loves me, hugs me, tugs me--it’s all about me

She’s merely a pretty picture--to look at and brag about

She’s a friend, a bud, a pal, one of the boys--intimate confidant

She’s a player, an athlete, a teammate, or a competitor

She’s a jokester, a texting pal, a secret-sharer, or a counselor

She’s an inconvenience, a challenge, or a wall to get around

There are lots of bad ways to see your wife or wife-to-be--so how should you see your wife? Peter says God’s way. Peter just talked about the importance of salvation saturation, to be filled daily with the truth of what God has done for you, in chapter 1 and 2--then submission to authority in 2 and 3. And the truth Peter has established already in 1 Peter is to . . .

#1 See your wife with an accurate Biblical lens

Live with your wives in an understanding way. The average American couple spends thirty-seven minutes per week together in actual communication. As a result of this drift, many wives start out as Glenda, slowly transform into Dorothy, then husbands discover that their wives have morphed into the wicked witch of the west at a moment's notice—"I'll get you my pretty."

For some husband's their wives start out as a hovering angel, and later she's just always up in the air harping about something. Yet so much of marital tension would actually go away if you both looked at each other with an accurate Biblical lens. Singles, so many of your dating or courtship relationships would be a joy if you would put on the right pair of glasses. And Christians, most of the tensions you've experienced with so-called believers would actually not have occurred if you'd been wearing the glasses you received from your marriage. What did you learn? Marriage presses two saints who sin so close together that each partner can see just how wicked, sinful, evil, harsh, selfish, proud all people are--even genuine Christians.

That lens is true of every friendship, every relationship, every courtship and every marriage. You need to see just how ugly your sin is and how capable of great sin others are to see clearly. That is true of everyone in this room--your sin is ugly and you are all capable of great sin--there are no exceptions. You have to see your spouse Biblically. Plus don't ever forget who you were without Christ, and who you are in Christ.

If you don't know what a skunk is, you're in trouble. And unless you know what a woman is Biblically, you'll never live with her in an understanding way. If you listen to the worldly voices telling you people are inherently good, or you look at your wife or others as if their self-esteem is your greatest concern, you'll not function in a Biblical relationship. So what does God say about women?

First Women are made in the image of God

Women are amazing creatures. Genesis 1:27 is clear, "*God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*" Even though the fall has marred God's image in people, it has not disappeared from men or from women. So I will seek to live with my wife in an understanding way, because she is an image-bearer of the living God, the Creator. I will treat her with a special dignity.

Husbands must remember your wife has the unique capacity to know God, to commune with God, to be morally accountable to God, to be creative, self-perceptive, and have the capacity to show God's love, joy, heart and other great God-like qualities.

Plus it means our wives are stamped with immortality. They will exist as body and soul entities in heaven or in hell forever. There is no hell for dogs (possibly cats)--I like cats, I do. They taste good with a sauce. Hell is only reserved for distorted image-bearers and fallen angels. Therefore the Gospel must saturate every Christian marriage. If you know God, you'll love your wife because she is made in God's image.

Second Women are made with God-designed individuality

You were not there in the womb when all that mysterious selection was being made in the gene pool that was going to determine the basic elements of her physiology, mental capacity, and personality. But there was someone there in the womb. Psalm 139:13 declares, "For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb" (God was there).

God uses the imagery of a weaver in His shop, making one strand at a time on His great loom, designing the fabric of our lives--an expression of His perfect artistry, like He's describing our DNA. Ephesians 2:10, "*We are His workmanship,*" God's masterpiece. God reminded Jeremiah of His work in the womb in Jeremiah 1:5, "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.*"

That means apart from our sin and its results, your wife is exactly what God intends her to be. And when we accept that truth, then as husbands we will also be more prepared to accept those abnormalities that were also woven in out of a woman's fallen-ness. As Exodus 4:11 reminds us, the Lord said, "*Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?*" God is the one who made your wife with all her capacity to put God on display--those things you love and with all her fallen weaknesses, physical limitations, illnesses and handicaps.

You say, "Chris, I want her to be different." No, God gave her to you because she is exactly what you need to become like Christ. This is why your marriage vow said in sickness and in health.

Third Women are creatures fallen in Adam, corrupted by sin

Women are sinful, all women--your wife, your daughter, all women.

1 Women are sinful by nature

Romans 5:12 says, "*Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.*" Because we are all part of the human race in Adam as our physical and representative father, after he sinned, every man and woman born since then has been born with a fallen sinful nature bent against God.

That wife or girlfriend may be a ten, really cute, smart, funny, sweet and kind, but they're also at war with God. That sweet hunk of Christian femininity is also Al Capone in a skirt. She may take your breath away with her appearance, but she is a snake-in-the-grass when it comes to sin. She is born spiritually guilty, condemned, blind and morally perverse at her very core.

Husbands say, "My wife is crucifying me," and I say, "Hey, you said you wanted to go the way of the cross." But this is tough--whoever said it was going to be easy lied. "But I have never been hurt like this before," and I say, "She is a sinner." Women are guilty, depraved and morally perverse. You don't have to teach them to lie, manipulate, be hurtful, be lazy or even cruel--it comes naturally. Women are not only sinners by nature, also by observation.

2 Women are sinful in particular bents

There is woven into the soul of every woman particular tendencies as a result of the whole state of fallen humanity. (Listen carefully--this is tough to say.) Some ladies in their conceived individuality have a conduit of potentiality for being gossips far out of proportion to other women. They are equally guilty, equally disobedient to God, but uniquely predisposed to misusing their tongues to talk. You have got to understand that as a husband and as a wife. Others are uniquely predisposed to lying, cleverness, or manipulation.

Now listen carefully--I did not say she was born with a robotic necessity to become a manipulator, but some because of the influence of sin upon humanity from conception are more predisposed to manipulation than others. Scarlett O'Hara has nothing on them. Some are more predisposed to vanity or selfishness, laziness, flirtatiousness, lying or negativity.

Look at the Scripture--Abraham had a bent toward lying, didn't he? David battled and eventually lost his battle with sexual lechery. Peter battled with speaking first thinking later. Peninnah was naturally an irritator to Hannah. Bathsheba lacked discretion and possibly was an exhibitionist. You had better open your eyes, husbands and wives. Ask God's help to see what specific areas your spouses are more predisposed to--this sin or that sin, if I am to live with them in an understanding way. Surely in those areas I must concentrate my energies and my prayers. So are we stuck in our sin?

Fourth Women are redeemable

No one is fixed and hardened into patterns of thought and behavior. Women are made in God's image, individually designed, very sinful with evil bents yet redeemable. This is what Peter has been teaching us in chapters 1 and 2--that God can save both women and men and transform them. Look back at 1 Peter 1:3, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*"

God can cause us to be born from above, born again, transformed, changed, forgiven, cleansed, washed, and made right with a new heart. If your wife is saved, then she has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. She didn't save herself, Christ saved her. He bore the punishment for her sins on the cross and died for her. She wasn't perfect, but had to be in order to get right with God.

We have a lot of salesmen in our body, and sales involve the negotiation of prices. The buyer asks for \$1,000 and the seller offers \$800, the seller comes down to \$950, the seller may come up to \$850 and so on. Then comes that magic moment when you settle on a price and the sale is made.

God is different. He sets the standard here, and you say I will do this, but the price stays the same with God. You say God is a tough seller so you dig deep and do this, but God's standard stays the same. He does not negotiate--He is God. And God's standard is perfection--absolute, total perfection, and you and I can't measure up. We can't make it--we will never be perfect.

That's what is so amazing about God. He knew we'd never make it, so out of love He made a plan to take the punishment for your sin and give you His perfection. Your sin killed Christ,

His righteousness gave you life--amazing grace. Christ took the punishment for your sin and gave you His perfection.

To live with your wife in an understanding way, you have to never forget what God did for her through Christ. Christ saved her. And never forget that now as a saved sinner, she must remain continually dependent upon God's Spirit in order to live in a way that masks her sinful bents, keeps her from the flesh, and makes her more into the person God created her to be. She is still going to sin, and still has the capacity to do great evil when living in her own strength. And she, like you, will battle with the world, the flesh and the devil until she finally goes home to heaven.

Do you have an accurate lens that you look at your wife through? Is it clear, is it accurate, or are you still shocked, hurt, angry when she sins, disappoints you, gives into fear, stops trusting? Or will you gently, graciously, lovingly overlook her sin (love covers)? Or kindly confront her disobedience? Or most importantly, will you husbands provide a model of obedience worthy of following?

You need to see your wife with an accurate theological lens in order to house together under intimate personal knowledge.

#2 See your wife as the woman you are one with

Verse 7, Again "*live with your wives in an understanding way.*" When Peter says the word wives, he's assuming you understand the expectations of marriage. She is your wife, not your buddy but your life partner--the one you are yoked to. Your helper, best friend, the one you want to and need to spend time with. She is so intertwined to you, you are both considered one.

Sadly, a lot of couples are confused about oneness since it's a type of mystery. Let me explain. Does the trinity ever confuse you? Which person can you pray to? Does the Holy Spirit or Christ live in you? The trinity is hard to fully understand--Amen? In the trinity there is authority and submission, where Christ submits to the Father. But there is also oneness. They are three persons yet one God--that defies a total explanation.

In Christian marriage, you are three persons, 1) God, 2) you, and 3) your spouse--but you are also one, and that defies a total explanation. But the expectation of Scripture is that you husbands would care for your wife like you care for your own body. That you would be one with your wife the way Christ is one with His bride, the Church, and the way God is three persons, yet one in the trinity.

You are one--that means when she's hurt, you're to be hurt. When she's struggling, you struggle with her. To attack her is to attack yourself. When you blast her with your words, you are slamming yourself, because you're one.

That does not mean you don't lead her, correct her, or encourage her to depend on the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. It does not mean you give into every whim, emotion, idea or desire. But you own her issues because you are one with her--she is yours and you are hers. Which means husband, you are responsible to keep your marriage focused on oneness. It means you talk about everything. You choose to be with her over any other. It means you delight in her, love her, lead her, and care for her--she is your wife, your partner. She is one with you. You're yoked with her, bearing the burdens, joys and sorrows, responsibilities and pleasures of this life together. Do you see your wife as one with you?

A business man's wife began to mope around and be sad with no light in her eyes, and no spring in her step--she was joyless. It became so bad her husband made an appointment to meet with a counselor. On the appointed day they met with the counselor--sat down and began to talk. It wasn't long before the counselor realized what the problem was. So without saying a word, he simply stood, walked over in front of the woman's chair, signaled her to stand, took her by the hands, looked at her in the eyes for a long time, then gathered her into his arms and gave her a big, warm hug. You could see the change come over the woman. Her face softened, her eyes lit up, she immediately relaxed. Her whole face glowed.

Stepping back, the doctor said to the husband, "See, that's all she needs." With that the man said, "Okay, I'll bring her in Tuesdays and Thursdays each week, but I have to play golf on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday . . ." No, you are one with your wife. She is your wife, men--she is yours to protect, care for, because she is your wife, you are the one to live with in an understanding way.

#3 See your wife as the partner you dwell with

"Live with your wives in an understanding way." Certain phrases don't translate from one language to another and the phrase "live with your wife" is one of them. When Peter says live with your wives, the actual words are "dwell" and "together", or the two Greek words are *oikeo* (dwell or house), and *suun* (together), and in this context the participle dwell together is a command. Live with your wife means dwell at home together with your wife--build your life, ministry, and family together with your wife. And God says this is not optional for any Christian husband.

All of your life is to be with her, with her in mind, with her in your heart, with her as your most essential relationship. And dwelling with her is more than being considerate or providing--it is living with your wife in an intimate and cherishing manner. It is nourishing and building up your wife in the bond of intimacy.

Now get this--are you ready? Get it? Say, "Got it." Good. When Peter says, "Dwell together with your wife," the apostle is commanding you husbands here to be responsible for the close togetherness of your marriage--that is not her job, it is yours. If there is drift, distance, or dullness, it is most often the husband's fault, and if not, it is still your responsibility to fix it.

Providing a good income should never become a substitute for sharing deeply in life together. The godly husband must understand every room in his wife's heart and be sensitive to her needs. Peter says living with a wife is something a man must know how to do. Sadly your biological sister for most men growing up is often not a great help since brothers often rip on sisters. Hopefully in your home you were taught how to treat mothers and sisters with grace and care. Hopefully you dads have talked about how to care for a wife to your sons and you have modeled for your daughters how they should be treated by men. But all men need to become learners of their wives--a disciple. You husbands are to be a student of your wife.

Most single men are doing this all wrong. Most quickly move to solo dating where you're not able to talk frankly about the women issues you need to learn. Instead, with other select men, you should for a season go out in groups, not paired off, and ask the ladies what is it like to be a woman--what goes on in women's heads, hearts, emotions about guys--how do hormones change their feelings, what you might say and more. Single ladies can also ask about men in those settings, but husbands have no choice. You must be a student of your wife and pursue

discoveries about her as if you're panning for gold and your future existence depended on finding those discoveries.

Husbands are bound to a wife in the most intimate, emotional, sexual, financial and spiritual way and that takes effort and wisdom. Some of you men don't have a clue as to the needs of your wife, which causes unending and often unspoken frustration and hurts. Some men think only of their careers and self-centered needs, which results in a broken partnership. Yet it is not what you get out of a marriage, but what you put into it that brings glory to God. Have you asked your wife (after reassuring her it's safe for her to answer honestly) what she truly wants you to be? Dwell together with your wife--how?

1 Make your wife your delight, your greatest treasure

Live in such a way she knows that's true. If you value her more than anything, she'll trust you as you attempt to get to know her fully.

2 Make time to ask questions and listen

By having a date night, or taking time in bed before you're asleep, or have early morning breakfast before the kids get up--but make some time, your time.

3 Redefine your partnership by making adjustments

As you learn what is most important to her . . . if a working car is a life essential for her, or the washing machine, make sure it runs and fix it immediately when it breaks down. If being home for dinner on time communicates to her that you love her, then figure out a system to make certain you get home by meal launch--T minus ten seconds. See your wife as the partner you dwell with. Live with her in an understanding way.

#4 See your wife as the one you must intimately know

Live with your wives in an understanding way. The word understanding or considerate way does not capture the full meaning here. The literal Greek is according to knowledge--by knowledge or under intimate personal knowledge is what God says. See her correctly through intimate personal experiential knowledge. The knowledge here is not knowledge of facts--it is knowledge of experience, intimacy, relationship, personal friendship. And it is not in an understanding way, but under personal knowledge giving us the sense of a must--under this alone can you dwell with her--under the weight of personal intimacy.

Some men feel they must know sports, or must know work, or must know about money. But God says you must know your wife intimately, personally and accurately. Wives--don't make this difficult for your husbands. A lot of Christian wives hide their hearts from their husbands. They make them guess, like *Let's Make a Deal*. "What's behind heart door number two? Oh, sorry, you got the phony motives." Or like a doctor who has to guess what your symptoms mean?

Some ladies, from lack of trust, or fear, or baggage from the past, some even from the desire to keep their husbands guessing, or making them try harder, or wickedly keeping them from fulfilling their roles and keep their husbands at a distance, don't share. But a Christian

husband must know his wife with personal intimate understanding, why she is the way she is. Don't keep this locked up in your heart. Share with your husband.

Peter says according to knowledge. But personal discovery is not academic knowledge of your wife, but a deep understanding of how she is put together by God. It involves perceiving her innermost makeup, discerning her deep-seated concerns, and helping her work through those in the security of your unconditional love. And there are only two ways to discover this experiential knowledge.

1 Study the Word of God, especially about people, women and marriage

2 Unhurried times of private fellowship together as husband and wife

Do you know your wife's SHAPE? Yes, she's hot. No, S H A P E

S spiritual gifts

H heart passion for Christ's work

A abilities and talents

P personality of being a Martha or Mary, introvert or extrovert

E experiences both good and bad

Have you figured out how her SHAPE works in harmony with your SHAPE? How you work as a team, how you together are more effective for Christ than separately. By the way, that is why God put you together--not merely to love each other, and not merely to raise kids. But to bring Him greater glory together than you ever could alone, to be more effective for Christ as a team than you could ever be separately. You get married when everyone is convinced it would bring God greater glory to be married, than to be single.

Many of you know how this works. Jean is grounded in reality and has wisdom for today. She has the most practical ideas of how to lay out each day. I am firmly established in the future. I used to make most of the long-term plans with the family. She would give me observations about where the boys were at when they were growing up, and I would then plan and execute ways to address those issues with my sons. Now after almost thirty years I am more like her and she is more like me, but we've learned to benefit from each other's strengths, gifts, talents, abilities and personalities--have you? Hey, we are different too--she likes tofu, and I think it tastes like dirty Jell-O. I like plain tomato soup, she puts veggies in it, and that's okay. See your wife as the one you must intimately know.

Do you see your wife with an accurate lens--a Biblical lens? Then let me conclude with this.

#1 Men, are you working at your marriage?

Let me be pointed--would your wife still marry you if you treated her then the way you treat her today? If not you are not working at your marriage and dwelling with her under knowledge, or as the NAS says, "*living with her in an understanding way.*"

#2 Single men, how you treat women now will determine how you will treat your wife later

There is no magical switch once you say "I do"--what you see is what you get. Remember what Paul said to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:1 to 2, "*Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, 2 the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.*"

Single gals, look to see how he treats his sisters, women in the church and his mother, and you'll see how he is going to treat you. If he's rude, mean, complaining, distant, unconcerned, neglectful then he will be to you. If he is polite, respectful, caring, close, then he will be to you. Listen, don't let anyone say to you, "There are 200 billion fish in the sea and this is the tuna you pick?" What you see is what you get, don't lie to yourself--watch how he treats women.

#3 Ladies, are you honest with your husband?

With a humble submissive heart, tell your Christian husband what you really think and feel. Remember Ephesians 4:15, "*Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.*" Then 4:29, "*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*"

Speak the truth in love--yes pick the right moment, be gracious, building and broken, but tell him the truth. A Godly husband will thank you for laying the cards on the table in a sweet manner.

#4 Only those who know Christ can truly know their spouse

You can't truly know the crown of all creation, man or woman, without personally knowing the one who created them--Jesus Christ. Turn to Christ today--let's pray.