

THE HUSBAND'S UNDERSTANDING

1 Peter 3:7

By Andy Manning

The title of this sermon is “The Husband’s Understanding.”

This is week 3 of our sermon series called “Making Marriage Work.”

All men pretty much want the same thing.

They want to be happy, healthy, and wealthy.

But most men don’t know that the best way to find those things by marrying a good woman.

In 2017 a new study was released by the Institute for Family Studies that showed that marriage makes men happier, healthier, and richer.

Married men are richer than single men by a range of 10-40 percent.

51 percent of married report being extremely satisfied with their sex lives compared to only 36 percent for single men.

Married men live almost 10 years longer than single men.

And 43% of married men report being very happy with their lives compared to only 21 percent of single men.

Marriage makes men happier, healthier, and wealthier.

But, truth be told, if you want the benefits of marriage, then you need to have a healthy marriage. And that’s not always easy. That’s why we’re in a sermon series right now called “Making Marriage Work.” God made marriage, so we’re trying to learn from God’s word about how to build a healthy, happy, lasting marriage.

We spent the first two weeks focusing on wives. We looked at the wife's submission, and the wife's beauty. And this week and next week we're going to look at husbands.

Today we're going to focus on the husband's understanding.

Turn with me to 1 Peter 3:7 (CSB). "Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner, showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."

Today we're just going to focus on the first part of this verse: "Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner."

What does it mean that the wife is the weaker partner?

We're not sure, because the text doesn't specify,

but it isn't saying that women are weaker morally, spiritually, or intellectually.

The Bible teaches that spiritually men and women are equal before God.

Later in the same verse it says that women are "coheirs of the grace of life."

Galatians 3:28 says, "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Some scholars believe it is just pointing to the reality that in general, women are physically weaker than men, and, so this verse is encouraging husbands to act as their protectors.

But I think it means something different. I think Peter is referring to their position of weakness in the marriage.

In a company, the employees are in a position of weakness and managers and owners are in a position of power.

In a family, the children are in a position of weakness, and the parents are in a position of power.

In society, civilians are in a position of weakness, and police, politicians, and judges are in a position of authority.

And in marriage, the wife is in a position of weakness and the husband is in a position of power.

In marriage, the wife's role is to submit and support; she is to follow her husband's lead; she is to submit to her husband in everything, as unto the Lord.

So in terms of the marriage, the husband is in a position power and authority, and the wife is in a position of weakness, vulnerability, and dependence.

Her overall wellbeing is highly dependent on the husband.

So I think what Peter is saying is this: In light of the fact that your wife is the weaker partner, in light of the fact that she is highly dependent on you, being a great husband.

So how can you be a great husband? You need understanding.

Peter says, "Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker partner."

What do you need to understand in order to be a great husband?

To be a great husband, you must understand your God-given role in marriage – to love and lead.

While men and women are equal in value, they are very different in the roles that God has assigned them in marriage.

In marriage, the wife's role is to submit and support, and **the husband's role is to love and to lead**. Let's take a closer look at these two roles.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE IN MARRIAGE

1. Love your wife.

First, the husband's role in marriage is to love his wife.

But what does it mean to love your wife?

Let's talk about what it does NOT mean.

Keep in mind that we are talking about the Biblical definition of love, not contemporary society's definition.

2 THINGS LOVE IS NOT

a. Love is not dependent upon your feelings.

When the Bible tells you to love your wife, it is not telling you to feel good about her; it is telling you to act good toward her.

Don't get me wrong; feelings are important in marriage. It is important in marriage to work at staying in love with one another.

But the reality is that the feelings will come and go, just like the seasons come and go.

And you are not to love your wife only when you feel like it; or only when you feel in love with her. You are to show love to her always.

b. Love is not dependent upon your wife's performance.

You are not called to love your wife when you think she deserves it; when she has been meeting your needs; when she is doing a good job of loving you.

You are to love her unconditionally.

WHAT IS LOVE?

So what does it mean to love?

A basic Biblical definition of love is that **love means doing what is best for others and meeting their needs.**

First, love means doing what is best for someone.

Mind you, love is not necessarily making someone feel good.

Sometimes the loving thing to do is the painful thing to do.

For example, a loving parent sometimes has to spank their kids. It doesn't feel good for the child, but that's what's best for them. So to love means doing what is best for your wife.

Second, love means meeting your wife's needs.

This is different than meeting her wants.

Your wife may want you to rob a bank or buy do illegal drugs for her, but you shouldn't do that.

You are not called to meet all of her wants; but you are called to meet her needs.

2 WAYS A HUSBAND SHOULD LOVE HIS WIFE

So with that in mind, let's look at Ephesians 5, because it gives us a couple of specifics about how to love your wife.

a. Put your wife before yourself.

Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her."

So the first thing we see here is that husbands are to love their wives sacrificially.

That means you are to **put your wife before yourself.**

So not only are you to do what's best for your wife and meet her needs,

but you are to do what's best for her before you do what's best for yourself,

and you are to meet her needs before your own.

Her needs, her desires, her problems, her comfort, her happiness takes priority over yours.

The idea of putting your wife first should be seen in everything you do. When you pick out a new car, give priority to her needs and desires. When you go see a movie, give priority to her needs and desires. When you go out to eat, give priority to her needs and desires. When you are making career decisions and financial decisions, give priority to her needs and desires. When you are planning out your schedule, give priority to her needs and desires. When you buy a house, give priority to her needs and desires.

b. Discover and meet your wife's needs.

Ephesians 5:28-29 says, "In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church."

This verse says the husband is to love his wife as he loves his own body; feeding and caring for it.

In other words, to love your wife means to meet your wife's needs.

That's your job as a husband. Your job is to discover and meet her needs – all of them. Her spiritual needs, her physical needs, her sexual needs, her financial needs, her emotional and psychological needs, her relational needs. Your job is to meet your wife's needs. You are called by God to be your wife's provider.

Let me put it this way. God loves your wife, and He wants to take good care of her. And His plan is to take care of her through you. You are God's method of caring for your wife.

So what are your wife's needs?

Your wife has many needs, and the most important are her spiritual needs.

Your job is to do whatever you can to make sure your wife is spiritually nourished.

Go to church with her. Pray with her. Talk about the Bible with her. Buy her good Christian books. Encourage her to seek the Lord and participate in church. Seek Christ with all your heart so that you don't lead her away from Christ and into sin.

Most Christian husbands do pretty well when it comes to meeting their wife's spiritual needs.

But where most Christian husbands fall short is meeting their wife's emotional needs.

Emotional needs?

Did you know that the Bible commands you to meet your wife's emotional needs?

Let me show you a couple of verses that might surprise you.

Deuteronomy 24:5 says, "When a man takes a bride, he must not go out with the army or be liable for any duty. He is free to stay at home for one year, so that he can bring joy to the wife he has married."

In Old Testament Israel, the government could not force a newly married man to leave his wife for any kind of civil service. They had to let him stay close to home for a full year. Why? So he could bring joy to his wife. Your job in marriage is to bring joy to your wife – to make her happy.

In other words, your job is to meet her emotional needs.

Let's look at a second verse, this one in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 7:33 says, "But the married man is concerned about the things of the world – how he may please his wife."

Now in this passage the apostle Paul is actually advising single Christians to stay single so that they could focus solely on pleasing the Lord; because once you get married, then your interests are divided between pleasing the Lord and pleasing your spouse.

But don't miss the implication.

If you are married, your duty is to please your wife.

That's what it means to be a husband.

You are to strive to make her happy; to meet her emotional needs.

HOW TO MEET HER EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Dr. Willard Harley is a Biblical counselor who has identified that five main emotional needs of women in his book *His Needs Her Needs*.

If you want to meet your wife's emotional needs and make her happy, and please her, and bring her joy, then you need to know these five needs.

a. Affection.

A hug; a greeting card or note expressing loving care; a bouquet of flowers; an invitation to dinner – alone; open the door at every opportunity; hold hands – especially in public; go for a walk after dinner; back rubs; phone calls during the day just to check on her; hug and kiss your wife before you leave and when you get back home; tell her that you love her; give her gifts on special occasions.

b. Conversation: She needs you to talk to her.

Set aside 15 hours a week to give your wife undivided attention.

c. Honesty and openness: She needs to trust you totally.

If your wife asks how you feel, tell the truth. Your wife wants to know your good and bad feelings, your frustrations, your problems, your fears and worries – anything that is on your mind.

Dr. Willard Harley teaches that there should be nothing hidden between husband and wife.

d. Financial Support: She needs enough money to live comfortably.

You need to be a good provider.

How much should you earn? Make sure that your wife is satisfied with your income.

If not, find a way to earn more.

You need to become an expert at financial management.

Financial success is not so much what you earn as what you do with it.

So I recommend you start with Dave Ramsey's book *The Total Money Makeover*. That book will change your life.

e. Family Commitment: She needs you to be a good father.

Be a good example to the kids.

Be the kind of man that your wife would want your boys to imitate, and the kind of man that your wife would want your kids to marry.

Spend time with the kids. Have family meals. Have Bible time with the kids. Play with the kids. Discipline the kids. Read books on parenting.

So we've talked about a lot of things so far. Let's review.

Because your wife is the weaker partner, she's in a position of weakness and you are in a position of power, and she is highly dependent upon you for her well-being, be a great husband.

To do that you need to understand something.

You need to understand your God-given role in marriage – to love and lead.

We've talked about what it means to love. Now let's look at what it means to be your wife's leader.

2. Lead your wife.

Ephesians 5:22-23 says, “22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body.”

The husband is the head, or the leader of his wife and family.

What does it mean that the husband is the leader? It means two things.

THE TWO ASPECTS OF HEADSHIP

a. The husband has the final say in all decisions.

God has delegated His authority to the husband to have the final say in all decisions.

This is why the Bible commands wives to submit to their husbands in everything, as to the Lord.

Obviously the wife should not submit if the husband is leading her to do something unbiblical. But in general, the husband has the final say in all decisions.

Now this doesn't mean that the husband should make all decisions alone. Only a foolish leader would believe that. You should seek out your wife's needs, desires, and input on every decision. Two heads are better than one.

As well, this doesn't mean that the husband gets to make all decisions in a way that benefits himself. That's the way unbelievers lead. And that leads us to the second aspect of headship.

b. The husband is to use his power to serve His wife.

The world's model of leadership is to rise up in power and leadership so that you can rise up in privilege.

The more power you have, the more money, and luxury, and prestige, and perks, and benefits.

The Biblical concept of leadership is very different. It's called servant leadership.

Use your power to serve the people you lead.

So in marriage, leadership means using your decision-making power to serve the needs and interests of your wife.

Use your decision-making power to meet her needs so that she can thrive spiritually, physically, emotionally, relationally, and financially.

CONCLUSION

I heard this in a sermon about marriage a while back, and I wanted to share it with you.

It shows how a husband typically reacts to his wife's cold during the first seven years of marriage.

1st year cold: The husband said, "Sugar dumpling! I'm really worried about my baby girl! You've got a bad sniffle and there's no telling about these things with all the strep going around. I'm putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general check-up and a good rest. I know the food is lousy there, so I'll be bringing you food from Tosini's. I've already got it all arranged with the floor superintendent."

2nd year cold: "Listen, darling! I don't like the sound of that cough! I've called Dr. Miller to rush over here. Now you go to bed like a good little girl just for Poppa."

3rd year cold: "Maybe you better lie down, Honey. Nothing like a little rest when you feel lousy. I'll bring you something. Do you have any canned soup?"

4th year cold: "Now look dear, be sensible! After you've fed the kids, washed the dishes and finished vacuuming, you'd better lie down."

5th year cold: "Why don't you take a couple of aspirin?"

6th year cold: "If you'd just gargle or something, instead of sitting around barking like a seal!"

7th year cold: "For Pete's sake, stop sneezing! Are you trying to give me pneumonia!?"

It's funny because it's true.

But that also makes it sad.

As husbands, we are called to love and to lead our wives.

And usually we do pretty good when we first start out. But over the years we tend to forget how precious our wives really are, and we tend to forget our God-given role in marriage.

So I want to encourage you today to recommit yourself to be the husband that God wants you to be.

Not because your wife has earned it. But because God has called you to it.

And remember this. The ultimate purpose of marriage is to glorify God by displaying the beauty of the gospel.

A wife's submission is supposed to display the church's submission to Christ. And the husband's love is supposed to display the unconditional, sacrificial, selfless love of the Lord Jesus Christ.