

What does it mean to dwell with your wife with understanding?

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:7

Code: QA119

The apostle Peter wrote: *Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).*

Living with your wife with understanding first of all involves mutual submission. Prior to commanding wives to submit to their husbands the apostle Paul taught that we are to submit to one another in the fear of the God (Ephesians 5:21). Submission is thus the responsibility of Christian husbands as well as of wives. Though not submitting to his wife as a leader, a believing husband must submit to the loving duty of being sensitive to the needs, fears, and feelings of his wife. In other words, a Christian husband needs to subordinate his needs to hers, whether she is a Christian or not.

In 1 Peter 3:7 Peter specifically notes consideration, chivalry, and companionship. Let's look at each of these qualities in turn.

Be Considerate

"Understanding" speaks of being sensitive to your wife's deepest physical and emotional needs. In other words, be thoughtful and respectful. Remember, you are to nourish and cherish her (Eph. 5:25-28). Many women have said to me, "My husband doesn't understand me. We never talk. He doesn't know how I feel or what I'm thinking about." Such insensitivity builds walls in marriages. "Live with your wives in an understanding way" is another way of saying, "Be considerate." It isn't what you get out of marriage but what you put into it that brings glory to God. Do you know your wife's needs? Have you discussed them with her? Have you asked her what kind of husband she wants you to be?

Be Chivalrous

By God's design, a wife is to be the special object of her husband's love and care. As "a weaker vessel" she is under his authority and protection. "Weaker" doesn't mean weaker spiritually or intellectually, but physically and perhaps emotionally. Scripture indicates that in several places. For example, in Jeremiah 51:30 we read, "The mighty men of Babylon have ceased fighting, they stay in the strongholds; their strength is exhausted, they are becoming like women; their dwelling places are set on fire, the bars of her gates are broken" (cf. Isa. 19:16; Jer. 50:37; Nahum 3:13). Babylon's army was compared to women because it was afraid, without strength, and defenseless.

It's not a negative thing for a woman to be a weaker vessel. In making the man stronger, God designed a wonderful partnership. One way a husband can protect and provide for his wife is to practice chivalry. Whatever happened to the custom of opening the car door for your wife? Some husbands are fifteen feet down the driveway while the wife still has one foot out the door! Look for ways to be courteous that you know she will appreciate.

Be a Companion

"Giving honor" is another way of saying, "Treat your wife with respect" while "grace of life" is a reference to marriage. "Grace" simply means "a gift," and one of the best gifts life has to offer is marriage. Thus when Peter says to give her respect as a "fellow heir of the grace of life," he is commanding husbands to respect their wives as equal partners in the marriage. Another way to win her to Christ is to cultivate companionship and friendship. That necessitates sharing your life with her and developing mutual interests. Think about things you can do together. One of the secrets of a happy relationship is finding commonality.

These aren't mere casual suggestions. According to Peter, your applying them has a direct bearing on how your prayers are answered. Since those prayers would include petitions for her salvation, don't neglect being considerate, chivalrous, and a companion to your unsaved wife.

Adapted from [Divine Design](#) by John MacArthur

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2024 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).