

4. The Pattern of Partnership 2: Reverence, honour and understanding in marriage

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[0 : 00] Well, if you'd turn with me to 1 Peter and chapter 3, it would be a great help if you had the passage and the letter indeed open before you.

Tonight we are continuing our series on love, sex and marriage, and the subject tonight is reverence and honour and understanding in marriage. Now you might think it's strange and perhaps unnecessary that we turn once again to a passage that begins with the words, Wives, be subject or submit to your husbands.

Because a couple of weeks ago we looked at Ephesians 5, 21 following, and that began with exactly the same words. But I do so for a number of reasons. First of all, because these passages are often neglected and seen as rather embarrassing in our politically correct world.

Best hushed up or at best perhaps skimmed over so as not to cause offence. And it may be that some of us here feel rather offended by these kind of things. Certainly that is the case in the wider church.

And just by way of example, I could say to you that last week's Glasgow Presbytery meeting, I wasn't there because I was away, but there was a report given on gender issues. And in presbytery apparently a lot of people get offended by these things.

[1 : 29] The word offence was big in the report. Many apparently regard it as offensive that there are some churches in our presbytery that have only men on the eldership.

And this is apparently seen to be a denial that we are all one in Christ. Similarly, it's a cause of great offence when committees from presbytery have visited some of these churches.

And it's even considered, I'm quoting, a contempt for the authority of presbytery, that churches should be like that. It was interesting to note that there wasn't anything said in the report about contempt for the authority of Scripture, or the fact that some others might be offended by the fact that the gospel is not proclaimed in many churches in our presbytery.

Nor was there apparently any offence at all seen in taking large amounts of money from some of these churches to help fund other churches in the Church of Scotland. Offence seems to be very selective, doesn't it, at times.

But I mention that just by way of an illustration of the total confusion that reigns in the wider church about the Bible's teaching on sexuality.

[2 : 42] Where, in fact, it's plain as a pike staff, that there's no conflict whatsoever between total and complete equality of the sexes in status and in value and being one in Christ, and the complementary relationships between the sexes that naturally lead to differentiation in function and in positions, in men and women, in marriages and in the Church generally.

Now, in verse 7 of chapter 3, there's enough there alone to make that perfectly clear, isn't there? Heirs together in the grace of life, Peter says, a married couple are.

But because of this confusion, it is important that we are clear of what we believe about these things and also why we believe them. We don't believe them because of tradition.

Certainly not in the name of any kind of misplaced and ugly male chauvinism. That is as out of place in the Church of Jesus Christ as is a misplaced feminism.

But rather we believe these things because it's God's clear ordering for his world and it's clearly taught in his Word. So that's why we're looking at this passage, or one of the reasons.

[4 : 02] And with that in mind, I want us to turn to what Peter says here in chapter 3. In Ephesians 5, you'll remember that Paul explains Christian marriage in the context of God's new society.

The Church is God's showcase for the whole of the cosmos of the recreated harmony and order that there is in Christ Jesus. And our marriages, says Paul, are to be thought of in that context.

They are a glorious display of the reharmonization of the universe that has come about through the death and resurrection of Christ. In fact, our marriages are to be a living proclamation of the Gospel.

They are to mirror Christ who loved the Church and gave himself for her in order to draw her into her great destiny. And so in that way, remember Paul said, husbands are to love your wives.

And as wives, as the Church, as it were, gladly submits to Christ, so wives also are to gladly give themselves to their husbands. But I know what you're thinking.

[5 : 07] That's all very well, but back here on planet Earth, that picture doesn't always seem to be nearly so rosy, does it? Husbands don't tend to always be like that.

And it's no wonder that wives find it difficult to take the teaching about submission and so on seriously. Well, in fact, Paul isn't naive and Ephesians isn't naive. That's why he goes on in chapter 6 to talk about the very daily battles in the spiritual realm.

Paul knows that there's a battle to live this way. He knows that holiness is tough. He knows it's a spiritual warfare. So it's not all rosy and silly and pie in the sky.

And Peter certainly is in no doubt that there's a real and present struggle. That's what his whole letter is about, isn't it? It's about the real struggles of standing firm in the grace of God in the midst of many trials.

If you look over to chapter 5, verse 12, that's how he sums up. This is the true grace of God, says Peter. Stand firm in it. Well, you only have to stand firm if it's difficult.

[6 : 12] He's writing to struggling, persecuted believers who are called, yes, to an eternal glory in Christ. That's what he says in chapter 5, verse 10.

Do you see? But he's a realist, isn't he? Do you see the first part of that verse, verse 10 of chapter 5? After you have suffered a while. You see, the glory that we're called to is not yet, is it?

Look right back to chapter 1 of 1 Peter and that very, very first verse of the whole letter. In one sense, that sums up absolutely everything. We are elect, says Paul.

We are called to glory, but we're still exiles, aren't we? We're living in a world of struggle and of sin and of suffering.

We have a living hope, he says in verse 3. Verse 4, he says, we have an inheritance that is imperishable, that it's unfading, unfading, it's kept in heaven for us.

[7 : 14] But meanwhile, look at verse 6. What is the reality of life? Well, we're grieved by various trials. That's pretty down to earth, isn't it?

Pretty realistic. But we don't despair in them, says Peter. No, we rejoice. Why? Do you see verse 7? Because our faith is being tested and proved so that it will at last result in glory and honour at the revelation, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that's not the way that you or I would have planned the whole thing, is it? We would have missed out that bit. We'd have gone straight from the calling to the glory. Well, at least I would.

And that's, you see, what many Christians want, isn't it? I suppose it's what we all want, really, isn't it? But that's why there's such a proliferation of what we call the prosperity gospel, where churches promise glory now, health and healing and prosperity and all of the things that Peter says we are promised at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

But we want them now. I do. But no, says Peter, the true gospel, the apostolic gospel, says, very often it's suffering now, it's struggle now, but it is glory to come when Jesus comes.

[8 : 38] But it's not pessimism now. It's not defeat now. There is victorious Christian living now. But as verse 6 in chapter 1 says, it's rejoicing now in the hope of glory, despite all the hardships that we will certainly face.

Verse 8, he says, we can even rejoice with joy that's inexpressible and full of glory, not because we have everything now, but because we know with certainty the full glory that is to come, the full salvation, the outcome of our faith.

That's why all through Peter's letter he says, don't be surprised at the fiery trial that you find yourselves in. And we often do, don't we? The difficult experiences in life. It's all part of sharing Christ's sufferings, that we will, at the last, share in the glory that's to be revealed when he comes.

And so you see, the heart of his letter is all about standing firm in the true grace of God. How to be holy in all of our conduct in the midst of injustice.

Yes, persecution, hardship, difficult situations, the struggles of life. Including, as we read in chapter 2, if you look again at chapter 2, verse 13 and following, including human authorities, even, he says, when they're unjust.

[10 : 01] See verse 19? It's a gracious thing, when mindful of God, one endures sorrow while suffering unjustly. Why?

Well, because he says in verse 21, we've been called to this because Christ also suffered for us and left us an example. He is our example who died for us that we might be healed, says Peter.

And you see, when he comes to the beginning of chapter 3, Peter is saying to us that our marriages too must be places where we stand firm in the true grace of God.

Even, yes, even in the face of struggles. Christian marriage is also to me a place of rejoicing even when we're grieved by trials.

Because, when we endure, when we do good, even in the face of suffering, it's a gracious thing in the eyes of God. So I want to say to you right at the outset this evening that this is a word of great encouragement, great encouragement to anybody who's feeling that right at this moment they're really struggling in their marriage.

[11 : 17] Some of us do have very, very trying experiences in our own marriage, don't we? Well, all of us do at times. It goes with the territory. We're married to sinners. That's the problem. But maybe some people right now are feeling they're just right up against it.

It's a real struggle in your marriage. Well, take verse 20 of chapter 2 seriously. Take it to heart and as encouragement. When you do good and suffer for it and endure, this is a gracious thing in the eyes of God.

The Lord Jesus views your struggle for faithfulness as a gracious thing. It rejoices His heart. It gives Him joy when you struggle for faithfulness and holiness even in the most difficult situations in your marriage.

even if your spouse doesn't see it, even if your spouse just doesn't appreciate it. The Lord Jesus Christ does. And it's a gracious thing in His eyes.

And you see, everything that Peter says in chapter 3, verses 1 to 7 is in that context. It's the realism of the struggles that we have as sinful people and in a sinful and a hostile world.

[12 : 31] The struggles we have to be godly in our marriages when all the odds seem to be against us and it really, really is tough and very often the odds are against us, aren't they? But the Bible is real.

It's realistic. It always is. No deception. So let's keep that in mind as we look at Peter's words here in this little section. Again, just as Ephesians 5, he speaks to wives first, although this time the wives get more of the verses than the husbands.

But the pattern's just the same, isn't it? Wives, be subject. Husbands, honour. Although, as we'll see, Peter's emphasis is a little bit different from Paul's.

So let's look then first at the wives. Be likewise, he says in verse 1. Notice that. Be likewise subject to your own husbands. That's the command, but he goes on to give three angles on it.

The spiritual purpose, that is why wives are to submit in verses 1 and 2. The spiritual picture in verses 3 and 4, what submission actually looks like.

[13 : 35] And then, the spiritual pedigree, who this pattern aligns you with in verses 5 and 6. First of all then, the spiritual purpose of a wife's behaviour.

Peter says that the real purpose of a wife submitting to her husband is that she should revere God in all things. Do you see that? Verse 2. It's all about being pure and respectful or reverential or fearing.

That's something that's always directed at God. It's the same word as in verse 1, chapter 1, verse 17. Conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile.

You see, what he's saying to you wives is this isn't first for your husband, not at all. First of all, it's for God. And that's why it's a gracious thing in his sight, especially if you have to endure a struggle in it.

And that is the possibility that's clearly implied here, isn't it, by that word likewise. It refers back, doesn't it, to verse 18, to servants being subject even to unjust masters.

[14 : 44] Now he's not saying that there's an absolute parallel here with unjust masters and unjust husbands. He's not saying that wives must endure harsh and, well, let's say, violent treatment from a husband who abuses her and beats her.

He's not saying that. That's not the point. And Paul himself in 1 Corinthians 7 does speak about times when a separation may be necessary.

For example, if an unbelieving husband will not tolerate a believing life living with him. But that's not what Paul's saying. Here, Peter.

What Peter's saying is that just as some masters will be unreasonable, so, for some wives, they will have very difficult marriages. And especially so, the implication in verse 1 here is, if their husbands remain unconverted, if they do not obey the word.

That's Peter's language for being unconverted. Chapter 1, verse 22 and 23, he talks about being purified by obedience to the truth. chapter 2, verse 8, he talks about others who are stumbling because they disobey the word.

[15 : 56] That's his way of talking about people being Christian or not. But what he's saying is that despite all these trying circumstances, and they may be many and varied with Christian husbands, ask any wife that, they'll tell you about the many and varied trying circumstances that they have.

but that despite these circumstances, wives, in submitting to their husbands, they do so primarily out of reverence for God, so as to live holy lives, pure lives before God.

Now you see, if you're a Christian wife, you need to know that, don't you? Makes a difference. Because I suspect at times it's very hard for you to feel that your husband deserves your submission to him and things.

Well, in fact, he doesn't deserve it, does he? But you see, that's not the point Peter's making. It's not for him your behavior. You see, he's saying it's for God, it's for Jesus Christ.

That makes all the difference, doesn't it? It's not for him, it's for Jesus. And that alone, in a way, should be enough motivation for us, shouldn't it? But he goes on to say there's something more too.

[17 : 04] Do you see, when you live so as to honor and to revere God above everything, that is the most powerfully evangelistic lifestyle that you can lead, isn't it?

That's true of every area of our life. It's pure conduct, it's holy living, lived out in reverence to God, that is the most powerful witness to God in the world. Of course it is.

It's primary evangelism. People see that God is real. They see that we serve him. They see that he must be wonderful because we serve him with joy and with gladness. That's the purpose of holiness, isn't it?

Remember Matthew chapter 5? You're the salt and the light so that people will see your deeds, your holy lives, and they'll praise your Father in heaven. And that's the fruit of holiness, godly submission by wives in their marriages and especially if your husband isn't a believer or is a disobedient believer.

Do you see verse 1? so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives. He's not saying that you should never speak.

[18 : 15] He's not saying you should never articulate your faith of the gospel to them. But what he is saying is don't be ramming that down your husband's throat all the time if he's not a believer. That kind of nagging would just put him off.

But rather live the gospel before him. Live according to God's proper creation order. And that will deeply impress him. Won't fail to impress him.

Because you see even unconverted people they understand by instinct don't they the rightful order of creation. Romans 1 tells us that plainly. Yes, people suppress the truth but deep down of course they recognize right and wrong.

If that weren't true our world would be in total chaos wouldn't it? It couldn't be any morality at all. That's why real Christianity you see real obedience to God's ways and his ordering for life that's really deeply attractive when people see it.

So you see Peter saying even if your husband is not a believer live so as to honor God's pattern for marriage and that will be a powerful witness to your husband. He may be won for Jesus just by your obedience.

[19 : 30] Now I have to say a word of warning about that. That's not to say ever that you can go and marry an unbelieving man and expect that God will allow you to convert him that way.

That would be sheer presumption. That's not what Peter's saying here. And it goes expressly against the command of Scripture doesn't it by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6 not to be unequally yoked.

But if you're somebody who's been converted to Christ if you find yourself in that position and your husband is not a believer then this is a real encouragement to you.

It must be. Take it as an encouragement and hold on to it and ask the Lord to help you to be a godly and an obedient wife. Doing it to please God first of all of course but there's a promise.

who knows whether your husband may come to faith through that. But for all Christian wives here or wives to be remember that the purpose of your godly submission in marriage is first of all to honour God it's to revere him.

[20 : 40] That's the point of the purity the holiness in your life in this. And when you do that says Peter it's precious in his sight.

It's a gift you're giving to the Lord Jesus and you can rejoice in that. That's the spiritual purpose of what God has called you to in marriage. But in verses 3 and 4 he goes on to speak of the spiritual picture of submission.

And the picture he gives in verses 3 and 4 is of a woman who gladly welcomes God's given order of creation and doesn't seek to assert the opposite of it even even if there's provocation even if there's good reason for resentment and again above all it's because she wants to live to please God.

Do you see verse 4? When she conducts herself like this in God's sight it's very precious. See it's all about God not about your husband.

Now what is Peter saying here and what is he not saying about jewellery and all that sort of thing is Peter banning women from wearing any gold or jewellery or having certain hairdos?

[21 : 53] Is he? Well if he is he must also be banning women from wearing clothes mustn't he? Do you see that? You have an NIV there you'll see it translates fine clothes but it's not fine clothes it's just clothes the ESV here is correct.

Don't let your beauty be from wearing gold or the putting on of clothing. I don't think Peter's telling women not to wear clothing he's not saying these things in particular are evil and are banned but what he is saying is that a woman should not seek to assert in her dress and in her demeanour the opposite of what God's creation order is.

Do you see? Women should not be seeking to assert through what they wear or how they attire themselves their independence of their husbands rather than their interdependence with them.

They're not to be asserting by what they wear or how they act even their desire to rule the roost over their husbands rather than to submit to them and play the proper part of a wife. You see the scholars will tell us that the things that Peter particularly mentions here the showy hairdos and that sort of thing they were more than just indulgence they were an expression of power of defiance of independence from husbands perhaps even of independence sexually to be free to act the way they want.

It's what we today might call power dressing. Remember the Spice Girls and all of that girl power? That's what he's talking about. It's aggressive it's assertive feminism he's speaking about here in total contrast to godly femininity.

[23 : 35] That's what he's condemning. Women who want submit not so much even to their husbands but to God's created order that's the point it's disobedience to God.

They refuse God's created order of partnership in marriage as leader and helper man and woman. It's just exactly the same way as Paul speaks in 1st Timothy chapter 2.

You're not forbidding jewellery or doing your hair nicely or anything like that. I have to say I think if he knew the cost of women's hairdressers and that sort of thing he might have had something to say about that. It's always astonishing to me that it can take 10 minutes for a haircut and it costs 6 pounds 50 but for a woman it takes half a day and a new mortgage.

That really is a mystery to me. But Peter's not condemning feminine beauty here. Of course he's not. He's not telling women not to look after themselves.

The Bible extols the beauty of women. But what he is saying women is that you're not to use your feminine charms as a weapon to assert yourselves over your husband.

[24 : 44] And that is a temptation for some women isn't it? It must be because it's a powerful weapon. Sexuality is a powerful thing. And the feminist world wants women to be encouraged to use all of these weapons to get on.

Isn't that right? And some women do dress to intimidate men. Power dressing. Some women do use seduction to gain power over men. It's always been that way.

Go right back to Genesis 3.16. The Lord said it would be that way. You will want to have desire over your husband against him. You read Isaiah chapter 3.

You'll find the prophet railing against the women of Israel walking in that way. Walking he says without stretched necks glancing wantonly with her eyes. mincing along as they go. Tinkling with their feet.

And in that day says the Lord the day of judgment. I will take away all the rings, the cloaks, the handbags, the perfume boxes and so on. You see power dressing. Asserting independence instead of interdependence.

[25 : 50] Think of Jezebel. Now there was an extremely powerful woman wasn't she? Incited her husband Ahab we're told in 1 Kings. I always remember Tom Swanson saying the last thing Jezebel ever did before she died was paint her eyes and do her hair.

And in fact that's true. 2 Kings 9.30 tells us exactly that. But you see the spirit of Jezebel, the aggressive, the assertive, the independent woman that is always there potentially even in the church of Jesus Christ.

Read Revelation chapter 2 in the letter to the church at Thyatira. You tolerate that woman Jezebel teaching and seducing my servants.

So you see what Peter's saying here is wives don't be a Jezebel. Pretty stark isn't it? That's what he's saying. And you might be tempted to that but that's not the way, not the way to please the Lord Jesus.

If you're doing that you're asserting yourself not against your husband but against God and his created order. But no, don't do that. Let your love and your devotion and your obedience to Jesus be the thing that shines through in your life to give you beauty.

[27 : 06] That's what a godly spirit does, a gentle and a quiet spirit of beauty. He's not saying to women you must look dull and dowdy and make a mess of yourselves. Of course he's not saying that.

But he is saying that he wants the imperishable beauty of a heart that loves the Lord Jesus Christ to shine through. He wants you to be a true woman.

He wants you to be feminine, not feminist. He wants your outward adornment to reflect that, to reflect the interdependence you have with your husband, not independence of him.

And that way you will indeed outshine your husband the right way, not by trying to outdo him for yourself, not by trying to usurp him as a man, but by outdoing yourself for him and above all for God.

And that's what's precious in God's sight, says Peter. And you'll find that that's what's very precious in your husband's sight too. I don't know any man who isn't overjoyed when his wife on his arm outshines him totally, as our wives always do.

[28 : 16] Not trying to be him, but trying to be her. It's a spiritual picture of a radiant woman. A woman who welcomes God's rightly ordered creation order for marriage.

But Peter points to a third thing doesn't he, in verses 5 and 6, the spiritual pedigree of submission. Do you see? Peter says that this pattern of submission isn't just reverence for God, it's not just to please God, it's also a real assurance of your hope in God.

Living like this shows that you have an authentic spiritual pedigree. You belong to the long line of the holy women of faith. You share their glorious hope.

Remember, hope is so important for Peter, isn't it? We're born again into a living hope, he says, to an inheritance that's kept for us in heaven by God. Now what a wonderful encouragement that is to, well, especially to a struggling wife, somebody struggling away perhaps with an unbelieving husband.

You might be terribly easily tempted, might later think, well, isn't all this struggle evidence that God has abandoned me? Doesn't it mean that God doesn't want me?

[29 : 34] Or that I'm not good enough? Or here I am trapped in this marriage that shouldn't be? Do you see what Peter's saying? No, it's the opposite. It assures you that you are part of God's family, that you're one of Sarah's children.

If you go on doing good as you are and being obedient to God without fear, even if you do face real hardship, just like what he says in Matthew 5, isn't it?

Remember? Rejoice and be glad when you're persecuted, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. This is the genuine look of faith about it, that's what he's saying.

I guess that a wife who's in a very difficult marriage may find it very easy to be discouraged, perhaps feel shame and guilt and blame yourself.

That could so easily erode the joy and the assurance that you should have. But what a wonderfully tender encouragement Peter gives you here. Don't despair. You're struggling away in this difficult marriage, seeking to be godly, but it doesn't mean that God's abandoned you.

[30 : 44] It's the mark that your faith is real, your hope is real. If it weren't, you wouldn't be struggling, would you? You wouldn't be bothering. The fact that you are means that you're his, you belong to Jesus Christ, you have an inheritance, a hope that is unfading and undefiled.

So don't fear, don't be frightened. Be strong. You're willing and your godly pattern of behavior is a perfectly wonderful disarming weapon in itself, in fact, for an unbelieving husband.

Remember Paul says to the Corinthians, our weapons aren't of this world, but the power of truth lived out graciously before others. That is a powerful weapon, isn't it? Grace is the most powerful weapon of all.

It's disarming. It disarms hostility. And when you fear God and when you revere him and you're obedient to him, he says to these wives, you have nothing to fear, nothing else.

So rejoice in your spiritual pedigree as a godly, obedient wife. You bear the clear marks of the family of faith. Maybe that's an encouragement to somebody even here tonight.

[31 : 59] Well, in verse 7, Peter at last comes to husbands, just one verse. He doesn't especially talk to husbands of unbelieving wives, I guess, just as today it was much more commonly the other way around.

He certainly is speaking to Christian husbands, non-Christian husbands would hardly be listening anyway. But the command is just as clear, isn't it? Husbands, honour your wives. And you see, he gives us a spiritual reason and a spiritual reward for doing so.

First of all, the spiritual reason. He says, just as the wife's obedience in marriage is above all something done out of reverence to God, to please him, so it is for the husband.

You are embracing God's sovereignly created order. You're to honour your wife so as to honour God by rejoicing in two things, in God's created order and also in God's redeeming grace.

You see, first of all, in verse 7, he's to honour God's created order, isn't he? That is, he's to recognise the natural complementary distinctions between the sexes that God has made.

[33 : 07] Husbands, he says, are to live with their wives with understanding, and to be honouring to them as the weaker vessel. What he's saying is women are different from men, they're not exactly the same.

And that requires understanding from husbands. That's Peter's message. Now, before anybody might get terribly upset about this notion of the weaker vessel, just see what he is and isn't saying.

He's not saying that the wife is weaker mentally or psychologically or weaker in character or anything like that. Of course not. He's just spent all these previous verses addressing the wife as an intelligent person, as a thinker, as a responsible person.

He's told her not to be afraid. He's told her to be strong despite hardship. That doesn't smack of weakness in those senses. Now, all Peter's saying is just what we already know. What?

Everybody knows. But generally speaking, women are weaker physically and therefore they're more vulnerable than men. And that is why women, of course, are open to exploitation by men, isn't it?

[34 : 13] I mean, even the most ardent feminists wouldn't disagree with me on that. In fact, it's grist to their mill, isn't it? That's why feminists rightly are campaigning all the time against exploitation of women in the pornography industry, the sex slavery, and all these dreadful things.

But you see, the answer to that vulnerability, according to Peter, is not directed at the women, is it? It's not women rebel and take up arms.

It's not women get tough and teach the men a lesson. No. The responsibility lies, according to Peter, with Christian men to be utterly countercultural, to be utterly anti-chauvinistic.

Do you see that? Honour your wife. Because that's what God made you for. That's your part in Christian marriage. Literally, it says, show honour to her as the feminine one.

The emphasis is on your wife as a woman, as feminine, as different from men. And doing so, says Peter, that honours God's creation order.

[35 : 19] And you see, if men had done this, there would be no need for feminism, would there? Because there wouldn't be exploitation.

There wouldn't be horrible chauvinism. So the feminists are right. It is us men who are to blame for feminism. But no, we are to honour our wives, says Peter, as women.

Not just as partners, not just as a wife, but as a woman, as somebody who is feminine. And that, says Peter, requires understanding.

And that's where the problem comes, isn't it, men? Do you know Proverbs chapter 30, verse 18? Three things are too wonderful for me, for I do not understand.

The way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on the rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man or a woman or a maiden. It's obvious that the Proverbs writer is a man and he's just as baffled as the rest of us men about the feminine psyche.

[36 : 24] I've been married for 14 years and still at times it seems to be a fathomless mystery to me. And I'm sure it is to most married men here. It doesn't seem to be necessary for Peter to tell wives that they are to understand their husbands.

Our wives all seem to understand us very easily, don't they? But the reverse just doesn't seem to come naturally. Isn't that right? I can see some smiles here mainly from the wives. And yet, says Peter, it's a command of God, isn't it?

Understand your wives. And he commands it because it requires hard work. And for some men it seems to be harder work than others. I heard a story about a man in Aberdeenshire.

I think it was in Turriff. He was very keen on a particular girl and they were going to a dance in the village and they didn't really know what to do to impress her. So he asked one of her friends, what shall I do? And she said, well, ask her to dance and dance with her and then at the end give her a nice compliment.

So he went off and danced and a few minutes later came back with a very red face. In fact, one cheek was very red. And the friend said to him, well, what happened? He said, well, I did as you said.

[37 : 33] But what happened? He said, well, we had a good dance and it was a very vigorous dance and I thought at the end I'd give her a compliment. So I said, wow, you don't sweat much for a fat lass, do you? Now you see, a man like that is not showing understanding of the fact that women are feminine.

I have to confess here, I once gave my wife as a birthday present a new iron. It seemed an obvious thing for me.

The iron was broken and we needed a new one and it was her birthday and you see, we don't always quite get it, do we?

It's quite hard work sometimes to understand our wives. Well, brothers, we need to work at it. That's what Peter says. The Bible has a lot of wisdom for us. Our friends and family and the church and other people have wisdom for us.

God's common grace is something we shouldn't despise either, should we? I remember reading that book, men are from Mars and women are from Venus. I got a lot of illuminating things there. Never given my wife an iron as a present since then.

[38 : 47] I thought about a Hoover once but I managed to resist it. But however we do it, men, we've got to understand our wives and that's a command of God.

Honor your wife as a woman. Show understanding to her as a woman. Don't exploit her as the weaker one. Honor her. For her sake but above all, says Peter, for God, to honor God's order of creation.

That's what he's made you for. But second, you see, he says, honor God's redeeming grace, doesn't he? She's an heir together with you in the grace of life. Yes, there's natural distinction between men and women according to God's creation, but there is also absolute equality in value and in status in God's sight.

That verse alone, as I said, is totally sufficient to give the lie to any of this nonsense that a rightful submission is in any way at odds with absolute equality in Christ.

What Peter's saying is you honor God's gospel and his kingdom if you honor your wife and you dishonor it if you don't honor your wife. That's very serious, isn't it?

[40 : 01] It leads to the last thing, doesn't it? The spiritual reward that he offers us for honoring our wives or rather, it's the reverse, isn't it? It's a warning to husbands that are dishonoring their wives.

If you're dishonoring wife, you're dishonoring God and you're impeding your own fellowship with God. Honor her so that your prayers are not hindered, he says. A wrong relationship with your wife leads to a wrong relationship with God.

It's as simple as that and that's deadly serious, isn't it? It's just as Ephesians 5, a one flesh body can only grow together. You can't grow without your wife.

So here, he's speaking specifically to husbands. He's not talking about prayer times with your wife being hampered, although of course that will happen wrongly if you're dishonoring your wife.

He's talking about your prayer life generally. He's talking about your relationship with Christ. And what he's saying is dishonor your wife and you dishonor God and God stops listening to your prayers.

[41 : 07] And therefore, your relationship with God will be on the rocks. It's very, very serious, isn't it? As we think about our marriages. Well, it's because, remember, the purpose of marriage as we've been saying from the beginning is to serve Christ and his kingdom.

And if we go against God's ordering for our marriages, then we can't serve the kingdom the way he wants us to, can we? But conversely, when we do submit ourselves to his clearly revealed way for our marriages by submitting wives out of reverence for God and by being honoring husbands also out of reverence for God, then we will achieve our truest destiny.

We will serve the kingdom. That's always the way in the Christian life, isn't it? It's when we totally submit in obedience to God, when we tether ourselves to his commands, that we find perfect freedom.

It's God's truth and it's obedience to his truth that sets us free. Isn't that what Jesus says? So friends, let me finish by saying this. We live, don't we, in a culture that's hostile to God and it's ever more so.

And therefore, it's hostile and ever more hostile to God's pattern for our lives and for God's pattern for marriage. And marriage is under attack in our society. And certainly, the biblical pattern of headship and submission is under attack not only in the world but also now in the church.

[42 : 37] Peter knows that. Peter knows that Christian marriage is under attack. He writes about it in chapter 5 and he tells us that it's because we've got an adversary, the devil, who's prowling around like a roaring lion looking at who he can devour.

That's why he wrote this for us. To encourage us and to say this is the true grace for your marriages and for the rest of your lives. Stand for a minute.

Trust it. Don't resist God's truth for our marriages. It's in his truth and in his truth alone that we find perfect freedom.

Freedom now in the midst of the struggles that we have and we must take comfort in that and we must help one another in those struggles and we must be open to help in the struggles that we have in our marriages.

But it's there that we find freedom and in the glory to come at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. So Peter says take heart. This is God's way.

[43 : 44] This is the grace of God. Trust God. Walk with him in it. He won't let you down. And in your marriages of honour and reverence and respect you will shine and others will see and they will glorify God as they see the gospel in your life and in your marriage.

Well let's pray. because of the Flug because the book has stopped and they have to plead
Verse two to sing like to