

## **Roles (Part 3) & Working it Out (Communication)**

### **1 Peter 3, Proverbs**

#### **THE ROLE OF THE WIFE: The Role of Inner Beauty**

**READ:** 1 Peter 3:1-6 – “Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, <sup>2</sup> when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear. <sup>3</sup> Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— <sup>4</sup> rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. <sup>5</sup> For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, <sup>6</sup> as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.”

We learn 3 specific things from this passage regarding the wife.

- The first is a look again at submission. One new aspect that we didn't look at last week is that submission is a tool of evangelism. This does not condone marrying a non-believer, but rather has in view the couple who is married and the wife surrenders her life to Jesus prior to her husband.
- The second term that we glean from this passage is “chaste conduct.” Chaste here has the idea of holy, pure, or sanctified. One way that we could consider this is “keeping yourself a secret.” In other words that your conduct does not draw attention to yourself. (At least not attention that is motivated by the flesh or that incites our sinful flesh nature.)
  - To further develop this concept of “chaste conduct”, Peter goes on to describe this outwardly driven behavior by describing a woman who goes to lavish lengths to draw the attention of others (primarily men).
- The third concept we see here is the “gentle and quiet spirit” which, he says, is “very precious in the sight of God.”

This inner beauty is what we want to dig into but let's first recognize that, in regards to our outward appearance, it is important to take care of our bodies. God gives us the responsibility to steward many things, including our bodies.

It is important that we take care of ourselves and are the healthiest version of ourselves for our spouse both inwardly and outwardly. For wives it's okay to look good for your husband. Husbands its okay to look good for your wives. But looks

aren't everything and our bodies change and age. But there are things, like our inner beauty, that last forever.

What we see in this passage of 1 Peter specifically speaks about the adornment that is precious in the sight of God, specifically the gentle and quiet spirit. When we say a "gentle and quiet spirit," we are not necessarily saying that you need to adopt an introverted presentation of yourself; and we are certainly not saying that you need to act timid or reserved, especially if that is not already your natural personality.

What this passage is speaking of is one's disposition, the attitude of one's heart; the way you conduct yourself in your husband's presence and the way you represent your marriage union to the outside world.

**A gentle & quiet spirit does not mean:**

- Mousy, timid, or introverted
- That you cannot have and hold strong opinions about things
- That you must be seen and not heard
- That you are a push over or must "give in" whenever there's disagreement

**A gentle & quiet spirit is:**

- Not aggressive & loud (Prov 9:13 – A foolish woman is clamorous)
- Not always seeking to get the last word in
- One who prays when she feels the urge to nag
- One who trusts the Lord (turning to Him first), and trusts her husband
- One who doesn't take things into her own hands
- One who speaks kindly and engages in a non-aggressive way
- One who speaks life, even in conflict or concern

Proverbs 15:1 says "*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*" In the New Testament, James 1:19-20 says "*let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*" These verses apply to husbands as well as to wives, but in the context of the marriage relationship, there is special application to the wife.

Proverbs 12:4 says "*An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones.*" May you be encouraged that as God grows you, and loves your husband through you, you will be like that crown beautiful and instead of rotteness you will bring life to your marriage.

## **THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND: Dwell with Understanding**

**READ:** 1 Peter 3:7 – *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.*

As was mentioned last week, a man may feel a little dismayed at the prospect of truly understanding his wife as she sometimes is like a “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma,” (As Churchill stated about Russia). But, all joking aside, this is where studying your wife and learning how to live with her even when you don’t understand her comes into view.

It is helpful to note that the text does not say “Husbands, dwell with your wife and understand her,” but rather “dwell with them *with understanding*.” Or another way of saying this is to have a patient and understanding demeanor towards them especially in light of the fact that you may not understand them well.

One helpful way to start on this road is to simply be open, communicate often, and don’t assume anything. You both think differently and have different backgrounds. It is best to just spell everything out for each other and be clear (in kindness and humility) because it’s likely that many of the things that are obvious to you are not so obvious to your spouse.

As an example, instead of saying “the event is at 7pm tonight,” spell out what you are looking for and say something like “the event is at 7pm and I’d like to be there early. I envisioned us wearing XYZ and arriving MN minutes early, etc.” We’ll focus more on communication in just a minute.

### **Giving Honor**

It is biblically accurate that headship in the home rests with the husband. However, that does not mean that the wife assumes the role of employee or subject in the husband’s kingdom. As Peter says later on, a Christian husband and Christian wife are joint heirs. You are on a journey together towards heaven as joint heirs and on this journey you are joint heirs in the kingdom of Christ, working to reflect Him more and more each day. There is a fundamental equality which exists between you even though there is also a hierarchy in the relationship.

As an aside, the “weaker vessel” reference primarily speaks to the fact that generally speaking, men are physically stronger than women. When it comes to other areas of life, such as intelligence, motivation, and spiritual health and maturity, there is nothing which says that men are superior to women or women to men. (Champagne Flute vs. Sturdy Mug)

Lastly, pay special attention to this last clause – all of this is said in 1 Peter so “that your prayers may not be hindered.” This means that if you choose to not dwell with her with understanding; if you don’t give her honor; if you don’t treat her as a sister in Christ, then your prayers will be hindered. That means they won’t be effective, or at least as effective.

As we wrap up the roles in marriage, it makes sense for us to roll into our next section of working it out. The rest of our time today we are going to focus on Communication as this is crucial in every marriage as well as one of the most challenging areas.

## WORKING IT OUT

### Communication

Communication is key to a healthy marriage. It is important for a couple to be in constant communication. The way a couple communicates is also key. It is important to recognize that the way you or your spouse communicates or doesn’t communicate is usually because of what they saw or didn’t see growing up. What was modeled for you will often play out in your own marriage be that good communication or bad communication.

It is good to share about your day, your highs, lows and struggles. You often need to create opportunities to enter your spouse’s world & experiences. Learn to be a good listener. Be open to hearing about things they care about and are passionate about, even if it does not interest you. Take time to walk together, talk over dinner, turn off devices and screens and look eye to eye. Consider ways you can create opportunities to talk.

“*How*” we communicate to one another is extremely important.

For example, **listening** is a crucial part of communication and allows for learning about one another. Proverbs 18:13 says, “He who answers a matter before he hears

*it, It is folly and shame to him.*” And as we referred to earlier, James tells us to be quick to hear and slow to speak. (1:19) Being a good listener is the first step in establishing good communication. You will often need to allow your spouse space to talk. Ask good questions when appropriate to show that you are listening and tracking with them on what they are saying.

**Body Language** is also a form of communication (which is missed if you are not looking at them, or are dialoguing via email/text/phone). For this reason, it is recommended to not have important or sensitive conversations over the phone or via email. Save these types of communications to be done “in person” and especially at a time when you can be free of distractions and are not already low on energy. Put your phones down or away so you are not distracted by your device and can give your full attention to your spouse.

There are 3 specific forms of communication we must consider: Venting, Counsel, and Conflict resolution.

## **Venting**

For today’s discussion we’ll be using the term “venting” to describe two different forms of communication. The first has the simple of idea of light-hearted every day conversations. In other words, this is merely the process of communicating about your day, your experiences, your observations, your thoughts, etc. These are usually conversations that have little “consequence” to them (unless one person is tuned out and not listening well, then the consequence can be damaging).

This form of communication is not without value though. It can help spouses who have both been in different worlds (i.e. different work places, etc.) to share in some aspects of their day, thus inviting the other to vicariously participate in their day with them. (It may be helpful to remember that though this is ‘low level’ communication, it still does require energy and effort, and thus it may cost one spouse (the less talkative one) more to engage in this way, especially if there’s not a clear direction, time, or other helpful boundary to this conversation time.

The other kind of venting, is the kind we are probably more familiar with in the use of this word. (i.e. I just need to let off some steam, etc.) Proverbs 29:11 says, “A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise *man* holds them back.” In this kind of communication, we must use more discernment. It is important for a spouse to have a safe place to share but always remember to share with discernment. We don’t need our spouse to bear “all” our burdens, or to process every detail with us.

Be considerate if your spouse has had a rough day of their own, whether or not it is wise to share the difficulties of your day. We also don't want this communication to turn into a complaining session. If your conversation turns in that direction, consider how you can pray for the situation (without being "holier than thou") and help bring your spouse's burden to Jesus.

Sometimes a spouse simply needs an ear to listen, and to be heard and not necessarily fixed or guided. However, there are other times when a spouse's counsel is needed and valuable. Wisdom is asking your spouse, "Do you need me to just listen and hear you or would you like me to respond or offer advice?" This takes us to our next form of communication.

### **Counsel**

One of God's great gifts to us in marriage is that our spouse often provides us with incredible insight that we would otherwise be lacking. Not only is your spouse usually the best suited person to know you, your history, your potential, etc. but they often have a different view or way of processing life than you do, (i.e. a distinct personality style that is different, and possibly even opposite of yours) which means that they can help you "round out" your own perspective on things better.

Proverbs 15:22 says, "Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established." And Proverbs 20:5 says, "Counsel in the heart of man *is like* deep water, But a man of understanding will draw it out."

The first verse helps us see the need to seek counsel. This is both an act of humility (i.e. admitting that you don't already know the right way, or at least are not 100% confident in your leaning.) But it also a way to honor your spouse by asking for their wisdom, insight and judgment on the issue. In doing this, you invite them in deeper, and give them space to help shape your path forward. What a privilege!

The second verse points out that sometimes the best way to "give" advice is to simply be a sounding board for your spouse. In other words, help your spouse talk things out until they become more clear. If they are having analysis paralysis they may have all the intel they need to make a decision, but simply need to process it out loud with someone to make sense of it all. You, with your wise understanding, can be the one who helps to draw that advice out of them.

Sometimes, however, the issue is one you both share, and you may lack the objectivity to help one another. This is where having a trusted friend, a mentor, or some other godly person in your life may help you to get unstuck and find the way forward. Also, be sure not to underestimate the power of prayer in such situations!

If you as a couple are feeling stuck in a certain area of life, it probably has also led to conflict, or is the result of some unresolved past conflict. This leads us to our third form of communication, conflict resolution, which we'll address in two weeks. Next week we talk about sex and money and how to avoid conflict in navigating these hot topics in marriage.

## **Q & A with Guest Speakers**

**Tell us a little about yourselves?**

**How long have you been married?**

**How many Children and their ages?**

**What's something unique about you that you can share with us?**

### **From: Role of the Wife (The Role of Inner Beauty) Eph 5**

- What have you learned about submission over the years?" What have you learned about the Lord through submission?
- How do you navigate the balance of exhibiting "chaste conduct" (i.e. not drawing attention to yourself from others) while still seeking to care for your physical appearance.
- What does a "gentle and quiet spirit" look like in your life? (Any examples of what this might look like, through your own successes or failures?)

### **From: Role of the Husband (Dwell with Understanding)**

- What does it look like to dwell with your wife with understanding? How do you navigate those times when you truly do not understand where she's coming from?
- How have you found ways to "give honor" to your wife and to seek to affirm and build her up?
- Have the two of you found ways to acknowledge your differences (in capacity, in gifting, in calling) and to leverage each other's strengths to accomplish something you couldn't do on your own?

### **From: Communication**

- How do you create opportunities for communication in the daily/weekly rhythms? (How do you navigate venting in your marriage?)
- Have either of you experienced the "fix-it" syndrome, when you attempt to "fix" the situation the other person is talking about when they just want an ear to hear? (What helps you to be a good listener for your spouse?)
- Any examples you can draw upon where you have been the recipient of "good counsel" from your spouse?



**On Your Own:**

- Ask each other, “*What is one concrete kindness I can do for you this week?*”
- How was submission modeled for you growing up? Was it a biblical example?
- Discuss what influences you had in your life (positive or negative) regarding chaste conduct. Are there any patterns to be aware of?
- What does a “gentle and quiet spirit” look like in your life? Can you think of an example of this in someone that you think exhibits it well? (Discuss what it is about them that stands out to you regarding this.)
- Discuss what “dwelling with understanding” looks like in your marriage. Do you have any examples where a lack of understanding led to conflict and where an attitude of “dwelling with understanding” could have been helpful?
- Write down some ways that you can show honor to your wife, building her up and affirming her? If you are unsure, ask her.
- Discuss each of your unique differences (capacity, talents, personalities) and how those can be used to “help” each other in different ways.
- Talk about any unhealthy patterns you grew up with regarding communication. Are there any of these that you see tendencies in your life now that you need to change?
- How would you each rate the health of your communication? Are there areas that need to be improved? Discuss how those improvements can be made.