

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabile.org.

Date: September 26, 2004

Title: Show Her Honor as a Fellow Heir of the Grace of Life

Text: 1 Peter 3:1-12

Author: Patrick J. Griffiths ©2004

Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in the Storyline of the Bible. She is determined by design to have a God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching focused on personal discipleship through intentional and systematic instruction; a Global-impacting mission that resolves to be a church planting church; and a Grace-based fellowship where disciples are invited to live under a reigning grace characterized by a Gospel-driven sanctification that celebrates a divine monergism to the Christian life.

3

SHOW HER HONOR AS A FELLOW HEIR OF THE GRACE OF LIFE

(1 PETER 3:1-12)

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit (1 Peter 3:8)



Your spouse is a conduit for the person and glory of Christ. It is time we see them as such. In the last chapter, we noted that everyone has an old, fallen nature. For the believer, “What they once were, they no longer are, but still have.” The believer is no longer identified as being **in Adam**. When a believer behaves in a sinful way, the source of that sinfulness is their old nature. The old nature no longer is their identity. Their **new identity** is who they are **in Christ**.

YOUR SPOUSE IS
A CONDUIT FOR
THE PERSON AND
GLORY OF
CHRIST.
IT IS TIME WE SEE
THEM AS SUCH.

First Peter 3:1-7 provides for us an interesting statement. Peter writes to wives (vv. 1-6) and then husbands (v.7). He sums up his thoughts in verses 8-12. Peter’s message does not conflict with Paul’s. Peter recognizes that within any relationship, tension and conflict exist. Peter reminds his audience that we are not to respond in kind when the old nature is expressed. In fact, listen to his thoughts in verses 8 and 9.

To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:8, 9).

In any relationship, we are to respond according to our new nature, not the old fallen nature. However, I would like us to consider just verse 7 at this point. My primary point is found in the phrase, “Show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.”

Before unpacking that thought, I would like to clarify a common

misunderstanding that often exists because of erroneous presuppositions. The verse says that if we do not dwell with our wives in an understanding way, our prayers will be hindered. What exactly does this mean? “Does this mean every time we have a misunderstanding or are angry with our spouse or are frustrated with them or whenever the relationship between the two of us is even slightly strained, that God will not answer our prayer?” Personally, I do not believe this is the case. Let me explain why. Your present sin cannot separate you from God. As far as sin is concerned, God has completely dealt with it at the cross. Nothing you do can alter God’s opinion of you and dealings with you. This includes your sin. We must not forget that our identity before the Father is completely sourced in who Christ is and not in whom we are.

Let us consider what it does mean to have one’s prayers hindered

- **First**, as husbands we are to dwell with our wives in an understanding way. This means we are to see them as **fellow heirs** of the grace of life. This means we are to see them for who they are **in Christ**.
- **Second**, if we do not see them for who they are in Christ, we will be praying the wrong prayers and these are the prayers God does not answer. This is in keeping with James 4:3, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.” It is our ignorance that keeps God from answering the prayer we prayed. If we do not dwell with our spouse in an understanding way, we will pray the wrong prayers and God will not answer such misguided prayers. For just a moment, think how many times you have prayed God would change your spouse. If you were honest you would admit your requests are self-serving. Your desire is for God to make them more like you and not Him, in order that your expectations would be fulfilled or accommodated.
- **Third**, if you do not see your spouse as a fellow heir of the grace of life, then you are focusing on their old, fallen nature and you are probably praying the wrong prayers. Because the old nature does not change, every attempt you make at trying to change it is futile. When two old natures are locked in mortal combat, neither one is praying appropriate prayers.
- **Finally**, our “feeling” of intimacy and the “emotional” enjoyment of our fellowship with God is inexplicably and subjectively tied into the “honoring of our spouse.” Nothing can truly break our fellowship with the Father since it is immutably connected to the person and work of Jesus Christ. But much can harm our relationship with our spouse and when we do not dwell with them in knowledge and honor them as fellow-heirs of God’s grace, we

cease to enjoy the “feeling” of intimacy and fellowship with God.

But let us go back to the statement, “Show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.” Do we really understand or know our spouse? This individual, if a believer, is a fellow heir of the grace of life. This verse is telling us that we are no longer to identify our spouse by their old nature, but are to **see them for who they are in their new nature.** These people are fellow heirs of the grace of life. But what does this mean? D. Edmond Hiebert provides us with an initial thought:

WE ARE NO LONGER TO IDENTIFY OUR SPOUSES BY THEIR OLD NATURE, BUT ARE TO SEE THEM FOR WHO THEY ARE IN THEIR NEW NATURE. THESE PEOPLE ARE FELLOW HEIRS OF THE GRACE OF LIFE.

“In their personal standing before God, there is equality; they are accepted by God on the same basis. Wives, like husbands, believe in the same Savior, are redeemed by the same ransom, live by the same grace, and look forward to the same eternal destiny. Recognition of that reality will end domestic tyranny.”¹

What Peter emphasizes is also noted by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 11:11; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:23-33). “Within the realm of salvation a re-evaluation of inherited conceptions about social rank has taken place.”² The person and work of Jesus Christ has effectively dealt the death blow to gender bigotry and role arrogance. Consider how this plays out in the book of Colossians. Let us go back and re-examine several salient features characterizing the believer’s new identity in Christ. Notice how Paul describes the believers of Colossae. Please read each statement.

- 1:2 Saints and faithful brethren in Christ
- 1:12 Qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light
- 1:13 Rescued from the domain of darkness
- 1:13 Transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son
- 1:22 Reconciled to the Father in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach
- 1:27 Christ in you, the hope of glory
- 2:7 Having been firmly rooted in Him
- 2:10 In Him you have been made complete
- 2:12 You have been buried with Him in baptism
- 2:12 Raised up with Him through faith in the working of God
- 2:13 He made you alive together with Him
- 2:13 He has forgiven us all our transgressions
- 2:14 Canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us
- 2:16 No one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in

- respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day
- 3:1 You have been raised up with Christ and are seated at the right hand of God
- 3:3 Your life is now hidden with Christ in God
- 3:4 Christ is your life

Does Colossians 1:1-3:5 reflect reality? Does it mean anything that is tangible in this life? What does this mean for you and me? If our spouse is a believer, then they are . . .

- 1:2 A saint and faithful believer in Christ
- 1:12 Qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light
- 1:13 Rescued from the domain of darkness
- 1:13 Transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son
- 1:22 Reconciled to the Father in order to present them before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach
- 1:27 Christ in them, the hope of glory
- 2:7 Having been firmly rooted in Him
- 2:10 In Him they have been made complete
- 2:12 Buried with Him in baptism
- 2:12 Raised up with Him through faith in the working of God
- 2:13 Made alive together with Him
- 2:13 Forgiven of all their transgressions
- 2:14 Canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against them
- 2:16 No one is to act as their judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day
- 3:1 Been raised up with Christ and are seated at the right hand of God
- 3:3 Now hidden with Christ in God
- 3:4 Christ is their life

THE WAY WE VIEW GRACE AND GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO US, WILL DETERMINE HOW WE VIEW OTHERS AND OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THEM.

The basis for us dealing with our spouse in this manner springs from God's dealings with us. The way we view grace and God's relationship to us, will determine how we view others and our relationship to them. What does this mean for you and me? Let us break this down. There are four basic ideas we need to consider as we seek to honor our spouse.



God's view of them is based on position not performance (1:2).

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father (Col.

1:2).

Every time we evaluate our spouse based on performance we are doing them an injustice. It is unfortunate, but often our very existence is wrapped up in what we do. As men, it is often found in our work. Yet what happens when we lose our job? In many ways, we lose our identity. As a mother, often your schedule and identity is found in your children and when they leave home, you find yourself lost. How can such “feelings” be prevented? What we need is to find who we are in Christ. **He is our true identity.** These other activities are blessings from God, but they do not make us who we are. It is only when you find ourselves in Him, that we will experience true contentment and peace. One of the worst kinds of mistakes we can make is trying to be something we are not.

IT IS ONLY WHEN YOU
FIND YOURSELF IN
HIM, THAT YOU WILL
EXPERIENCE TRUE
CONTENTMENT AND
PEACE.

This principle is presented well in *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling written in 1894. It is the story of a boy named Mowgli who was raised by wolves in the jungles of 19th century India. His friends were Baloo the Bear and Bagheera the Panther. The time came when Mowgli found himself attracted to a young female friend. The problem was that Mowgli was acting like a wolf, when in fact he was a man-cub. No matter what Mowgli did, he could not change what he was. Performance did not define who Mowgli was, only position could. Mowgli was not a wolf-boy, Mowgli was a boy.

WE CANNOT AFFORD
TO DEFINE PEOPLE BY
THEIR PERFORMANCE;
WE CAN ONLY DEFINE
THEM BY THEIR
POSITION. YOU ARE
NOT DEFINED BY WHO
YOU WERE IN ADAM,
BUT WHO YOU ARE IN
CHRIST.

We cannot afford to define people by their performance; we can only define them by their position. You are not defined by who you were **in Adam**, but by who you are **in Christ**. Bob George fittingly notes how, “Christianity is not about how well we behave but who we are in Christ.”³

In marriage, we must view our spouses from their position and not their performance. This does not mean we can sit around and do nothing. We have responsibilities to carry out and fulfill, but it does mean that these activities do not make us who we are. We will stop being so judgmental if we learn this simply truth.

Here is the testimony of one who was in bondage to unrealistic expectations:

I struggled daily in this area because I believed I was only acceptable and valuable if I met the total needs and standards of the people I sought acceptance from. Each time I failed to please a significant person in my life, I felt like a failure, a loser, a mistake, inadequate, worthless. I was totally devastated and I tried all the harder to please the other and to meet all their needs. When I thought I had it all figured out and I thought I was performing well, the standards would change unexpectedly and I would discover that I had not done what was expected of me. I was expected to be a mind reader and to know what the unstated standards are. I lived in constant fear of making mistakes because any error on my part resulted in anger from the person I sought acceptance from. To me, their anger equaled rejection, an indictment that I was unworthy and unacceptable. I grew tired of performing and often prayed that God would just go ahead and take me to be with Him because I was unable to meet the needs of those I loved the most. I believed I was a miserable failure!⁴

There is a flip side to this problem and it is when we impose our preferences on others. “Whenever you depend upon someone else for the things only God can provide, you put them under stress to perform.”⁵ This is nothing less than spiritual bondage.

We should always cringe when we hear of someone who was told all their life that they would never amount to anything and that they are failures. Such information is tragic. That person’s identity has been built around their inability to perform according to someone else’s expectations. What they need to learn is who they are in Christ. He is their identity.

God never judges us because of failure or conformity (2:16-23). It is regrettable how we often evaluate people based on their ability to perform. We often evaluate a marriage as good when everyone fulfills their parts. What if there is failure and non-conformity to the cultural assumptions concerning Scriptural ideals; can such a marriage still be good? The answer is yes; it is when we stop judging people based on their failure or conformity. **Good marriages are not determined by performance but by position.** The second basic idea we need to consider as we seek to honor our spouse is . . .



God never sees them from a position of deficiency but sufficiency (2:10).

and **in Him you have been made complete**, and He is the head over all rule and authority (Col. 2:10).

We are always working to become something we are not and perhaps never will be. God sees us as already being complete. When we live in the past, we are living from a position of deficiency. When life is marked by “What if?”, or “If only”, or regret, then we are living from a position of deficiency instead of from a position of sufficiency. We are not living with the attitude of expectancy.

YOUR SPOUSE IS EVERYTHING GOD WANTS THEM TO BE TODAY. AND HE IS WORKING IN THEM AND THROUGH THEM HIS PERFECT WILL.

Your spouse is everything God wants them to be . . . today. He is working in them and through them His perfect will. This is not to deny the doctrine of progressive sanctification, but we must affirm how God is working in them and through them what is already true. Again the idea is this, “We do not work to gain His approval and acceptance; we work because we have His approval and acceptance. We are not working **for**, but **from**.” This tension between what I am in Christ and who I am in the world is reflected in the statement, “Already-not yet.” It is notably undesirable but we often allow our circumstances to control our identity rather than our **in Christ** position. There is a third basic idea that will assist us as we seek to honor our spouse.



God never sees them for who they were, but for what they are (2:12, 13, 3:7).

Having been **buried with Him** in baptism, in which you were also **raised up with Him** through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He **made you alive together with Him**, having forgiven us all our transgressions (Col. 2:12, 13).

And in them you also once walked, when you were living in them (Col. 3:7).

God never holds your past against you. He no longer sees you for **who you were in Adam**. He only sees you for **what you are in Christ**. Bringing up the past is one of the most ungracious actions anyone can have toward another.

Often in relationships and especially in marriage, couples do not become “hysterical” in their communication, but “historical.” Forgive it and move on. If you do not forgive the past, you will never move beyond it.

The old has died; the new is what lives. God always sees them clothed in the very righteousness of Christ (3:3, 4). As a believer, our spouse radiates the glory and righteousness of Christ. If we view our

spouse from what they once were, but no longer are, though they still have, then we are living in the past. If we view them for who they are in Christ and from His perspective, then we are living in the present and what will be a perfect future. Only one of these two positions is “dwelling with your wives with understanding.” Dwelling with our spouse in understanding is seeing them as fellow heirs of the grace of life.

God always sees them as forgiven (2:13). This is where our opinion of God’s forgiveness really takes root. We have made forgiveness very conditional. Because of this, we harbor ill-will toward people and will not let it go until they ask us for forgiveness. This is very ungracious and un-godlike. We have come to believe that God will only forgive us when we ask Him to, but such is not the case. Every sin we have ever committed or will commit is already forgiven by God. We appropriate forgiveness when we accept God’s provision at Calvary. When our spouse sins against us, as far as God is concerned, it is already forgiven. And Ephesians 4:32 tells us that we are to forgive others even as we have been forgiven.

Have you ever had a stone in your shoe? No matter what you do, that stone is a constant irritant and a reminder of its existence. One of two things will happen. Either you will ignore the stone and develop a thick callous and lose a part of who you are, or you will take your shoe off and shake out the stone.

If you do not forgive, you will develop a callous around your soul and you will lose a part of who you are. It is time to take off our shoe and shake out the stones in our relationship. This brings us to our final basic idea seeking to honor our spouse.



God always sees them as being seated at His right hand (3:1).

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1).

If we saw our spouses as sitting at the right hand of God, would this change the way we view them and treat them? This is the “honor” part of 1 Peter 3:7. The idea is to hold as precious or to value. When we see them for who they are in Christ, we will value them.

What do we really value?

A group of Wisconsin friends went deer hunting and paired off in twos for the day. That night, one of the hunters returned alone, staggering under the weight of an eight-point buck.

“Where’s Bubba?” The others asked. “Bubba had a stroke of some kind. He’s a couple of miles back up the trail,” the successful hunter replied.

“You left Bubba laying out there and carried the deer back?” They inquired.

“A tough call,” nodded the hunter, “but I figured no one is going to steal Ol’ Bubba.”

Friend, what do you value?



APPLICATION: (Making the Transfer)

Perhaps today you find yourself living in the past. Friend, let it go. Today is the day you need to start living with your spouse according to knowledge. Do not see them for **what they were in Adam**, but for **whom they are in Christ**. May God graciously grant you this moment as a turning point in your life.

Perhaps today you find yourself in a relationship where you are not treated as a fellow heir of the grace of life. Remember this, even when your spouse’s old nature is expressed, it does not change your own identity in Christ. As a believer you are an heir of the grace of life regardless of what message your spouse may communicate to you. Cling to this truth tenaciously.

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Peter: An Expository Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 194.

² Bo Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), 102.

³ Bob George, *Victory Over Depression: How to Live Above Your Circumstances* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 49.

⁴ <http://www.cwvinc.com/performance-based-acceptance.htm>

⁵ George, *Victory*, 54