

A God Honoring Marriage - The Husbands Role: Part 1

What does it mean to “dwell with [your wife] according to knowledge”? There is the first and obvious meaning that husbands and wives are supposed to live together. But this verse is instructing men on how they are to live with their wives. Husbands should live with their wives in an intelligent, knowledgeable way. The husband must learn to understand his wife and get to know her better and better.

I. The _____ to Understanding

- Once Adam and Eve sinned, they had something to hide, and so they covered themselves. They limited the _____ that was made available to each other. (*Hebrews 4:13*)
- Now we are hesitant to open up, be honest and vulnerable, because we know that we have a lot to be _____ of.
- The facts that the wife is more likely to hide because of shame while also needing to be open with someone more than the husband creates a huge _____ in the context of marriage.

II. The _____ to Understanding

- Marriage is intended by God to _____ that openness, honesty and vulnerability that husband and wife once enjoyed before sin. (*Genesis 2:24-25;4:1; Matthew 19:4-6; Hebrews 13:4*)
- A husband should seek to know his wife in every way: physically, mentally, emotionally and _____.

A. The Step of _____

- The _____ must be applied to the marriage relationship for it work as God designed it to.
- Only the gospel can _____ cover our guilt and shame. (*Genesis 3:21; Romans 5:1*)
- When both husband and wife have accepted the sacrifice of Christ for their sins and know that they can stand before God _____, they can then stand before each other unashamed.

B. The Step of _____

- The husband must carefully communicate to his wife in a way that she understands that he accepts her for who she is and she is _____ opening up to him.
- The wife will always be tempted to _____ herself, especially when she is made to feel that she has something to be ashamed of.
- The husband must say and show that he accepts his wife for who she is, giving her _____ to open up and be vulnerable to him.

C. The Step of _____

- Husband, you know how to dwell with your wife according to knowledge. But too often men stop the knowledge part when they start the _____ part.
- Never stop learning about your wife. The longer you are married, the _____ you need to work to get to know your wife. (*Ecclesiastes 9:9*)
- _____ will destroy the atmosphere of acceptance and safety in the marriage. Dwell with your wife, and only your wife, according to knowledge.

Conclusion

Men are not especially known for such a warm desire to know others personally. We can be cold and indifferent, though we may not mean to be. If a marriage is to honor God, then the husband must learn to _____ his wife and get to know her better and better.

1 Peter 3:7

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Marriage is the most sacred institution in the world. When a husband and wife are demonstrating the proper love and respect for each other, it is heaven on earth. Because it is such a vivid picture of the relationship between Christ and His people, it is the target of Satan's concentrated attacks. We see this on large scale, as even the definition of marriage has been changed in our day to include unions that God calls abominations. We also see it on the personal level as marriages are routinely destroyed by the sin of one or both spouses.

Peter's letter to the believers included instructions how to live a life of good works, even in the midst of suffering. The lost might oppose us, but they will be ashamed when they cannot find anything bad to say about how we live, and therefore God is glorified through our reputation of righteous living. 1 Peter 3:1-6 gives instructions to wives about their role in a God-honoring marriage. In verse seven, we read the instructions to husbands about their role in such a marriage.

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Why is there only one verse for men when the women got six? Maybe it is because men have shorter attention spans. Though the number of words used in the instruction to the men may be small, the expectations placed on husbands are huge. He is expected to always be studying his wife to know her better and better. He must treat his wife with tremendous respect, understanding that she is the weaker vessel. He should appreciate that they are equal in Christ, and that his fellowship with God can be helped or hindered by his relationship with his wife. By fulfilling his God-given responsibilities, the husband can direct the marriage to honor God.

We will study this verse in two parts. In this first lesson, we will answer the question, "What does it mean to 'dwell with [your wife] according to knowledge?'" There is the first and obvious meaning that husbands and wives are supposed to live together. But this verse is instructing men on how they are to live with their wives. Husbands should live with their wives in an intelligent, knowledgeable way. The husband must learn to understand his wife and get to know her better and better.

I. The Pitfalls to Understanding

It is no secret that men and women have a hard time understanding one another. The first reason this is challenging is that God designed us so differently that there are infinite opportunities to learn about each other. To men, women are the most baffling of creatures. And just when a man thinks that he has a woman figured out, she will do something so unexpected it puts him back in pre-school. The process of a husband getting to know his wife is ongoing. It should never stop, because she is a beautifully complex creation of God whose wonders will never cease to amaze.

Before sin, this wasn't a problem. Adam and Eve were able to communicate perfectly. There were no secrets between them. They were free to be open and share their hearts without fear of being misunderstood or judged harshly. They were not omniscient, so they still would have had to learn about each other, but they had a perfect ability to understand and unlimited time to learn.

When they chose to sin, everything changed, because they became guilty and ashamed. It is no coincidence that the first thing they did was to make themselves coverings of fig leaves. Their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked. That nakedness was indicative of their openness and understanding before. That wasn't a problem because they had nothing to be ashamed of then. But once they sinned, they had something to hide, and so they covered themselves. They limited the information that was made available to each other. Who were they trying to hide their bodies from?

Not from themselves because they didn't have a mirror. They hid their bodies from each other, first, and from God later.

Hebrews 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

In that very act of covering themselves it was demonstrated that sin had ruined the perfect understanding that the husband and wife could have of each other. Now there is the temptation to hide things. Now we are hesitant to open up, be honest and vulnerable, because we know that we have a lot to be ashamed of. We fear judgement and reprisal. So we close ourselves off from others, even our spouses. Sometimes, especially our spouses. We retreat into our shells and we let very few people see the real us. We only open up to the people we feel like we can really trust and sometimes we feel like we cannot trust anyone at all. It is true that women generally feel this vulnerability of exposure more than men. Men, on the whole, have less shame than women, and that is one of our great faults. It is also true that women need to be able to open up more than men. Men are less emotional creatures and therefore do not need to be known and understood to the degree that most women do. The facts that the wife is more likely to hide because of shame while also needing to be open with someone more than the husband creates a huge challenge in the context of marriage.

II. The Path to Understanding

Marriage is intended by God to restore that openness, honesty and vulnerability that husband and wife once enjoyed before sin. One of clearest proofs of that is the fact that God limits the act of physical intimacy for the husband and wife alone. You should not be that open and vulnerable to anyone but your spouse.

Genesis 2:24-25 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. [25] And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Matthew 19:4-6 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, [5] And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? [6] Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Hebrews 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

The physical intimacy between a husband and wife is unique and special in this regard. Through it the highest degree of knowledge and familiarity is gained between two people. This is why the Bible calls the act of intimacy "knowing."

Genesis 4:1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

A husband's knowledge of his wife includes physical intimacy, but it is certainly not limited to that. A husband should seek to know his wife in every way: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. He should learn how she thinks, how she feels, what are her likes and dislikes, how she views the world, what are her hopes and fear. To do this, the husband must create an atmosphere in the marriage where the wife can feel comfortable opening up to her husband and letting him know her for who she really is.

A. The Step of Redemption

The first step in creating this atmosphere is spiritual redemption. The gospel must be applied to the marriage relationship for it work as God designed it to. Remember, sin ruined everything, including the perfect ability for a husband and wife to understand each other. They became guilty and ashamed and hid themselves, limiting the information communicated to their spouse. As long as that guilt and shame remains, they will be barriers between husband and wife. They will never achieve oneness. They can sew fig leaves of self-improvement all they want, but they will still feel

the urge to hide, just like Adam and Eve did when God came to the garden. Only the gospel can perfectly cover our guilt and shame. This was demonstrated when God made coats of skins to replace Adam and Eves fig leaves.

Genesis 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

God killed an animal in the place of Adam and Eve and from its skin made a covering for them. That was a picture of what Christ would later do for us on the cross. He died on the cross in our place and His blood is the perfect covering for our sin. It removes our guilt and our shame so that we can stand before God in humble confidence that we are accepted by Him through Christ Jesus. He was buried and rose again so that we might have eternal life in His name.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

When both husband and wife have accepted the sacrifice of Christ for their sins and know that they can stand before God unashamed, they can then stand before each other unashamed. It is no longer a close held secret that they are fallen sinners. They can love each other with unconditional love, spite of their faults, because they understand that God loves each of them unconditionally in spite of their faults. They can show grace to one another, be patient with one another, assume the best of each other, because all of these traits of love and more are demonstrated in the gospel that has redeemed them. It is possible to have a redeemed marriage when both husband and wife have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

B. The Step of Acceptance

Redemption is the first and most important step on the path to understanding. But you still have two sinful creatures trying to exist in harmony with a limited ability to understand. There are other steps that must be taken by the husband to move toward better understanding of his wife. If a husband is to dwell with his wife according to knowledge, he must carefully communicate to his wife in a way that she understands that he accepts her for who she is and she is safe opening up to him.

The wife will always be tempted to hide herself, especially when she is made to feel that she has something to be ashamed of. This can happen because of sin in her life. With sin comes guilt and the temptation to question our standing before God. Only confession can cleanse us from that sin and restore us to right fellowship. A wife who harbors guilt and shame is not only hurting herself, she is hurting her marriage too.

The wife can also be made to feel that she has something to be ashamed of by mistreatment from the man whom she is supposed to be able to trust. When he shames her, she hides herself. He must let her know that he accepts her, even though she is imperfect. He must let her know that he loves her, even though she may not feel lovable. This is not as easy as it may sound. She is a fallen sinner who is tempted to think things that are not true. She may have experienced things in her past that make trusting her husband even more difficult. But it is the husbands duty to seek to know his wife better and better.

Many husbands have made their job harder than necessary, if not impossible, by being critical and judgmental of their wives. They have been ungracious with their wife's shortcomings and hypocritical in judging her harshly while downplaying or denying their own faults and failures. They have created a culture of shame and guilt. It is no wonder that the wife has hidden herself by whatever fig leaves she can get her hands on. Instead, the husband must say and show that he accepts his wife for who she is, giving her permission to open up and be vulnerable to him.

C. The Step of Learning

As the husband establishes a culture of openness and acceptance in the redeemed marriage, he should actively seek to get to know his wife better. Many husbands are secretly experts at doing this, and they would realize it if they only took the time to consider it. If you are married, think back to

the days before your wedding. When you first met your wife, you didn't know much about her, did you? As you began to be interested in her, what did you begin to do? You began to learn more about her. How did you do that? By spending time with her and listening to her talk. By asking questions so that you could learn more and more about her. It was called dating, or going steady, or going out, or courting, or whatever you may want to call it. The purpose of spending intentional time with the woman who would become your wife was to get to know her. Husband, you know how to dwell with your wife according to knowledge. But too often men stop the knowledge part when they start the dwelling part. Husband, you need to keep studying your wife. You should study her more closely diligently than even the most dedicated scientific researcher.

Never stop learning about your wife. The longer you are married, the harder you need to work to get to know your wife. That is the opposite of the common perception and practice. What happens many times in a marriage is that over time the interest is lost. The flame burns low and the passion fades. What was once fascinating is now ordinary. It is the law of diminishing returns applied to marriage. To reach the next level of knowledge, you have to work harder than you did to reach all the previous levels put together.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

Some men are unwilling to put forth that effort and the marriage stagnates and can lead to infidelity. In the worst case, a husband begins to invest his energy into getting to know another woman. She may be no better than his wife and probably not nearly as good, but she is different and that interests him. He begins to get curious and starts asking her questions and listening to her talk and learning more about her. In doing so, he begins to commit emotional adultery, and if not stopped will likely lead to physical adultery. The same kind of thing happens with pornography. Men, don't go there. That is a level of knowledge that is to be reserved for your wife only. Infidelity will destroy the atmosphere of acceptance and safety in the marriage. Dwell with your wife, and only your wife, according to knowledge.

Conclusion

In the musical, "The King And I," the character Anna, a British school teacher who travels to Siam to be governess to the king's children, sings to the children a song entitled "Getting to Know You." It is meant to be a cute, heart-warming song about a teacher and her students becoming familiar and comfortable with each other. In the song she says,

*Getting to know you,
Getting to feel free and easy
When I am with you,
Getting to know what to say
Haven't you noticed Suddenly
I'm bright and breezy
Because of all the beautiful and new
Things I'm learning about you
Day by day.*

Men are not especially known for such a warm desire to know others personally. We can be cold and indifferent, though we may not mean to be. If a marriage is to honor God, then the husband must learn to understand his wife and get to know her better and better.