



The First Letter of Peter
Bible Study Session 13
1 Peter 3:7



Study By
Lorin L Cranford

“Husbands, live with your wife.

A copy of this lesson is posted in Adobe pdf format at <http://cranfordville.com> under [Bible Studies](#) in the Bible Study Aids section. A note about the [blue, underlined](#) material: These are hyperlinks that allow you to click them on and bring up the specified scripture passage automatically while working inside the pdf file connected to the internet. Just use your web browser’s back arrow or the taskbar to return to the lesson material. All rights reserved © by C&L Publications Inc.

Greek NT

Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως
 συνοικοῦντες κατὰ
 γνῶσιν, ὡς ἀσθενεστέρῳ
 σκεύει τῷ γυναικίῳ
 ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν, ὡς
 καὶ συγκληρονόμοις
 χάριτος ζωῆς, εἰς τὸ
 μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς
 προσευχὰς ὑμῶν.

**La Biblia
 de las Américas**

Υ vosotros, maridos,
 igualmente, convivid de
 manera comprensiva con
 vuestras mujeres, como
 con un vaso más frágil,
 puesto que es mujer, dán-
 dole honor como a co-
 heredera de la gracia de
 la vida, para que vuestras
 oraciones no sean estor-

NRSV

Husbands, in the same
 way, show consideration
 for your wives in your life
 together, paying honor to
 the woman as the weaker
 sex, since they too are
 also heirs of the gracious
 gift of life—so that nothing
 may hinder your prayers.

NLT

In the same way, you
 husbands must give hon-
 or to your wives. Treat her
 with understanding as you
 live together. She may be
 weaker than you are, but
 she is your equal partner
 in God’s gift of new life. If
 you don’t treat her as you
 should, your prayers will
 not be heard.

Quick Links to the Study

- I. [Context](#)
 - a. [Historical](#)
 - b. [Literary](#)
- II. [Message](#)
 - a. [Husbands, show your wife consideration](#)
 - b. [How and Why.](#)

Introduction to Study.

This text continues the emphasis on the *Haustafeln*, i.e., domestic code, that Peter began in 2:18. This time the focus falls on Christian husbands and their treatment of their wives.¹ Of the three topics in this material -- slaves, 2:18-25; wives, 3:1-6; husbands, 3:7 -- his emphasis on husbands is the shortest, but is packed full of rich insight and advice.

In similar texts in the writings of Paul, the focus on Christian husbands is much more detailed than in First Peter, especially in Ephesians:

Ephesians 5:25-33. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 27 so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind — yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. 33 Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.²

¹“Since this verse shares characteristics similar to the preceding sections dealing with household conduct—introduction with ὁμοίως (‘similarly’), address, participle, advice, and then motivation—it is, despite its brevity, to be regarded as the third in the series advising household members on appropriate conduct, each of which depends on the imperatives of 2:17.¹⁵⁹⁹” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia—a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 217.]

²GNT: 25 *Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας*, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς, 26 ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι, 27 ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἕνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων, ἀλλ’ ἵνα ᾖ ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος. 28 οὕτως ὀφείλουσιν καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα· ὁ ἀγαπᾶν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπᾷ, 29 οὐδεὶς γάρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν, ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτήν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, 30 ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ. 31 ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. 32 τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν, ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. 33 πλὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ καθ’ ἓνα ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα οὕτως ἀγαπάτω ὡς ἑαυτόν, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἵνα φοβῆται τὸν ἄνδρα.

Colossians 3:19. 19 *Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.*³

The perspective of a Christian husband relating to a Christian wife is similar in all three of these passages. This represents a departure of Peter from his previous emphasis (cf. 2:11-3:6) on the Christian relating to the non-Christian, either in society or in the home. Why he made this shift is not clear; perhaps it had to do with perceived needs among his readers. But whatever the reason, Peter picks up the responsibility of respectful regard to human authorities that he began in 2:13 and relates it to Christian husbands in terms of their responsibilities to their wife.⁴ The ultimate authority of God (cf. διὰ τὸν κύριον in 2:13) mandates these responsibilities of the husband to his wife.

I. Context and Background⁵

Background concerns play a role here as they always do in understanding a text properly and clearly.

a. Historical

External History. The UBS 4th revised edition of the Greek New Testament lists two places where wording varies from manuscript to manuscript in the ancient copies, while the Nestle-Aland 27th revised edition Greek text lists five variations of wording in this sentence that surface in the many manuscript copies.

The first of the two variations in the UBS text is with συγκληρονόμοις, 'joint heirs.'⁶ Some manuscripts read συγκληρονόμοι, using the nominative case ending -οι rather than the instrumental case ending -οις. The essential meaning is the same, but the issue is one of style and better Greek grammar. The question is whether συγκληρονόμοις, 'joint heirs,' refers to husbands, or to wives as joint heirs with their husbands. The comparative phrases introduced by ὡς and ὡς καὶ on either side of the participle ἀπονέμοντες strongly assert that the case of σκεύει and συγκληρονόμοις should match, which they do with the use of the instrumental (=instrumental dative) cases of both these words.⁷ Thus συγκληρονόμοις is the preferred reading, and places more emphasis on the concept by asserting the wife to be joint heir with her husband, rather than συγκληρονόμοι which would assert the husband is joint heir with his wife.

The second variation is with χάριτος ζωῆς, 'grace of life.'⁸ The primary alternative reading is ποικίλης χάριτος ζωῆς, 'the manifold grace of life.' The phrase χάριτος ζωῆς is rather unusual in ancient Greek and prompted several changes by copyists trying to make clear sense of the phrase: χάριτος ζωσσης, 'living grace'; χάριτος

³GNT: 19 οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτάς.

⁴The use of the participle συνοικοῦντες in 3:7 matches the ὑποτασσόμενοι in 3:1 and ὑποτασσόμενοι in 2:18, all of which play off the foundational finite verb Ὑποτάγητε in 2:13. While such a grammar structure was easy to do in ancient Greek and easily understood in terms of subordinating a series of ideas to a primary one, such is utterly impossible to re-create in English translation, or any of the modern western languages for that matter. Thus by just reading a modern translation of this text, the reader would have not a clue as to the arrangement of ideas in the larger passage of 2:13-3:7.

⁵Serious study of the Bible requires careful analysis of the background and setting of the scripture passage. Failure to do this leads to interpretive garbage and possibly to heresy. Detailed study of the background doesn't always answer all the questions, but it certainly gets us further along toward correct understanding of both the historical and contemporary meanings of a text. This serious examination of both the historical and literary background of every passage will be presented in summary form with each of the studies.

⁶"Of the two chief readings (συγκληρονόμος 2127 can be disregarded as a scribal idiosyncrasy) the external support for συγκληρονόμοις appears to be slightly stronger (P⁷² κ^c (κ συγκληρονόμους) B^c (B συνκληρονόμοις) 33 1739 it^{ar}, t vg sy^{tr} arm eth (Speculum)) than that for συγκληρονόμοι (A C K P Ψ 81 614 Byz Lect syth). If one adopts the dative, the reference of the clause ὡς ... ζωῆς is to the wives; if the nominative, the reference is to the husbands.¹ The transition in sense from the singular τῷ γυναικείῳ σκεύει to the plural συγκληρονόμοις may have seemed harsh to copyists, who therefore preferred the nominative. Actually, however, the transition is not unnatural, and the dative is more in harmony with the structure of the sentence and the thought (for the presence of καὶ seems to favor taking the two clauses as coordinate)." [Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 620-21.]

⁷The ending -οις is signaling a connection to the neuter gender word σκεύει, 'vessel,' which is a clear reference here to the wife as the appositional modifying adjective γυναικείῳ (neuter gender singular number) indicates. The plural συγκληρονόμοις simply individualizes the previous reference to singular 'the female vessel.'

⁸"Several witnesses have added the adjective ποικίλης (manifold/of various kinds) from 4:10, where the reference to 'God's grace in its various forms' is natural and appropriate. A literal translation of the Greek 'grace of life' may not have a clear meaning. The genitive ζωῆς is probably epegetic, that is 'grace that consists in life' (Achtmeier, 1 Peter, p. 218; Elliott, 1 Peter, p. 580)." [Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament : An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 486.]

ζωῆς αἰωίου, ‘grace of life eternal’; ποικίλης χάριτος ζωῆς, ‘manifold grace of life.’ None of these variations have strong support from significant early copies of the New Testament, and thus should be rejected. The best meaning of χάριτος ζωῆς will be explored below, and this reading should be understood as original.

The remaining three variations listed in the N-A 27th Greek text reflect stylistic and spelling ‘improvements’ because of the changing patterns of Greek over the centuries of copying this text. A couple of manuscripts drop the article Οἱ at the beginning so that ἄνδρες matches γυναῖκες in 3:1 without an article. A very few substitute συνοικοῦντες (“live with”) with a form of συνομιλέω (“talk with”). Two copies read ταῖς προσευχαῖς rather than τὰς προσευχάς, “so that you won’t be hindered in your prayers” rather than “so that your prayers won’t be hindered.” But these variations have very little manuscript support and are later alternations by copyists. Thus they are to be rejected as not being original. The text as it stands in the above listing is the original wording, and we can be virtually certain of that.

Internal History. The background history present in this text is indirect and relates to the general attitude of husbands toward wives in the first century. Again some general trends will surface, but great diversity will also be reflected in the different cultures, and, even inside specific cultures, different men adopted different postures toward their wife. The one universal given of that world was that it was a patriarchal world where the male dominated life. This power over others, especially inside the family unit, had few restraints imposed by the surrounding culture. The more extreme side was the Roman tradition of the *patria potestis* which granted absolute power of life and death over family members.⁹ The Greek tradition didn’t go quite as far with society imposing acceptable norms on how the male head of the household could treat his family. Jewish tradition was guided by the Torah of the Old Testament that imposed a number of limitations on how family members were to be treated. Plus, the economic status of the husband and wife played an important role in defining acceptable and improper treatment by the husband of his wife. Harsh treatment such as that which Paul forbids in Col. 3:19, μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτάς, was relatively commonplace from all indications. But one can also find examples of great honor and respect being given to wives by their Roman, Greek, or Jewish husbands.¹⁰ Careful examination of the available data about husband’s attitudes and relationships toward their wives in the Roman empire during the first Christian century reveals a mixture of occasional brutality and sometimes

⁹The restraint on this during the first century came with Emperor Augustus imposing radical reforms on Roman society after consolidating his power as emperor. One of these reforms was the imposing of the Lex Papia Poppaea laws governing marriage in AD 9. This reform was designed to encourage marriage and the stability of marriages for child bearing purposes among the Italians. Interestingly, the law was introduced by the suffect consuls of that year, M. Papius Mutilus and Q. Poppaeus Secundus, although they themselves were bachelors. The intent and impact was to strengthen the marital relationships and to make them more harmonious.

Roman patterns were more ‘liberal’ than many of the other traditions, with Roman wives enjoying considerably greater freedom and rights; for details see “Marriage in ancient Rome: Conventions of Roman Marriage,” Wikipedia.

¹⁰Most of these are found as inscriptions on the tomb stones of wives who have passed away. These are generally written by their husbands to pay tribute to being an extraordinary wife. To be sure, this represents mostly the wealthier classes of ancient society and does not give insight into the peasant class of Roman society that was by far the largest segment. Some of the data suggests that the wealthier classes responded differently than those without wealth, in large part simply because the wife would normally come from a family of wealth and power. Abusing her could bring serious repercussions to the husband.

One example of devotion to a wife is a letter from Pliny the Younger (AD 61-112) about Calpurnia, his wife, written to Calpurnia Hispulla, his wife’s aunt who had raised her after her father’s death (*Epistulae* bk 4, letter 19):

As you yourself are a model of the family virtues, as you returned the affection of your brother, who was the best of men and devoted to you, and as you love his daughter as though she were your own child, and show her not only the affection of an aunt but even that of the father she has lost, I feel sure you will be delighted to know that she is proving herself worthy of her father, worthy of you, and worthy of her grandfather. She has a sharp wit, she is wonderfully economical, and she loves me -- which is a guarantee of her purity. Moreover, owing to her fondness for me she has developed a taste for study. She collects all my speeches, she reads them, and learns them by heart. When I am about to plead, what anxiety she shows; when the pleading is over, how pleased she is! She has relays of people to bring her news as to the reception I get, the applause I excite, and the verdicts I win from the judges. Whenever I recite, she sits near me screened from the audience by a curtain, and her ears greedily drink in what people say to my credit. She even sings my verses and sets them to music, though she has no master to teach her but love, which is the best instructor of all. Hence I feel perfectly assured that our mutual happiness will be lasting, and will continue to grow day by day. For she loves in me not my youth nor my person -- both of which are subject to gradual decay and age -- but my reputation. Nor would other feelings become one who had been brought up at your knee, who had been trained by your precepts, who had seen in your house nothing that was not pure and honourable, and, in short, had been taught to love me at your recommendation. For as you loved and venerated my mother as a daughter, so even when I was a boy you used to shape my character, and encourage me, and prophesy that I should develop into the man that my wife now believes me to be. Consequently my wife and I try to see who can thank you best, I because you have given her to me, and she because you gave me to her, as though you chose us the one for the other. Farewell.

of beautiful devotion and love. This is all the more interesting because of the usual age difference of between ten and twenty-five years between married couples. Thus Peter's admonitions to Christian husbands would resonate with the men in the churches simply because most of them would have known of examples who followed most of these instructions, even among their non-Christian friends.

b. Literary

Literary Form (Genre). The broad genre is that of the letter body which implies the occasional nature of these instructions. That is, what Peter said was prompted by real circumstances existing in the churches that the letter was addressed to, rather than being a hypothetical situation. The narrow genre issue is that this sentence is *paraenesis* of the Haustafeln category. That is, it is moral admonition given to the family, and in this case the male head of the household. As such, it puts on the table standards of conduct expected from believers and these become ideals that are to be seriously sought after for incorporating into daily living and relationships. They are not threatening laws imposed down upon the targeted individuals. Rather they are presented as divine expectations and in the case of 3:7 as expectations that have potential consequence if not followed.

Literary Context. The literary setting of 3:7 is relatively easy to detect. It stands as the third part of the Haustafeln section of 2:18-3:7 dealing with slaves, wives, and husbands. This in turn is a part of a larger section, 2:11-3:12, that deals with Christian obligations, mostly to the non-Christian world surrounding believers. This is the second topic of three in the letter body. Peter is seeking to explain to his readers that we Christians are mandated by God to reach out in positive ways to other people, especially to those who do not know Christ, and to those who in some setting possess authority over our lives whether it be government, family, or social settings.

Literary Structure.

The block diagram below illustrates the thought structure of this single sentence in Greek.

likewise

30 ^{3.7} **husbands should live together (with their wives)**
 according to knowledge,
 as a weaker vessel
 showing their wife honor
 as also joint heirs of the grace of life,
 so that your prayers won't be hindered.

The core expression (highlighted in **bold type** above) is clear. What is less certain are the connections of the modifying expressions that follow the initial verbal expression. Differences in punctuation of the three major printed Greek texts of this passage reflect this uncertainty.¹¹ The above diagram reflects a tentative

¹¹**UBS 4th revised edition:** Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως, συνοικοῦντες κατὰ γνῶσιν ὡς ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκευεὶ τῷ γυναικείῳ, ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν.

Nestle-Aland 27th revised edition: Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως, συνοικοῦντες κατὰ γνῶσιν ὡς ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκευεὶ τῷ γυναικείῳ, ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν.

SBL GNT: Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως συνοικοῦντες κατὰ γνῶσιν, ὡς ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκευεὶ τῷ γυναικείῳ ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν, ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν.

The UBS and the N-A texts agree in the placing of commas after ὁμοίως, γυναικείῳ, and ζωῆς. But the newer SBL GNT differs by placing commas after γνῶσιν, τιμὴν, and ζωῆς. The impact of this is the defining of what modifies what. Both the UBS and N-A editors assume that κατὰ γνῶσιν ὡς ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκευεὶ τῷ γυναικείῳ modify the participle συνοικοῦντες. The translation impact would be as follows: "Like wise husbands, live together with your wife according to knowledge and as the weaker vessel, showing (her) honor also as joint heirs of the grace of life, lest your prayers be hindered." The second participle ἀπονέμοντες is the modifying

Outline of Contents in First Peter:

Praescriptio: 1:1-2

- *Superscriptio*, 1:1a
- *Adscriptio*, 1:1b-2a
- *Salutatio*, 1:2b

Proem: 1:3-12

- *Core*, 1:3a
- *Expansion*, 1:3b-12

Body: 1:13-5:11

- *Holy living* 1:13-2:10
 - *Ideals* 1:13-25
 - *Privileges* 2:1-10
- *Obligations* 2:11-3:12
 - *Civic* 2:11-17
 - *Haustafeln* 2:18-3:7
 - *Social* 3:8-12
- *Persecution* 3:13-5:11
 - *Encouragement* 3:13-4:11
 - *Explanation* 4:12-19
 - *Proper Conduct* 5:1-11

Conclusio: 5:12-14

- *Sender Verification*, 5:12
- *Greetings*, 5:13-14a
- *Benedictio*, 5:14b

understanding of how everything is connected in the sentence. Which ever punctuation pattern is adopted, the essential meaning remains pretty much the same; only some emphases shift.

This highlights one of the issues in developing a modern Greek text from comparative analysis of the existing ancient manuscripts. It wasn't until about the fifth century with the shift to minuscule style writing of Greek that very primitive punctuation marks begin showing up in the writing of Greek. Prior to that, with everything being written in uncial style Greek, no breaks even between words were present, as well as no punctuation marks at all.¹² Consequently, the editors of modern Greek texts have to make decisions about inserting periods, question marks, commas, colons, semi-colons, blank spaces between words etc. based on a particular understanding of thought flow. Usually, the text makes this very clear but on occasions, such as our text in 3:7, the issues are cloudy and some aspects are debatable.

II. Message

Given the structural understanding above, the passage will be examined around two major divisions: the main responsibility, and expansions of that responsibility. One should note that even though the translation of the main clause (cf. a. below) is with an English imperative verb, the structure of the Greek makes the participle συνοικοῦντες better understood as instrumental in that it reaches back to Ὑποτάγητε πάσῃ ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει διὰ τὸν κύριον in 2:13 with connections also to 2:11-12, as Achtemeier and Epp correctly contend.¹³ How does one show proper acceptance of human authorities? Husbands show it by how they treat their wives.

a. Husbands, show consideration for your wives

Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together

Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως συνοικοῦντες κατὰ γνῶσιν,

Notes:

In a world where the husband controlled the family with few limits imposed on him, Peter calls upon Christian husbands to step away from their power to control and to reach out to their wives with thoughtfulness and respect. Paul's way of expressing this was for husbands to love their wives: Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναῖκας (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19). Peter's wording is different with συνοικοῦντες¹⁴ κατὰ γνῶσιν, which literally is "Make a home together using good sense." The husband is to be committed to building a proper home together with his wife. The συνοικέω in this single use inside the entire New Testament stresses the home and the joint responsibility of husband and wife for developing it.¹⁵ In the cultural worlds of the first century, reference for ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς, with εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν going back to the first participle συνοικοῦντες.

On the other hand the SBL GNT punctuation impacts the translation differently: "Husbands similarly should live together (with their wives) according to knowledge, showing them honor as weaker vessels and also as joint heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers are not hindered." The weakness of this approach is the presence of "your," ὑμῶν, at the very end of the sentence. The second person plural form rather than a more natural third person "their" raises questions about the accuracy of this approach.

¹²In non-technical very simple terms, *uncial* means capital letters, while *minuscule* means cursive letters. The terms are universal and application to all western languages. For a helpful but not overly technical description of these issues along with diagrams, see "Evolution of the Uncial Script," at skypoint.com. Even clearer is "Minuscule Greek," at Wikipedia online. For a sample file of minuscule style of Greek see "Thucydides" at Wikipedia.

A very helpful introduction to all this is "An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism," at skypoint.com. My "Study in Textual Criticism," at cranfordville.com highlights the issues for fourth semester Greek students, and beyond.

¹³The participle συνοικοῦντες ('living with'), like the those in 2:18 and 3:1, is to be construed not as imperatival¹⁶⁰ but as instrumental: it indicates the way obligations are to be met.¹⁶¹ [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 217.]

¹⁴συνοικέω fut. 3 sg. συνοικήσει Dt 25:5; aor. συνώκησα LXX; pf. ptc. fem. συνώκηκυῖα LXX **live with** τινί *someone* (since Hipponax [VI B.C.] 20 Diehl3 and Aeschyl.; also Demetr.: 722 Fgm. 2, 2 Jac.) of man and wife (Hdt. et al.; OGI 771, 28; pap, LXX; Jos., Ant. 4, 247; 8, 191; Demetr.: 722 Fgm. 1, 12; cp. Philo, Sac. Abel. 20) **1 Pt 3:7**.—New Docs 3, 85. DELG s.v. οἶκος II C. M-M." [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 973-74.]

¹⁵As a term of the *oik-* family, *synoikeō* (lit., 'make a home [*oikos*] with [*syn-*']), like *oiketai* (2:18), is perhaps intentionally employed to underline the household realm of this body of instruction (2:18–3:7). The cooperation of husband and wife in household management (*oikonomia*) is noted by Philo (QG 1.26, commenting on Gen 2:22):

Why does Scripture call the likeness of the woman 'a building'? The harmonious coming together of man and woman and their consummation is figuratively a house. And everything that is without a woman is imperfect and homeless. For to a man are entrusted the

this carried with it implications of the husband taking care of responsibilities outside the house, and giving his wife full reign over things inside the house with his complete support. Cultural patterns in today's world have changed so that responsibilities both inside and outside are shared by both husband and wife. But Peter's essential point remains valid to today's situation. Husbands must fully support their wives in the building of a home together.

This support was to be given *κατὰ γνώσιν*. The prepositional phrase stresses the giving of support out of a realization of the nature of the situation with his wife.¹⁶ This includes at least the two aspects that Peter will specify in the expansions: 1) weaker vessel and 2) co-heirs. Beyond this, the experiential knowledge orientation of *γνώσις* stresses a understanding gained out of experience and observation, rather than by pure theory. When a husband reaches out to his wife in such an affirming and positive way, he will discover much about the richness of the marital relationship and about his wife. And this developing understanding should encourage his growing support of her in the building of a home together.

Paul's way of stressing the positive stance of the husband toward his wife is with the concept of self-sacrificing love and devotion to her. The *ἀγάπη* kind of love is defined in Ephesians 5: 25b-33a basically in terms of a comparison to Christ and how He sacrificially loved the church in giving Himself for it in order to make it the most beautiful bride ever. By Paul's admonition in Col. 3:19, loving one's wife is the opposite of both showing bitterness toward her and causing her to feel bitterness against him.

This is a challenge to every Christian husband. And it is something desperately needed in modern western society. The physical aspects of marriage have been so emphasized by the cultural perversions of Hollywood, that marriage is equated with sex and little more. And this even is often touted to be boring and unsatisfying after a period of time! What both Paul and Peter are calling husbands to do is to make deep, abiding commitments to their wives that seriously seek to make the wife a better person and to develop a profoundly satisfying home together. As the old hymn declares, "God, give us Christian homes!"¹⁷

public affairs of state; while to a woman the affairs of the home are proper. The lack of her is ruin, but her being near at hand constitutes household management (*oikonomia*)."

[John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 575.]

¹⁶"*considerately*. The adverb translates *kata gnōsin* (lit., 'in accord with knowledge, insight'; cf. *ennoia*, 4:1, and contrast *agnōsia*, 2:15). This considerateness or knowledge pertains not only to the assumed condition of wives as 'weaker feminine vessels' but also and especially to their special status as 'co-heirs of the grace of life.' Therefore, it is unnecessary to suspect here a repudiation of the depreciation of women in various Gnostic circles (against Reicke 1954). The thought reflects conventional wisdom: 'My soul takes pleasure in three things and they are beautiful in the sight of the Lord and humans: agreement between brothers, friendship between neighbors, and a wife and husband who live in harmony' (Sir 25:1); 'happy is the one (male) who lives with (synoikōn) an intelligent wife' (Sir 25:8). See also Ps.-Arist., Oec. 3.4, where the unity of husband and wife is 'allied with wisdom and understanding.' On the mutuality of the marital relationship, see also 1 Cor 7:1-5, 10-16, 36; Eph 5:25-33; 1 Thess 4:4-6." [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 575-76.]

¹⁷1. God, give us Christian homes!

Homes where the Bible is loved and taught,
Homes where the Master's will is sought,
Homes crowned with beauty Your love has wrought;
God, give us Christian homes;
God, give us Christian homes!

2. God, give us Christian homes!

Homes where the father is true and strong,
Homes that are free from the blight of wrong,
Homes that are joyous with love and song;
God, give us Christian homes,
God, give us Christian homes!

3. God, give us Christian homes!

Homes where the mother, in caring quest,
Strives to show others Your way is best,
Homes where the Lord is an honored guest;
God, give us Christian homes,
God, give us Christian homes!

b. Here's how to do it and why

paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life — so that nothing may hinder your prayers.

ὡς ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει τῷ γυναικείῳ ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν, ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν.

Notes:

How does a husband build a solid home together with his wife? In the expansion elements added to the core assertion (cf. a. above), the answer to this question is provided by Peter. It contains several elements:

Likewise: ὁμοίως.¹⁸ This comparative adverb indicates that the responsibilities for the husband are in line with those for the wife (3:1, Ὅμοίως), and for the slave (2:18). Through this word, Peter stresses that the husband is under authority himself and thus has specific guidelines for his conduct.¹⁹

Paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex: ὡς ἀσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει τῷ γυναικείῳ ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν. The core expression ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν has the literal sense of 'treating her like a queen.' How does the husband cooperate with his wife in home building? The primary way, as this instrumental participle asserts, is by elevating her to the status of queen of the house and then showing her appropriate respect and support. This was a mandate quite distinct from the surrounding cultural values which affirmed that the wife gained honor and respect from her husband by producing a son for him.²⁰ This distinctive emphasis of Peter is also to be understood against the ancient backdrop where the wife typically had responsibility of the management of affairs inside the home. This gave her status and influence which Peter urges the husband to support. In many of the tomb stone inscriptions praising the wife, one



4. God, give us Christian homes!
Homes where the children are led to know
Christ in His beauty who loves them so,
Homes where the altar fires burn and glow;
God, give us Christian homes,
God, give us Christian homes!

¹⁸ὁμοίως adv. of ὁμοίος (Pind., Hdt.+)
pert. to being similar in some respect, likewise, so, similarly, in the same way Mk 4:16 v.l.; Lk 3:11; 10:37; 13:3, 5 v.l. (see ὡσαύτως) al. ὁμ. καὶ and so, so also Mt 22:26; 26:35; Mk 15:31; Lk 5:33; IPol 5:1. ὁμ. μέντοι καὶ in the same way, too Jd 8. ὁμ. δὲ καὶ (pap, EpArist; Jos., Bell. 2, 575, Ant. 14, 216) Lk 5:10; 10:32; 1 Cor 7:3f; Js 2:25. In Ro 1:27 the rdg. varies betw. ὁμ. τε καὶ and ὁμ. δὲ καὶ (v.l.). Sim. Mt 27:41 ὁμοίως καὶ (vv.ll. ὁμ. δὲ καὶ and simply ὁμ.).—καθὼς θέλετε ... , ποιεῖτε ὁμοίως as you wish ... , do so Lk 6:31. ὁμ. καθὼς in the same way as 17:28. ὁμ. πάλιν similarly, again 12:1. W. the dat. foll. ὁμ. πλανᾶσθαι ἐκείνοις to go astray as they did 2:9. Somet. the idea of similarity can fade into the background so that ὁμ. means also (UPZ 70, 8 [152/151 B.C.] ὁμνύω, ὅτι ψευδῆ πάντα καὶ οἱ παρὰ σὲ θεοὶ ὁμοίως; 65, 8f ὁμ. καὶ Κότταβος, ὁμ. καὶ Χεντοσνεύς; TestJob 47:6 ἀφανεῖς ἐγένοντο ... οἱ σκώληκες ... , ὁμ. καὶ αἱ πλῆγαι; GrBar 9:3; Ath. 9, 2 [to introduce additional Scriptural evidence]) ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμ. ποιεῖ this the Son also does J 5:19; cp. 6:11; 21:13.—As a connective (Hierocles 26 p. 480 [ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ]; oft. pap); more than one ὁμ. in the same way ... also (an edict of Augustus fr. Cyrenaica, SEG IX, 8, 108; 110 [lit.] = DocsAugTib 311) 1 Pt 3:1, 7. Cp. 5:5.—M-M. TW.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 707-08.]

¹⁹This is contra the position of Elliott in the Anchor Bible commentary: “The adverb homoiōs, rather than introducing some aspect of similarity in the sense of ‘likewise’ (as in 3:1a), serves here (as in 5:5a and occasionally elsewhere in Greek literature) as a simple connective with the sense of ‘in turn’ or ‘also.’” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 574.]

²⁰“A wife, who was not part of the husband’s kin-group, remained an ‘outsider’ on the periphery of his family until she bore him a son and thereby brought the family honor. Her honor generally was her chasteness, but it was also enhanced by the fidelity and respect of her husband (cf. Xen., Oec. 7.42; 9.11). Thus it was noted (Ps.-Arist., Oec. 3.2, 3), ‘Now a virtuous wife is best honored when she sees that her husband is faithful to her, and has no preferences for another woman; but loves and trusts her and holds her as his own ... he should approach his wife in honorable wise, full of self-restraint and awe ... advising her in a courteous and modest manner’ (cf. similarly, Plut., Conj. praec. 47; Mor. 144F: The husband should show ‘no greater respect for anybody than for his wife’; and Ps.-Arist., Oec. 3.2: ‘Now to a wife nothing is of more value, nothing more rightfully her own, than honored and faithful partnership with her husband. Wherefore it befits not a man of sound mind to bestow his person promiscuously, or have random intercourse with women; for otherwise, the baseborn will share in the rights of his lawful children, and his wife will be robbed of her due honor, and shame will be attached to his sons’).” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 579.]

of the most common themes is about how well the wife took care of running the household and in seeing that food and other supplies were always adequately available for the entire household.

When Peter uses the comparative ὡς ἄσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει τῷ γυναικείῳ, (“as the weaker sex”), he adopts what was universally believed throughout the ancient world: the woman is ‘weaker’ than the man. Mostly this was based on simple physical strength comparisons, but sometimes it was carried over into the moral and intellectual realms by some philosophers.²¹ Yet in spite of such contentions by various male writers, Roman society by the mid-first century was stepping away from associating moral and intellectual weakness with the female. Women were gaining increasing rights along with more advanced education so that they entered public life increasingly on a competitive level with men. How much of the ancient assumptions about female weakness Peter has in mind is not clear. In the best case assumption, he was asserting only the external physical strength difference. This would be favored by his language affirming the leadership role of the woman inside the home, since good management of a household required considerable mental and people skills.

Peter’s use of this cultural perspective is seen not as an opportunity for the husband to abuse or take advantage of his wife. But rather as an incentive for respect and tenderness in his actions toward her. The ultimate point of Peter’s comparison is that the wife needs the husband’s help, and he must be sensitive and supportive in giving it to her. This is connected to Paul’s model of sacrificial love from the husband for his wife.

Since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life: ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοις χάριτος ζωῆς. The second point of comparison (= ὡς καὶ) motivating the husband to treat his wife like a queen is that they share jointly in the spiritual riches of eternal life. Clearly Peter assumes both are believers, and wants the husbands to understand that their wives stand on equal ground with them in experiencing the grace of God that brings spiritual life, not just to each one but jointly to their home as well. The richness of the phrase centers on the noun συγκληρονόμοις. The wives may indeed be a ‘weaker female vessel’ physically, but spiritually they stand on equal ground with their husbands before the Lord. What God has promised in eschatological salvation to the husbands is shared equally with the wives. There is no distinction, just as Paul had declared in a couple of writings dated about the same time as First Peter:

Gal. 3:28, There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, **there is no longer male and female;** for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.²²

Col. 3:11, In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

²¹“The adjective ‘weak’ (*asthenēs*) and the noun ‘weakness’ (*astheneia*) are used to describe humans as weak beings (Philo, *Deus* 80; *Spec.* 1.293–94; *Clem. Alex.*, *Strom.* 2.15.62; 2.16.72; 7.3.16; *Paed.* 3.12.86), the female gender as weak (4 *Macc* 15:5; *PLond.* 971.4; *Clem. Alex.*, *Paed.* 2.10.107), physical infirmity (*Matt* 25:43; *Mark* 6:56; *Acts* 5:15–16; 2 *Cor* 12:7–10), the weakness of human nature (*Heb* 5:2 [‘ignorant and wayward’]; 7:28), weaker parts of the body (1 *Cor* 12:22), spiritual weakness or helplessness (*Rom* 5:6; 6:19; *Heb* 4:15), moral sensitivity (1 *Cor* 8:7–13), the weakness of the flesh in contrast to the power of the spirit (*Matt* 24:41; *Rom* 8:26), economic weakness or poverty (*Acts* 20:35; 1 *Cor* 1:27), and Christ as ‘crucified in weakness’ (2 *Cor* 13:4).

“Here the comparative adjective ‘weaker’ (*asthenerōi*) is linked conceptually with *gynaikeiōi* (‘feminine,’ only NT appearance), with both adjectives modifying *skeuei* (‘vessel’). Females were generally regarded (by males!) to be weaker than males physically, intellectually, and morally. Thus, it was held that ‘the male (seed) is stronger than the female (seed)’ (Hippocratic Corpus, *Gen.* 6.1). ‘The female nature, in humankind,’ according to Plato (*Leg.* 6.781B), ‘is inferior in virtue to that of males.’ In fact, he claims, ‘the female is in all respects weaker (*astheneron*) than the male’ (*Resp.* 5; 455D; also 451C–56A; *Meno* 71C–73C). Accordingly, female infants, because they are weaker (and less desirable) than males, comments Ovid (*Met.* 10.23), should be exposed. The weakness of females is also cited as a reason for their restriction to the home and indoor matters: ‘For Providence,’ it was noted (*Ps.-Arist.*, *Oec.* 1.4, 1344a), ‘made man stronger and woman weaker (*astheneron*), so that he, in virtue of his manly prowess, may be more ready to defend the home, and she, by reason of her timid nature, more ready to keep watch over it; and while he brings in fresh supplies from without, she may keep safe what lies within.’ According to the Israelite Letter of Aristeas (250–51), ‘the female sex is bold, positively active for something it desires, easily liable to change its mind because of poor reasoning powers, and of naturally weak constitution,’ and thus the female requires a husband as a ‘pilot.’ Musonius Rufus, the Roman moralist, likewise comments (*Educ.*) that ‘in the human race, man’s constitution is stronger and woman’s weaker’ so that ‘heavier tasks [gymnastics and outdoor work] should be given to the stronger and lighter ones [spinning and indoor work] to the weaker.’ According to the Roman jurist Gaius (*Inst.* 1.144), earlier generations wished women, even those of a mature age, to be under a guardian, because of the ‘innate weakness of their sex’ (cf. S. Dixon 1984).188” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 576-77.]

²²GNT: οὐκ ἐν Ἰουδαίῳ οὐδὲ Ἕλληνι, οὐκ ἐν δοῦλῳ οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερῳ, **οὐκ ἐν ἄρσεν καὶ θήλῳ**· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Although Paul does not mention male and female in Colossians, the principle expressed there is identical to the one expressed in Galatians. What Peter had mentioned in his opening prayer in 1:4-5,²³ he now affirms that men and women share on an equal basis. The implications of this are enormous. The surrounding culture may have signaled to the husbands that their wives were somehow inferior. The differences in physical strength seemingly confirmed those cultural signals. Peter counters that by acknowledging the difference in physical strength as an incentive for thoughtfulness by the husband to his wife and then by affirming the wives' complete equality with their husbands before God -- a powerful affirmation of their value and importance that should motivate the husbands to treat their wives like queens!

What is it that both husbands and wives inherit from God? Peter answers with χάριτος ζωῆς. A phrase found only here in the New Testament, it has produced challenges to understanding, including efforts by ancient copyists to modify the wording in their production of copies of the Greek New Testament.²⁴ Modern Bible translators struggle with the phrase as well.²⁵

What did Peter mean by this expression?²⁶ Most likely the phrase designates the divine grace that brings spiritual life.²⁷ Whether the emphasis is upon conversion or, more likely, on the future experience of spiritual life in final judgement is debatable. The ancient copyists who added αἰωνίου to ζωῆς had a correct idea, but lacked a sufficient basis to legitimately understand it as the original wording of the text.²⁸ Peter does understand God's grace as life giving, as is reflected in his multiple use of the word for grace in this letter.²⁹ Divine grace and spiritual life encompass our experience from conversion to consummation, but the linking of divine

²³1 Peter 1:4-5: 4 and into *an inheritance* that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

4 εἰς κληρονομίαν ἄφθαρτον καὶ ἀμίαντον καὶ ἀμάραντον, τετηρημένην ἐν οὐρανοῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς 5 τοὺς ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ φρουρουμένους διὰ πίστεως εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐτοιμὴν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι ἐν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ.

²⁴“The addition of ‘eternal’ to ‘life’ in P⁷² and the Syriac Peshitta perhaps was influenced by the stock expression ‘eternal life.’¹⁹⁰ ‘Varied’ (*poikilēs*) appears to have been added to ‘grace’ by other scribes (Ⲙ A and others) on the analogy of 4:10.” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 580.]

²⁵Note the patterns of translating χάριτος ζωῆς. In a few instances a different wording of the Greek text is assumed:

English: “grace of life,” KJV, ASV, HCSB, NASB, NKJV, RSV; “the gracious gift of life,” NRSV, NIV, TNIV; “God’s gift of new life,” NLT; “God’s gift of life,” TEV; “the grace that gives true life,” NCV; “the new life of God’s grace,” The Message; “God’s free gift of Life,” Weymouth;

German: “der Gnade des Lebens,” Luther 1912, Luther 1984, Elberfelder 1905, Einheitsübersetzung; “ewigen Leben, das Gott schenkt,” GNB; “der Gnadengabe des (ewigen) Lebens,” Menge Bibel; “der lebensspendenden Gnade,” Züricher Bibel; “Gottes Gnade Erben des ewigen Lebens,” Neue Genfer Übersetzung; “das ewige Leben von Gott geschenkt bekommen,” Neues Leben Bibelübersetzung;

Spanish: “la gracia de la vida,” La Biblia de las Américas, La Biblia Reina-Valera Antigua, 1960, 1995, Sagradas Escrituras 1569, Nueva biblia Latinoamericana de Hoy; “la vida que Dios da,” Castilian; “la vida que Dios les dará como herencia,” Dios Habla Hoy; “la nueva vida que Dios les ha dado,” Nueva Traducción Viviente; “del grato don de la vida,” Nueva Versión Internacional; “del don de la vida,” Reina Valera Contemporánea; “ellas Dios les ha prometido la vida eterna,” Traducción en lenguaje actual.

From the above comparisons in English, German, and Spanish, one can easily note the difficulties in translation. The translations are struggling not over the essential meaning of the phrase, but how to best express the idea in the respective languages.

²⁶The view of a few ancient commentators that is repeated by a few modern commentaries that life here means procreation, and thus Peter is promising children to the husband who treats his wife properly is without any merit whatsoever. Thus it will not be considered in our discussion.

²⁷“The genitive ζωῆς (‘life’) is probably exegetical (‘grace that consists in life’) rather than qualitative or adjectival (‘living grace’),¹⁷⁶ and bears an eschatological implication: it refers to the new life awaiting the Christian subsequent to God’s judgment of the world.¹⁷⁷” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 218.]

What I find interesting in the comments of Achtemeier and Epp, as well as quite a number of other commentators, is their use of archaic Greek grammar terminology that hasn’t been used in Greek grammars for well over half a century. The current term for the grammar function of ζωῆς is either Genitive of Apposition or Appositional Genitive. Unfortunately this tendency by some of the commentators is not limited to isolated instances, but instead is fairly consistent. The sad aspect of this is the reflecting of outdated understanding of Greek grammar by these commentators, which at times seriously weakens the strength of their understandings of the text.

²⁸“‘Eternal’ has been added to ‘life’ by scribes in p⁷² (ζωῆς αἰωνίου) and supplied in the Syriac Peshitta.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 155.]

²⁹See the concordance listing of ‘grace’ in the NRSV for First Peter at <http://www.biblestudytools.com/search/?q=grace&c=1p&t=nrsa&ps=10&s=Bibles>.

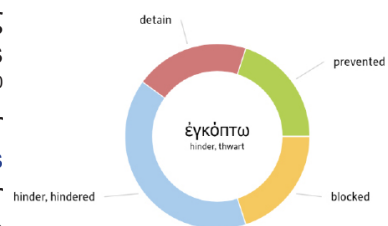
grace and spiritual life to ‘inheritance’ here favors a dominate emphasis on the eschatological realization of spiritual life in final judgment.

The powerful assertion of Peter is that the wife needs to be shone proper honor and respect, and this is prompted both by her needs as the physically weaker of the two and also by her full spiritual equality with her husband before God. She is a person highly honored by God, and so should also be honored by her husband. Here Peter provides a clearly distinct Christian perspective that had substantially different perspectives than those typically found in the non-Christian cultures that his readers reflected both in their differing ethnic heritages and in the multi-cultural environment in which they lived in ancient Anatolia. As Christian families implemented this concept set forth by Peter, their neighbors would begin to notice that commitment to Christ indeed does make a difference in how one lives. Hopefully this difference would be appealing enough to draw their neighbors to consider Christ as Lord of their lives and homes as well.

So that nothing may hinder your prayers: εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν. How important this way of husbands treating their wives is can be seen in this warning that Peter issues at the end of the sentence.³⁰ The importance of praying seriously and consistently is set forth by Peter later in 4:7, “the end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers.” For the husband to fail to treat his wife with proper respect means that his prayers are ‘hindered.’ The verb ἐγκόπτω, according to the BDAG lexicon, means “to make progress slow or difficult.”³¹ The husband’s prayers aren’t nullified, but they lose their vitality and praying ceases to be a vital part of spiritual health. Why? Because of a fundamental biblical principle: right relationship with God is vitally linked to right relationships with other people. Peter sees this foundational concept applicable to husband / wife relationships.

Husbands can stifle their relationship with God simply by not treating their wives properly. In such cases, God essentially says, “Don’t come wanting to talk with me, until you talk correctly to your wife! I told you to honor her. When you do that, then I’ll be happy to converse with you.” There is a powerful need for Christian husbands to grasp Peter’s words here.

In summary, Peter has something vitally relevant to say to modern Christian husbands in this text. When we husbands begin taking these words seriously, not only will our homes become more Christian, but I’m convinced our churches will become more Christian as well. The ancient pagan world would occasionally sing the praises of wives, usually on their tombstones after the wife’s death. And typically those praises were based on what the wife did for her husband. Peter calls upon Christian husbands to ‘sing the praises’ of their wives while they’re still living, and because of who the wives are in God’s eyes. That’s the Christian difference!



³⁰εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν, ‘That way your prayers will not be hindered.’ Peter views the believing husband and wife as a kind of church in miniature (cf. Paul in 1 Cor 7:5; also Clement of Alexandria’s interpretation of the ‘two or three’ gathered in prayer according to Matt 18:20 as the Christian wife, husband, and child, Strom. 3.10). The only other use of προσευχή in 1 Peter occurs at 4:7, in a series of guidelines for church life, with the implication that to ‘attend to prayers’ (νήψατε εἰς προσευχὰς) necessitates mutual love, hospitality, and ministry as described in 4:8–11 (in the Gospel tradition, cf. Mark 11:25; Matt 5:23–24; 6:12, 14; 18:15–20). When these same qualities are lacking in a Christian marriage (e.g., when husband and wife do not treat each other mutually as ‘co-heirs’), their common prayers will be ‘hindered’ (ἐγκόπτεσθαι); whether the hindrance results from simple lack of ‘attention’ on the part of those praying, or from actual divine judgment for disobedience (cf. v 12: God’s ears are open to the righteous but not to evildoers) is not specified.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 170-71.]

³¹ἐγκόπτω (ἐν + κόπτω) 1 aor. ἐνέκοψα; impf. pass. ἐνεκοπτόμην (Hippocr. et al., ins, pap; Jos., Bell. 1, 629; 6, 111; Just., D. 45, 1 τοῖς λόγοις ‘interrupt’ and thus hinder the progress of a discussion; Ath. 26, 1 [cause wounds]) **to make progress slow or difficult, hinder, thwart** (so Hesych.: ἐμποδίζω, διακωλύω; Polyb. 23, 1, 12; M. Ant. 11, 1, 2; PAlex, 4, 3 [=Witkowski 33, 1, III B.C.; and Sb 4305]; PMichZen 56, 6 [III B.C.]) in NT w. the acc. (B-D-F §152, 4) τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν; foll. by inf. w. μὴ as neg. (B-D-F §429; Rob. 1094) *who hindered you? Gal 5:7*; cp. **1 Th 2:18**. εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐγκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν *in order that your prayers may not be hindered 1 Pt 3:7*. ἐνεκοπτόμην τὰ πολλά w. gen. of the inf. foll. (B-D-F §400, 4) *I have so often been prevented Ro 15:22*.—ἵνα μὴ ἐπὶ πλεῖόν σε ἐγκόπτω **Ac 24:4** is understood by Syr. and Armen. versions to mean *in order not to weary you any further*; cp. ἐγκοπος weary Diog. L. 4, 50; LXX; and ἐγκοπον ποιεῖν to weary Job 19:2; Is 43:23. But impose on is also prob.; detain NRSV—B. 1355. DELG s.v. κόπτω. M-M s.v. ἐκκόπτω. TW.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 274.]