

“THE CONSIDERATION OF GODLY MEN” Part 2

HOLINESS

1 Peter 3:17

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Bruce: Let’s have a moment of prayer. Don , would you set the tone for us, and then we’ll get started. (*Music.*)

Hallelujah! Thine the glory! Revive us again. Father, we just pray that Your Holy Spirit would be among us, to revive our country, to bring us back to a saving grace knowledge of You. And may it be done for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Well, brothers, I want to thank those who came to the breakfast on Friday, to be there to support me, and I appreciate it very much. When I saw the number of Brave Men who were there, it gave me a great deal of confidence that we were doing something together. You know, ministry is never just one way; it’s never just one person. It’s always a group of people, the body of Christ functioning itself. So I want to thank you for coming.

Ted asked me a question about if there were any responses. They were numerous.

I’ll have to be honest. I had not accepted the invitation to speak at that breakfast for about the past five or six years, because it has always been so watered down and lukewarm. There have always been sort of the restrictions, that you’ve got to realize that you’re going to have nonbelievers there. You’re going to have Jewish people. You’re going to have people who have no interest in Christ, so you’ve got to be very, very sensitive to the whole group. I understood that, and that’s fine, but it’s not my strength. It’s not my forte.

So this was sort of my last year. You know, I’ll be retiring from PNC in June, and so I just kind of said that this will be my swan song. And so I said, “I’ll do it this year. But you can’t put any restrictions on me.”

And Lisa said, “No, you’ve got complete freedom to do what you want.”

Men: Oh! Nice!

Bruce: And so I appreciate it very much. And thank you for your support, brothers. It was great comfort to see so many of you there.

Our responsibility, men, is just to proclaim truth.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You know, He achieves the results that He wants. It’s not up to us to manipulate people. We don’t need to do that. You can just speak honestly from the heart. Speak the truth with grace and truth, and the Holy Spirit will do what He wants to do.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And so, I just rejoice in what the Lord is going to do. With other responses I’ve heard, other people have asked from PNC said, “When is your Bible study? Can we come to the Bible study?”, and other things like that. You just never know what the Lord is going to do.

Participant: Amen.

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Bruce: But I do appreciate your support and being there with me, because it gave me great confidence to realize this, that we were doing something that day, not just me. It was us, and I’m grateful for that.

I asked Don to play that song, “Revive Us Again,” because I just have a great concern for what’s going on in our country. When you look at the violence again in St. Louis and that area, the two policemen that were shot, and justifying it because they’re frustrated, and therefore I can pull out a gun and shoot someone.

I’m no prophet, brothers, I’m no prophet. So this is just my own personal observation. If you nail me to the wall, I think the Holy Spirit has vacated America, because one of His ministries, in addition to guiding us into all truth, is to restrain the evil in the world. I don’t see evil being restrained in America. I just don’t see that. We’ve removed Him from public schools in prayer. You can’t pray. We’ve removed Him from public buildings. You can’t have Him; we’ve removed Him from activities,—prayer before events, and things like that. It’s just like we are getting what we wanted. We’re getting what we deserve. We’re removing the Holy Spirit.

Now I’m no prophet, so don’t nail me to the wall. But it just seems to me that I do not see the restraining work of the Holy Spirit in the United States. And that concerns me greatly, because it really says that the failure is in the church. The real failure is that the church is not proclaiming the truth about Christ and Him crucified.

And so that was why I took the approach I did on Friday. It was just to say that this might be my last shot for the city. If that’s the case, I want to go out with blazing guns and sensitivity, to speak with grace and truth. So I trust that there was much grace in what I said, in the truth of what I said. That’s what makes it palatable to people. We speak with grace and truth, not just truth alone.

My brothers, our role really, as the Brave Men, is that, when you can, just speak truth in love. Let the Holy Spirit do His job, because it’s His role to bring us—. Yes, Don?

Don: Bruce, when you say that the Holy Spirit has vacated America, I wonder if maybe you could elaborate on that a little bit, only because I don’t see in the word of God that He has ever had His seal of approval, if you will, or special affection, for any country in particular. It’s the church, Israel in the Old Testament—you know, the Old Testament church,. And the New Testament church. We’ve had material blessings, obviously, but I don’t know. How has He vacated America any more than He has vacated Russia, or China, or any other place?

Bruce: That’s a great point, Don. Thank you for clarifying that. What I mean by that is that He has vacated the church in America. I just don’t see the power of the church in America much anymore. And so my concern is, what are our churches offering?

Now, you’re right. I don’t see in the Scripture any particular affection that God has for the United States. Certainly we’ve been blessed. But at the same time, my concern is for the church, and that is why I had Don play that hymn, “Revive Us Again,” because revival must occur inside the church.

Participants: Amen. Yes.

Bruce: Because revival implies this, that there is already life. There is life not outside the church, but life is inside the church. So where is revival going to happen? It’s not

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going to happen in a mass evangelism event. It’s going to happen inside the local body of Christ.

And so, all I’m saying, brothers, is that we need to take seriously what we’re doing in our own churches. We need to take very seriously what we’re preaching and teaching in our own churches, because it’s my conviction that if the Holy Spirit removes himself from the church in America, then America is going to suffer greatly because of the lack of power in the church. Yes, sir?

Participant: Why do you think that the church in America has changed?

Bruce: Because we have a very man-centered gospel, a gospel that is about man, rather than about God. We’ve bought into it.

Let me tell you how Satan works. If you look at Genesis chapter two, God spoke to Adam and said, (*paraphrase*), “Don’t eat of the fruit of the tree in the garden.” Look at Genesis chapter two and Genesis chapter three. What did Satan come along and do? He did four things.

First of all, he planted a doubt in their minds by asking the question that says this. “Did God say?” That’s planting a doubt.

The second thing he did was that he planted their response, which was distortion. Eve came back and said that this is what God said, but that’s not what God said. There was a distortion of what He said, because a doubt had been planted.

How often do you hear doubts in people’s minds? “That’s not fair! The God that I worship would not do that.” That’s a doubt.

And then the next thing happens. That is distortion. They began to create a god in their own human imagination.

The third stage you see in the Fall is this. Doubt, distortion, denial. Then Satan came back and said that God didn’t say. He refuted exactly what God did say. So the stages are doubt, distortion, and denial. And the result is death.

Now that’s what we have—deception in the church. Satan’s great ploy is deception and accusation, right? Revelation 12:9-10, deception and accusation.

My concern is that we’ve been deceived into thinking that we need to preach a man-centered gospel, a gospel that is about me and about my well-being, as opposed to God and His glory. I think the real issue is that we have a man-centered gospel, and that we’ve been deceived into believing that. That’s my quick observation.

Participant: Could you please tell us what the Biblical gospel is? Please, just in regards to when you say the gospel, would you please share with us briefly what the Biblical gospel of Jesus Christ is?

Bruce: The gospel contains about six different things. First of all, the holiness of God, then the sinfulness of man. You start with the holiness of God, then the sinfulness of man. Then you talk about the Person and work of Christ, His sinless perfection and perfect obedience, and then repentance and faith. So if you’re looking for a quick synopsis, content wise, it’s the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the Person and the work of Christ, and repentance and faith.

Participant: Thank you.

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Bruce: That would be my summary of the Biblical gospel, as opposed to “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Where does that start? It starts with me and my need. The gospel is not about me and my need. It’s about God and His glory.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That’s where it starts. And we’ve reversed that. Yes, please?

Participant: 2 Chronicles 7:14. “If My people.” What does that say? Who identify with God? “If My people ... will humble themselves, and turn from their wicked ways, and repent, I will hear from heaven, ... and heal their land.”

Bruce: Amen. Let me take you to 2 Corinthians chapter three. I believe we were there. The gospel, really, is about the glory of God in the face of Christ. That’s a summary statement. The gospel is about the glory of God in the face of Christ. You preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and you’re glorifying God. That’s essentially what it is: the glory of God in the face of Christ. That’s why our message is Christ and Him crucified. That’s the simplicity of what the gospel is really about. And what we’ve bought into is a false version of that, because we’ve made ourselves the center of it.

Brothers, I’m just concerned for the church, and all I’m saying is that one of the things we need to pray about is what’s going on in our local churches. Pray for your leaders. Pray for your pastors. Pray that we have the right pastors in the right pulpits preaching the right things, because my concern is that our nation is really moving in a different direction, and the church needs to play a role in being revived again. Revival starts inside of our churches, inside the body of Christ.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And may it be so, for Jesus’ sake. Well, thanks for my little soapbox. I’ve just been under conviction of that, and I wanted to share that with you, so we can join together in praying for the church.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Pray for the church.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes?

Participant: How much does the condition of the church have to do with the fact that we’re living in such a prosperous time?

Participant: Oh, yes.

Participant: And our sensitivities have been blunted, and it’s just easier to relax and to be entertained, and to be full of material abundance.

Bruce: I think that another way of looking at it is that we’ve become complacent, rather than convicted. The contrast is complacency versus conviction. And in our country, our churches have become complacent, and no longer have the conviction of what we need to be about. So, in summary, Ted, that’s what I would say. Complacency is the result of our opulence and our wealth. Don?

Don: Well, yesterday, we had “Good Morning, America,” or one of those shows on, and they were talking about this church, and it’s a trend now where the church had a gymnasium, and people were concerned about losing weight and everything. Well, you know, losing weight is a good thing. You know, the Bible says that physical exercise

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profits a little. But they went on and non about how great this was, and I was thinking, “Well, so what? You know, the world would applaud something like that, the church becoming more like the world, and concerned about worldly things, like losing weight, or whatever. And meanwhile, spiritually, in many cases, churches are dead.

Bruce: An amen to that. I think that, when the church, the local church and the church visible, the body of Christ, when it loses it’s distinctiveness in the world, it no longer becomes Christian.

Participant: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: It just becomes some sort of a program. My concern is the loss of distinctiveness in our churches, compared to the system of the world, and that’s exactly what you’ve just highlighted. I think the difference is that, because we’ve become so complacent, we’ve lost our conviction.

Now again, that doesn’t mean that we’re Bible bashers. All it does mean is that we preach both grace and truth, truth with grace. Yes, sir?

Participant: Bruce, I think it was at least twenty years ago. It was in a study back with Stanley. I ran across a book, and it was about the study of evangelism, and what’s going on and inside churches. That’s what this book was about. It had a pretty big impact on me at the time, and I spent a lot of time just running over and over that. But my point is that I’m concerned, for me and for others. I go to school to learn how to be a welder. I go to be a welder, and then I take it for granted, and you know, that’s just with the evangelism—us, as a church. How would we proceed as people who are just working, works related. It’s just like we’re working a lot of times. It’s a job. It’s not a job. You know, it’s hard to see some of the compassion. It’s there. It should be there. It’s put there. There’s nothing wrong with hiding the compassion that you’ve been giving. But oftentimes, we don’t want to see that, and we’re uncomfortable with that.

Bruce: Yes, right.

Participant: So we get back to where it’s just work.

Bruce: Yes. Church is not about work. It’s about grace. What a privilege we have! Do you really think God needs us?

Participant: Absolutely not.

Bruce: Absolutely not. It’s a privilege for us to be involved in ministry. Take a look at 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 1, I believe. Let me see if I’ve got that right. No, look at chapter 4, verse 1. 2 Corinthians 4:1. “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.”

Do you realize, brothers, that ministry is not the result of human achievement. It’s the result of divine mercy.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Look at that verse again. “Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God.” Whatever ministry you and I have is a function of His mercy, not our achievement. It’s not based upon our giftedness, our skill set, or our anything else. It’s based upon the fact that God, in His absolute sovereign mercy, says, in effect, “I’m going to let you participate in what I’m doing. Join Me in what I’m doing, and it will be blessed.”

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Often, what do we do? We create something and say, “Lord, bless it.” And then we wonder why nothing happens, as opposed to saying, “Lord, what are You doing around me? I’m going to join that today, because I know it will be blessed, because You initiated it.” But you see, mercy is the reason that you and I are involved in ministry. Ministry is not the result of human achievement, but the consequence of divine mercy. We just ought to be very, very grateful to God, who permits us to be a part of what He’s doing.

Before I get into our lesson today, men, I would just like to take a few minutes, if you don’t mind, and let’s just silently, or verbally pray, and I’ll ask Ted to close us in a minute. Let’s just pray for the church in America. Could we do that? However the Lord is pleased to use you to do that, perhaps He’s igniting us to create some revival in our own flocks. And so let’s just pray for our own churches, and then Ted, in a moment, would you close us, please?

Father, we come together, as Brave Men, beseeching that you would revive us again in the local church, for Your glory. Help us be distinctive from the system of this world, to cause the face of Christ to be shown and glorified among our people.

Participant: Father God, forgive me, for I am a man of unclean lips, among a people of unclean lips. Thank You for all the good gifts that You have blessed me, and my family, and this country with. Thank You for freedom, and for prosperity. Thank You for all these good things. We have turned Your good gifts into idols, and I ask Your forgiveness for it, for the idols of our hearts. Lord, please convict us, and give us repentance. Repentance is a gift from You.

Participant: Amen.

Participant: Thank You for Your Holy Spirit.

Participant: Our Father, Lord, I’m reminded of the words of Your apostles who said that soon, after the beginning of Your church, the New Testament form of Your church, that savage wolves would come in from among the flock. And Father, we’ve seen this over and over again in the history of Your church. Lord, unfortunately, in our country, Lord, so many churches have swallowed the ideas of liberalism, where now the inerrancy of Your word is doubted and denied, even in so-called evangelical churches. Lord, we just pray that, though we deserve Your turning Your back upon us, as a corporate church, Lord, that we3 plead for Your mercy. We plead, heavenly Father, that You would revive us, that You would revive the churches in this country again, heavenly Father, to stand up for Your word. Instead of a man-centered gospel, and entertainment, and all that kind of thing, Father, may more and more churches preach Your word, and have the fire of that word spread, that we may be, as a church of Yours, a light and salt, a beacon. And Father, for those of us, many of us who do attend churches that really do take Your word seriously, Father, help us never to take that for granted, but to pray, Father, with watchfulness for our pastors, for our elders and deacons and bishops, and whoever are there, Lord, that we may not fall to the wiles of the evil one. In Jesus’ name we pray.

Participant: Amen.

Participant: Dear Lord, we pray that our identity may be found in You, and that we may be, and understand what it means to be a faithful bride. Help us, dear Lord, to honor

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You individually, and as a corporate body of believers. Help us to understand that it’s not what we achieve, but what we receive of You. And we pray that Your will be done in us.

Ted: “The LORD sits enthroned forever. He has established His throne for justice. He judges the world with righteousness. He judges the people with uprightness. The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, and a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know Your name put their trust in You, for You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.” In Christ’s name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Amen. Thank you, brothers. Let’s open your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter three, continuing our study on the theme of Holiness that is given to us.

A pastor friend of mine made a powerful statement. I just heard it the other day. He was talking about the power of the Scriptures. In John 17, which is Christ’s high priestly prayer, which I refer to as the Lord’s Prayer,--this is His prayer,--He makes this statement. “You gave Me the words to speak. I spoke Your words.”

Now here’s how it works. God gave the word to Christ. Christ gave those words to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave those words to the apostles. The apostles gave them to us. Now, in the Scriptures, we have what? We have God’s word.

That’s what we need to take seriously. Look at that sequence again. God gave the words to Christ. Christ gave them to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gave it to the apostles. The apostles wrote it down, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and we have it right before us. That’s why we need to take so seriously that our foundation is the inerrant Scripture that God has given us. These are the words of God. And may God be pleased to initiate that into our hearts, and help us realize that the Holy Spirit is to be our Teacher, and He will guide us into all truth.

Let’s listen to this words in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7. “Likewise, brothers, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

Now brothers, if we don’t understand the role that Jesus has to the church, the husband or wife will never understand their role as a husband or a wife, because the model of those relationship between a husband and a wife is mirrored for us in the model of the relationship that Christ has with His church. And the degree to which you and I understand His relationship to the church will be the degree to which you and I understand our responsibilities.

Now I’m going to make a statement that’s impossible to do, because I’m a failure at it all the time. Apart from the grace of God, who interrupts my humanity, and sometimes overrules my own sinfulness, here is a statement I want to make our marriage. You cannot let somebody else’s conduct determine what you do. You cannot let somebody else’s treatment of you, or conduct, determine what you and I do.

Now apart from the grace of God, that’s impossible. That is contrary to human nature. It’s contrary to our psychological makeup, because we think that we have a right to respond to how somebody treats us. But if you understand the Scripture, you’re going to understand this. You and I cannot let the treatment that somebody else gives us

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determine how we treat them. That’s where we put Christ’s life on display, and that’s where we have a distinctiveness from the rest of humanity.

Now, the reason that I’ve not taught you the first several verses of chapter three, dealing with the wife, is because you and I don’t need to worry about what they *don’t* do. You and I need to worry about what we *do* do. We don’t need to worry about what they’re *not* doing. We need to understand what we should be doing.

So don’t let your wife’s conduct, or treatment of you, determine what you and I do. Now that’s impossible to do apart from the grace of God.

This is what Peter tells us, and remember, this is what he says. “Likewise.” It means that he’s talking about submission.

The whole context of these last couple of chapters, two, three and four, where we are right now, deal with two themes. The theme of persecution. It’s in the midst of persecution that he teaches us to be submissive—submissive as citizens, submissive as husbands, submissive as wives, submissive as people who are church members, submissive as employees and employers.

He’s talking about submission in the midst of persecution. And now he’s talking about relationships between husband and wife in the context of an environment of persecution and submission.

And so, when he uses the word “likewise,” in effect he is saying, “Men, you need to likewise have the same understanding of what submission is,’ just like he taught us that the wives are to be submissive to us as the head of the family. Likewise, we are to exhibit that same submissiveness and reverse it back to our wives in the way that we treat them. And we cannot worry about what our wives *don’t* do. We need to worry about what we should be doing.

And this is what Peter tells us we should be doing. “Live with your wives in an understanding way.” And what does that mean?

The word *understanding* means to be considerate. In other words, it means to live your life with your wife according to knowledge. Understanding is based upon knowledge. You live with your wife according to knowledge.

What is the knowledge that we need to understand? It’s the knowledge which means God’s design of the woman and her role, and God’s design for the man. That’s why we spent some time a couple weeks ago in the Genesis account.

Basically it’s this. The Genesis account creation ordinance is this, that man is the head and woman is the helper.

Now we need to understand what that means. Man is the head and woman is the helper. It doesn’t mean that you and I are chauvinistic dictators. It means we are loving servants, as Peter would describe us. And he’s saying that you need to live with your wife according to the understanding of knowledge about God’s design.

And so that is what Peter is beginning to tell us, that we first of all live with an understanding way, according to knowledge.

“Live with your wives.” The word *live* is the word “abide.” It means to pitch your tent with and feel at home. You and I need to pitch our tent and feel at home with our

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wives. Live with your wives; abide with them. Feel at home with your wife. Literally, the word means “to inhabit at one’s household.”

Now that means you’ve got to think that way. Now I have to admit, guys, that I fail at this all the time. The reason I’m so convicted about it is because I see my failures in my own relationship.

But you’ve got to understand that we need to live with our wives in an understanding way, based on the ordinance of God, in the creation ordinance of the headship/helper relationship, that I need to pitch my tent and feel at home with her. Now that means that there is a lot of responsibility, and I have to worry more about what *I* need to be doing, and quit worrying about what she’s *not* doing. And so we live according to knowledge.

View your wife as your home. Now, do you really view your wife as your home?

A friend of mine I worked with with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes retired early. I went down to see him a couple of months ago in Kansas City, and I said, “Randy, why did you retire so quickly?”

And this is what he said. “I just wanted to spend time with my wife.”

Now that really hit me in the head, you know. Can I really say that? Is my wife really my home? Do I want to retire just to be with her? Or do I want to retire so I can do other things, have more things to do? You see, the system of this world is so contrary to that thought. But basically, what Peter is saying is that you need to live with your wife in an understanding way. And that understanding is based on the knowledge of the Scriptural, Biblical design. And so part of that means that we need to feel at home with our wives. Pitch your tent and feel at home with her.

Give everything of yourself in four areas: physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. Give her everything of yourself, your mind and emotions, in these four areas—physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

Now the word “*consideration*” is found in the NIV. It means a reason to gain insight by study.

In other words, how many of you take golf lessons? How many of you have taken flying lessons? How many of you have gone out and taken financial management lessons? How many of you have gone out and taken a lesson on your wife?

Participant: Actually, I have. (*Laughter.*)

Bruce: That’s what he’s basically saying. You and AI will go out and spend time studying other things, so we can do things. Peter is saying to study your wife, so you can be something. It’s not so you can *do* something; it’s so you can *be* something, so you can be the head that God has designed. That would be the loving servant who will love and lead, and who she will respect and follow. So it means that you and I need to make our wives the object of our study. Make her the object of your study.

Now that’s not easy, and sometimes it’s boring. And sometimes it’s difficult.

Now what Peter is saying is that, if you’re going to live with your wife according to knowledge, in an understanding way, that you need to make her the object of your study so you know how to live with her. That’s a lifelong process, brothers. It’s not something you just do overnight. It’s not a weekend retreat. It’s something you do the rest of your life. You’re always asking yourself, “What can I learn about her, so that I can lead her

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properly?” Because the whole issue is, am I giving her correct leadership, as the design that God has given me as the head of the family? So we make her the object of study. “Take a course in your wife,” Peter is saying. Take a course in your wife. Become a student of your wife. Know what triggers her responses in four areas—intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually. What are her triggers? What flips the switch? We need to study to gain insight into her needs, then determine what we need to do. Make the wife the object of your study.

Peter also says, “Live with your wives in an understanding way.” Then he says to do this. Treat her with respect. Give her honor. How do we give her honor? Respect is showing the worth or the value of someone’s possessions or personhood. We show them respect and honor. The word *treat* means to assign to yourself. Assign to yourself the idea of giving her honor.

How can you do that? You treat yourself to give her honor and respect—honor, esteem, value, worth, to cause her to be encouraged, enjoyment of her values.

What is it that makes a good Christian marriage? It’s two Christian people focusing on God, not themselves. You see, the real benefit of a Christian marriage is this. You and I need to cause her to enjoy her enjoyment. Cause her to enjoy her relationship with Christ. We want to find out what the things are that will enhance that, and cause her to enjoy her relationship with Christ. Those are the things that we need to do.

How do I do that? I can’t tell you how to do it. All I’m saying is that this is what we need to do, and that’s how we need to think. We need to think that way, to cause her to enjoy her enjoyment of being equal with us in Christ, because it’s not talking about her personhood. There is equality in personhood, but distinctiveness of position. This is a positional difference, not a personal value difference. It’s to show her respect and honor.

I remember when I was raising my stepdaughter. She was dating. I said a couple things.

I said, “Now, Amy, if somebody wants to take you out, that’s fine. But they’ve got to come and talk to me first.”

“Well, Dad, nobody will ever come to see me.”

“I guess you’ll be dateless then, won’t you?” (*Laughter.*)

But I said, “You know, they’ve got to show enough respect of you, to come and talk to me about how they’re going to treat you, and I just want to make sure, because that’s part of my protection of you. So just have them come. I’m not going to bite their heads off. I’m just going to say, “What do you plan to do,” and we’ll have a nice conversation.”

So after a while, she began to do that. The first time she went out, we went to a movie. I said, “Amy, sit in the car until he comes and opens the door.”

She said, “Dad, I’ll never get to the movie.” (*Laughter.*)

I said, “That’s probably true.”

So, on her very first date, she went out. The guy got out of the car, went up to buy the tickets, and Amy is sitting there in the car. (*Laughter.*) Then she looks around. “Well, I guess I’d better open the car door.” (*Laughter.*)

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Honor. Respect. I said, “Amy, teach the man how to respect you by putting him into a position where he’ll have to respect you. I want him to fall into respect for you.”

You see, why is it that a woman loves a man? It’s because she respects him. A woman’s respect is the cause of her love for a man. What we need to do when we date our wives, as we continue to do that, is to have them fall into respect for us, because when they fall into respect for us, they’re going to love us. And that’s how we begin to develop the relationship that Christ has with His church. If we don’t understand Christ’s relationship to the church, we’ll never understand our responsibilities as husbands.

So Peter says, “Live with them in an understanding way,” and show them honor. Give them all the respect and dignity that you can. They are coequals with us as heirs of grace, Peter tells us. So show them honor.

Make her life the primary object of her study, because she is a worthy subject. She is the most valuable possession you have, next to Christ, in this world. She is your most valued possession.

Now I know that’s hard to understand. But part of marriage is refining our sinfulness. And God uses the spouse as the primary means to do that. It will be the wife who will be the one who will sharpen your spirit and your character because of the relationship you have. So we need to live with them in an understanding way, and treat them with honor.

Now I’m not saying this is easy, brothers. I mean, I fail at it myself, and I do it every day. But these are the things that we need to think about. And the point is this. Don’t let what she’s *not* doing determine what we *ought* to do. Let’s take responsibility for ourselves.

Participant: So you’re saying that the wife comes before the children.

Bruce: Yes. A marriage is made up of a husband and a wife, not kids. Kids don’t make a family. Kids expand a family, but they don’t make a family. You have a family when you have a husband and a wife. If God is pleased to give you children, then He’s just expanding the family that already exists.

A lot of times, people say, “Well, I want to create a family and have children.” You already have a family if you’re married. If God is pleased to give you children, to raise a holy group of people, that’s because He expands that family that already exists.

One of the greatest things we need to do as husbands, if we have daughters, is to let our daughters see how they should be treated by the way that we treat our wives. Give them a picture of honor. When we treat our wives that way, hopefully I gave Amy a picture of how her husband is to treat her. And he does a very good job of that. So I’ve had some conversations with him about how he respects her and treats her.

And he basically said, “I just look at the way that you treat your wife. That’s how I know I need to treat my wife.” That’s the role we can have as a model as a husband for our girls to see that.

Recognize her femininity. Peter says to recognize her as the weaker vessel. Now that term “weaker vessel” does not mean positionally. She’s not weaker positionally. She’s weaker physically, or weaker as in a different position of authority.

Remember, the context of this passage is in two things. It’s in the context of persecution, and in the context of submission. When Peter says that she is “the weaker

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vessel,” we have to recognize that weaker vessel. Men who think that women are inferior don’t understand God’s word. We’re not talking about inferior position. We’re talking about physical capabilities, and the inferior position of authority. She’s in a different position of authority. It’s very difficult for somebody to be in a helper position when the authority position is abusive, emotionally or otherwise.

We need to recognize two things about the weaker vessel concept. Physically, she just cannot do some of the things that men can do, and that’s okay. And secondly, positionally, she is in a weaker position authority wise, because the head of the family is the man, not the woman. And so you need to understand her weaker position authority wise. She may want to take charge, and you’ve got to realize that’s a position that’s not given to her. It has been given to us. So recognize that this is not talking about her value as a person. It’s talking about her physical abilities, or her position as her authority in the family. That dictates how we begin to treat them, with honor and respect, living with understanding.

“Weaker vessel” does not mean inferior positionally, or intellectually, morally or spiritually. It means that it deals with two things—in comparison to men physically, and in the weaker position with respect to authority.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: Does it also speak to that she was more prone to deception, as far as—

Bruce: You’ve got to be careful about that. You’ve got to be careful not to make that assumption. The best I can understand, (and Bishop Rodgers, you can help me if I need some help), but I understand that the “weaker vessel” concept has to do with two things. Physically, she just cannot do certain things that men can do, and that’s okay. Secondly, she has an inferior position of authority. She’s in a helper position of authority, not the headship position of authority. It’s a weaker position, not a weaker person.

So don’t take that to the next level, and say other things, and make conjectures about that. Just leave it with those two things. You’ve got to be careful about that. Yes, Bill?

Bill: It’s hard to see it sometimes, but the second position, being under authority, we know from Genesis the curse, that she doesn’t want to be under authority.

Bruce: That’s right.

Bill: She wants to be the head of the house.

Bruce: Yes, we talked about that.

Bill: When we see that, it’s hard for us.

Bruce: That/’s exactly right.

Bill: But we have our own sin to deal with.

Bruce: Absolutely. We need to understand this. We may be in the position of authority, but she’s in the position of influence. The person who is in the second position has the influence position. Women are far more influential in the family than we are. We are the head of the family, but she is in the position of influence because of the helper mentality, the helper position that she has. Recognize that, and respond to that positively, and give her the correct leadership that we need to give.

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It means that, in comparison to men, she is more delicate, and in a more deliberate, delicate position of authority, being the helper. That’s the way that she was positioned by God. We need to understand that.

Put her in a position to want to help you, so that she can fulfill her godly design.

These are difficult things to do. That’s what I’m saying. We cannot let what they are not doing determine what you and I do. Recognize that she is more delicate physically, and in a more subordinate position structurally. And don’t abuse it by our strength or our position.

So Peter summarizes it with this. Notice. “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you.”

Now the important thing to realize is this, that she shares in the heirship of grace with you, equal positionally. That’s the critical issue. We need to respect her and do that. She is a child of God. She is a sister in Christ, and you need to treat her that way. Sometimes, we treat sisters in the church more compassionately than we do our own wives.

But she’s an heir with us. And notice this. “So your prayers will not be hindered.”

Now men, I’m not saying that I know how to do this. I’m not telling you what you should do. All I’m saying is this. Look at the Scripture. Don’t let what she is *not* doing determine what you and I do.

May you and I have the grace to fulfill our responsibilities, and be the heads of our families, so that we can demonstrate the distinctiveness of our relationships in Christ that the world doesn’t see. One of the greatest evidences that the church is failing is that they look at our families. Men, it’s time that you and I step to the plate, and live with our wives in an understanding way, in showing honor, and holding them in high regard because of their position of equality with us as joint heirs. May it please God to help us in molding and reviving our families, to begin the revival in our church.

Let’s pray. Father, we’ve gone over this very quickly, because we’re all afraid to talk about it, because we just don’t know what to do. It’s really very unsettling to think that I need to make my wife the object of my study, when I would rather study the Scripture. I need to study her just as much as I do Your word. So Father, forgive us for our inability, to think that the world revolves around us and our needs, rather than us giving excellent leadership from a godly point of view. May it be pleasing to You, Father, that You would revive our families for the glory of God. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!”