

## Replanting Eden

### For Better or For Worse, Part 5

*1 Peter 3:7a*

### Discussion Guide

#### Main Idea:

The way to a successful marriage comes through the attempt to imitate the first couple before the Fall in the Garden of Eden where there was complete selflessness and God-centeredness.

#### Discussion Points:

Sin corrupts everything. Most of all, it distorts our view of God. Our sinful nature directs our worship inward putting ourselves on the throne above the One True God. Before the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden there was complete selflessness between the couple as they looked out for each other instead of trying to gratify their own desires. With the Fall, the priorities of Adam and Eve changed.

- How do you imagine the marriage between Adam and Eve would have looked before sin entered into the world?
- How would their relationship change as selfishness and became a part of who they were?
- What are the ramifications of Original Sin for us today in our relationships and marriages?
- How does a proper view of God change selfish attitudes in marriage?
- Can selfishness and sin be completely eradicated within a marriage?

1 Peter 3 starts with Peter giving instructions for wives about how they are to live with unbelieving husbands. In verse 7, Peter shifts the focus from the attitudes and actions of wives to the mindsets and leadership qualities of husbands. To start this section, Peter uses the word “likewise” to compare what he had just taught about the role of women to how he is about to direct the men.

- How are husbands and wives similar to each other?
- What character traits should be common between men and women within a marriage relationship?
- How should men and women both display the character of Christ in a marriage?

## **Discussion Guide cont.**

- Do they imitate Christ in all of the same ways?

Peter is specifically addressing married believers in this chapter.

- Can unmarried men and women learn from this passage about their roles?  
How can they apply Peter's teaching to their lives as unmarried individuals?

Peter says the first thing in verse 7 that godly husbands need to do is "live with [their] wives in an understanding way."

- Why is it significant that Peter is talking about a husband understanding his own wife and not understanding all women in general?
- What does it take to understand another person?
- How can a husband take the initiative to understand and care for his wife?
- How can a wife help her husband to understand her and care for her?

Instead of being thoughtless, husbands need to be polite. Instead of being abusive, husbands need to be affirming. Blame-shifting and selfishness came right after the Fall in Genesis 3. Adam showed a lack of love for his wife when he realized his failures would have grave consequences. Christ-like husbands should act differently than Adam did after the Fall. Look at Genesis 3:1-12.

- What impact would Adam's blaming Eve for his failures have on his wife?
- In what ways can we be polite and affirming unlike Adam?
- Can a husband lead well if he is not polite or affirming to his wife?

### **Gospel Connection:**

In the beginning, God created everything and he called it "good." Even as he created man and woman, God called them good. They were living in the perfect Garden of Eden lacking no good thing when they decided to remove God from his rightful throne and to gratify themselves outside of him. Sin thus came into the world and selfishness has reigned ever since. Christians are called, however, to reject the desires of the sinful nature and to consider others as more important than themselves. The model of this great, boundless humility is Jesus, as he came to die for the sins of a corrupt and hostile world without being dissuaded by the physical and spiritual pain, but counting the cost as more than worth the price to show his love for us and bring us redemption and fellowship with him which we could have no other way.

## **Discussion Guide cont.**

### **Practical Implications:**

- Think:** In what areas of your life are you displaying selfishness? What impact does that selfishness have on your relationships with others? What impact does it have on your witness for Christ?
- Pray:** Thank God for showing you what it means to be selfless. Thank him for Jesus displaying to us what true love is. Ask him to help you follow Jesus' example of this kind of love.
- Do:** Read more about Christ's selflessness. Show that type of sacrificial love to others.

# Replanting Eden

## For Better or For Worse, Part 5

*I Peter 3:7a*

If I'm not sure how long the tired old joke has traveled around that marriage is a fine institution, if you are willing to be put in an institution.

Sadly, people are often in agreement with that derogatory view of marriage. In fact, we are living in a western world that now, according to recent polling, finds a large majority with the view that marriage is an outdated institution.<sup>i</sup>

In our generation, we have reached the milestone where more couples are living together than marrying.

Frankly, our self-absorbed, self-promoting, self-serving world finds it difficult to surrender to the foundational principles within marriage – first and foremost – self-denial.

Which is why marriage happens to be the most sanctifying relationship on the planet – or it can be – simply because it calls for men and women to die to self. And especially men.

The Apostle Paul described marriage to men in these kinds of terms – he wrote, ***love your wife like you love your own body; love your wife like you love yourself (Ephesians 5:28 paraphrased)***.

He also gives the ultimate command when he tells husbands to ***love their wives like Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25)*** and if you are wondering what that might mean, Paul spells it out by adding, ***who gave Himself up for her***.

The ultimate act of self-denying love is Christ literally dying so that He can redeem sinners whom He calls His bride.

That kind of sacrifice isn't a partial sacrifice; you don't almost slightly die for someone. You don't die 60% and remain alive 40%. If you die, you are dead. That's profound, isn't it?

According to the Bible, marital love is tantamount to dying

- to self-desire
- to self-ambition
- to self-preservation
- to self-promotion
- to self-will
- to self-absorbing, self-satisfying lifestyle.

A good marriage is a marriage that is constantly putting self to death; there is just no more room for yourself.

Which means then that a successful marriage isn't finding the right person, it's *becoming* the right person.

Lenski, the Greek Scholar, made this thought provoking statement about marriage returning to God's original design when he wrote nearly 100 years ago, "Cure selfishness and you replant the Garden of Eden."<sup>ii</sup>

*Cure selfishness and you replant the Garden of Eden.*

And I'm sure you know what he meant. This is why marriage happens to be the greatest demonstration of the love of Christ – and the gospel – on the planet.

If you'll turn back to his ***first letter and chapter 3***, the Apostle Peter has been describing this gospel-delivering, Christ-exalting marital relationship.

He began with the wives in ***verse 1*** ranking under their husband's leadership in voluntary submission. In our study we explained how this does not undermine her personal worth; it actually expresses it.

She now has this unique opportunity to model Jesus Christ who voluntarily submitted to the will of His Father in the plan of redemption. Jesus was, and is, co-eternal and co-equal in

essence with the Father – equally divine – yet willingly submissive to the will of His Father.<sup>iii</sup>

So a submissive wife, although equally human and equally valuable and co-equal in her standing in the gospel, models the heart and attitude of Christ in her submission.

And the husband likewise has a unique opportunity to model Jesus Christ by giving his life in sacrificial love to win and keep and provide for and care for his bride.

So in a good marriage, both the husband and the wife are modeling different aspects of what we see in the life of our Lord.

Now having spent 6 verses on wives, Peter now delivers only 1 verse to husbands.

And this isn't because women need more help than men. It is probably because of the simple fact that women love information and men don't read the directions . . . there is only so much we can handle.

Actually, as you are going to observe with me over these next few weeks, this one verse for husbands is as loaded as the previous 6 verses for wives.

In fact, you can easily see four different points that contain volumes of meaning that are convicting and transforming and encouraging.

Let me show you – ***1 Peter 3 and verse 7: You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way*** – point #1: this is a divine command;

– ***as with someone weaker, since she is a woman*** – point #2: this is a creation distinctive;

– ***and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life*** – point #3: this is a prophetic incentive;

– ***so that your prayers will not be hindered*** – and point #4: this is a spiritual ultimatum.

Let's cover the first point today. At the beginning of ***verse 7, Likewise*** . . . that is, just as there are things for the wife to do and act and

live and obey, so also, ***likewise***, there are things for the husband to do and act and live and obey.

In other words, a good marriage is never a one-way street.

And Peter begins his comments to husbands with a command – here it is – ***live with your wives in an understanding way***.

Now ladies, if you thought it was impossible to submit to your husbands – how impossible is this command for men?

How many husbands in here can raise their hand and say, “I understand my wife”?

No hands? Does that mean this auditorium is filled with disobedient husbands or honest husbands? Probably honest.

Before we dive into the meaning of “understanding your wife”, don't skip too fast over this first expression – notice – ***Husbands . . . live with your wives***.

This isn't a reference to your address – “Live in the same neighborhood.” This isn't a reference to your address, it's a reference to your attitude.<sup>iv</sup>

This verbal form is found only here in the New Testament. And it implies much more than living under the same roof.

One author writes that this expression is the nearest equivalent in the Greek language to our English expression “making a home for.”<sup>v</sup>

This expression makes the distinction – as we would say it – in the difference between a house and a home.

Peter is essentially saying, “Husbands, make your house a home with your wife.”

And that's going to require much more than just bringing home the bacon. You are to bring home yourself.

*Live – dwell – commune – with your wife.*

I read recently the results of one survey that the average husband and wife talked to each other 37 minutes *per week*.<sup>vi</sup>

That's a housing arrangement, not a home. That's surviving marriage, not growing the garden of marriage.

It is possible for a marriage to go on for years like that – half an hour of conversation a week.

Sort of enduring an armed truce where, one author writes, competition replaces cooperation. Where unresolved conflict has worn away the fabric of the marriage and they are staying together for good reasons, but never the best reasons.<sup>vii</sup>

Many couples stay together for the sake of the children, which is commendable, but not biblical.

In one case I read about recently, an 89 year old wife and a 92 year old husband sought for a divorce. The astonished judge asked them, “Why, after all these years, do you now want a divorce?” They answered, “We wanted to wait until our children all died.”<sup>viii</sup>

In that marriage, decades earlier, the weeds of life took over and choked off the flowers of companionship and enjoyment . . . the kinds of things that blossom on the stems of commitment and humility and sacrificial love.

Beloved, a garden of flowers never happens by accident. I love driving back into the state of North Carolina after being in any number of states. I don’t know who is in charge of planning it – and I’m sure our taxes pay for it – but I couldn’t be happier, because it isn’t long before my wife and I notice at major interstate intersections and at off and on ramps along the interstate, there are beautiful gardens of flowers; sometimes it’s acres of wildflowers; sometimes it’s arrangements of flowers in a variety of colors.

We would never dream, as we drive past these colorful displays, that any of it happened by accident. It took timing, and then time, and expense, and sweat . . . and more sweat, to make it happen.

In the state of your marriage, the same is true – and husbands, you happen to be the chief gardener in your marriage.

You take the lead; replant the Garden of Eden.

Now notice as Peter writes, *Husbands . . . live with your wives in an understanding way.*

Your translation might read, live *with them according to knowledge.*

The word here refers to insight and a conscious sensitivity.<sup>ix</sup>

It combines the ideas of intelligence through observation and then consideration in action.<sup>x</sup>

This doesn’t happen in a moment; it will take a lifetime of study.

By the way, I find it interesting that the woman is never told to understand her husband. And probably, the fact remains, that women probably do. They are much more intuitive and observant. They pick up on everything; they are constantly watching and weighing data. Men just want know what’s for supper.

As one man wrote, “Women are satellite antennas, picking up signals and information from around the universe – men are cordless telephones and if they wander 200 feet away from home they lose the signal.”

That’s generally true – nevertheless, this command remains!

And men tend to let each other off the hook by joking, “You just can’t understand women! Man are they ever complicated; you just can’t figure them out.”

Has it ever occurred to you that the Bible never asked you to try and understand women? God is commanding you to try and understand *one* woman – your wife.

And that’s a life-long, self-denying, self-giving, gospel-demonstrating, Christ-modeling process.

And keep in mind, as one author pointed out in my study, this command isn’t necessarily talking about superficial understanding or knowledge – surface knowledge – like her favorite ice cream flavor or her favorite color. What Peter is talking about here is related to knowing her challenges and desires and needs and then acting on that knowledge by giving yourself to assisting and encouraging and guiding her through life.<sup>xi</sup>

This is where the husband operates in the home like a shepherd – you are shepherding her to her final home. You are attempting to carry the burdens of life rather than create them.

And by the way, Peter earlier did not tell the wives to respect and follow their husbands, to have a gracious and composed spirit *only if* their husbands are loving or *only if* they are followers of Christ. In fact, in this immediate context, women are commanded to do so in spite of the fact that their husbands are unbelievers, undeserving of the deepest kind of respect that a godly husband would engender.

And now, husbands, the same shoe fits here as well.

Peter is not suggesting that if your wife has a gracious spirit and respects and follows you, then you are to find ways to show intelligent and caring consideration toward her. No, we are commanded to observe their needs and move to fulfill them in spite of the fact that they treat us with disrespect and an ungracious spirit.<sup>xii</sup>

Marriage is not a quid-pro-quo arrangement – “if you scratch my back I’ll scratch your back” or “if you are good to me, I’ll be good to you” or “if you are loving and kind to me, then I’ll be loving and kind to you.”

Listen, it’s easy to love the loving. It’s easy to care for the caring. It’s easy to show grace to the gracious.

And that kind of marriage never moves forward because no one will step on the gas and take the initiative.

Men, step on the gas! How? “I mean, I don’t understand much about her at all!”

The command of Peter here implies that you act upon what you *do* understand and then continue to live with her and talk with her and walk with her through life and gain more understanding and then act upon that too.

That’s self-denying love – that is this first command in verse 7.

Remember what Lenski wrote – which I quoted earlier – “Cure selfishness and you replant the Garden of Eden.”

As we have done in these past weeks, let me offer some practical garden tools as you work in your own private Garden of Eden.

**First, don’t be thoughtless – plant seeds of politeness.**

In other words, don’t be rude, or unkind.

After a man attended a seminar on efficiency he decided he would help his wife make her life more efficient too. A few days later he was telling a co-worker who had also attended the seminar how it was going. He said, “One morning as I sat at the breakfast table watching my wife make breakfast, I realized that I had watched her do the same inefficient routine for years. She made lots of trips to the refrigerator, stove, table and cabinets, often carrying just a single item at a time. So I said, “Honey, why don’t you eliminate all that legwork by carrying more than one item at a time?” The guy’s friend asked, “Did it save time?” He said, “Yes it did; it used to take her 20 minutes to get breakfast ready – now I do it in 7.”

The Apostle Paul adds this note to husbands along this same line as he writes to the husbands in the church. He says, ***Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. (Colossians 3:19)***

The word for embittered carries the idea of being harsh or sharp-tongued.<sup>xiii</sup>

One author writes that Paul’s statement refers to a man who has arrived at an embittered state and all he can do is act out with impatience and thoughtlessness.<sup>xiv</sup>

This is a man who has become so filled with himself that he really doesn’t care anymore if his wife is hurt or happy; if she is crying or contented; he really doesn’t care.

And he sort of dares her to trouble him with her troubles!

In fact, a news article I came across some time ago – which was really comical on one hand but sad on the other – said a couple in Germany had been married for decades and now he was 72 years old and his wife was elderly as well. He had hooked up an air raid siren in his house to stun his wife into silence. CNN reported on this – so you know it has got to be true. The report said that whenever this man’s wife complained or tried to get on him about something, he cranked up the siren and let it rip for a few minutes. The police were finally called to tell him to take it down and he

reluctantly complied – but he told the police “it works every time.”

You might not have an air raid siren, but men, our unkind, impolite and inconsiderate actions will speak louder than words – or even air sirens.

There’s no excuse for a rude, discourteous, uncouth, demeanor for a man in public – much less a husband in private.

Men, this will not only hurt your marriage, it will undermine your ministry and the gospel you represent which is known as a gospel of grace.

Even Hudson Taylor, the missionary of 100 years ago in the land of China bemoaned this missing quality of politeness. He was known for his sensitivity toward the Chinese culture – in fact, early on in his ministry, he created a sensation when he died his hair black, put on the que – or the pigtail – and the gown and slippers of a traditional Chinese teacher. He would write later in life, “Rude Christians will seldom be out of hot water in China and although they are earnest and pious, they will not accomplish much. In nothing do we fail more, as a Mission, than in a lack of politeness.”<sup>xv</sup>

Husbands, plant seeds of politeness and pull out the weeds of thoughtlessness.

### **Secondly, don’t be abusive – plant seeds of affirmation.**

Abuse comes in many forms: emotional, verbal, and physical abuse.

It comes from the mouths and hands of men angry with their own inadequacies in life and their attempt to boost their own self-importance by bullying, pushing and demanding people in their lives to give way and make room at the top.<sup>xvi</sup>

And the wife is most often at the tip of this spear. I have read in data recently available that 1 out of every 6 adult women have experienced, or are currently experiencing some sort of verbal or physical abuse.

This kind of male domination has nothing to do with biblical headship. Male dominance of

this sort has nothing to do with God’s creation; it has everything to do with man’s corruption.

Biblical headship isn’t driving – it’s leading. It isn’t coercion or forced marches – it’s modeling humility and grace.

One British author writes on this text to remember that Jesus Christ – our perfect groomsman – does not coerce the church, His bride; he woos the church and loves her by laying His life down for her – He wins her heart and brings her to glad obedience. He isn’t harsh or manipulative but loving and gracious for the good of the church and the glory of His Father.<sup>xvii</sup>

Husbands, if you want to live with your wife with kind consideration, begin building verbal bridges instead of verbal walls.<sup>xviii</sup>

One author wrote with humor, “Men, try praising your wife, even if it frightens her at first.”<sup>xix</sup> What a shock!

Replace abusive words with affirming words – just try one affirming word a day, for starters.

Words like “*thank you.*” That expression requires humility because it reminds you that you needed something that your wife provided.

Affirming someone else prunes back pride and plants seeds of humility.

When is the last time you thanked your wife for anything. Start tonight with supper – even if you frighten her – she’ll wonder who is inhabiting your body.

“Thank you sweetheart for supper – it was delicious.” Maybe it wasn’t. “Thank you sweetheart for supper – it was . . . unforgettable.”

Say affirming words to your wife like, “I’m so glad God gave you to me.”

That’s the opposite of what Adam said in the Garden of Eden when he effectively complained, “Lord, look at this woman you gave me.” Imagine what that did to Eve?

Say words like, what I believe Adam said later on, “Will you forgive me?”

“Will you forgive me” – that is pride-killing language. Imagine an admission of wrong from the man of the house.



Those are man's ego-crushing, humility-planting words of grace and growth. Say that one often!

In his devotional commentary, one of our summer series speakers, Ray Pritchard, wrote about how it takes 8-10 positive comments to offset just one destructive comment. In other words, 8-10 kind words are needed to erase the effects of just one hurtful, unkind, unloving, careless word that was written on the tablet of someone's memory.

Invest in the garden of your own wife and family and home.

In fact, make up your mind when you come home to bring yourself with you. You have faced untold challenges; you have had a long day. Follow the advice Dennis Rainey's friend gave him one time Dennis was in this man's office. He noticed a simple 3"x5" card sitting on this man's desk that simply said, "Leave some for home."

In other words, save some energy and investment for home.

Obviously these principles apply not only for husbands but also for fathers.

"Leave some for home."

You've got a garden to grow at home. Your wife waits for the chief gardener to arrive and roll up his sleeves and plant some new seeds along the way.

I remembered some of the lyrics of a song that describes this kind of commitment from husbands who follow the counsel of 1 Peter 3 in choosing to continue learning how to deny themselves and to lay down their lives for their wife.

I looked up the song – it goes like this:

*Tomorrow morning if you wake up  
And the sun does not appear  
I will be here*

*If in the dark, we lose sight of love  
Hold my hand, and have no fear  
'Cause I will be here*

*I will be here  
When you feel like being quiet  
When you need to speak your mind  
I will listen*

*And I will be here  
When the laughter turns to cryin'  
Through the winning, losing and trying  
We'll be together  
I will be here*

*Tomorrow morning, if you wake up  
And the future is unclear  
I will be here*

*Just as sure as seasons were made for change  
Our lifetimes were made for these years  
So I will be here*

*I will be here  
And you can cry on my shoulder  
When the mirror tells us we're older  
I will hold you  
And I will be here  
To watch you grow in beauty  
And tell you all the things you are to me*

*I will be true to the promise I have made  
To you and to the One who gave you to me*

*Tomorrow morning, if you wake up  
And the sun does not appear  
I will be here<sup>xx</sup>*

In the context of 1 Peter, this is the kind of lifestyle that makes the world take note –

- there is something different about Christianity;
- there is something different about their relationship;
- there is something different about their marriage;
- there is definitely something different about the way that man treats his wife.

Man, I have got to find out what it is.

And we get to tell them who it is, that makes the difference; who it is that loves us with unfailing love – our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who will *always* be here.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 8/27/2017 by Stephen Davey.

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- i Adapted from Stuart Scott, The Exemplary Husband (Focus Publishing, 2002), p. 59
- ii R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of First and Second Corinthians (Augsburg Publishing, 1937), p. 557
- iii Daniel M. Doriani, 1 Peter (P & R Publishing, 2014), p. 119
- iv Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Hopeful: 1 Peter (David C Cook, 1982), p. 85
- v D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter (BMH Books, 1984), p. 205
- vi Ibid
- vii Dennis Rainey, Staying Close (Word Publishing, 1989), p. 23
- viii Ibid
- ix Fritz Rienecker/Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 757
- x Adapted from J. Allen Blair, Living Peacefully: 1 Peter (Kegel, 1959), p. 153
- xi Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter (Zondervan, 2010), p. 190
- xii Above principle adapted from R.C. Sproul, 1 Peter (Crossway, 2011), p. 95
- xiii Stuart Scott, p. 201
- xiv Ibid
- xv Alexander Strauch, Leading With Love (Lewis & Roth, 2006), p. 61
- xvi Adapted from Scot McKnight, The NIV Application Bible: 1 Peter (Zondervan, 1996), p. 193
- xvii Owen Strachan & Gavin Peacock, The Grand Design (Christian Focus Publishers, 2016), p. 98
- xviii Adapted from Wiersbe, p. 86
- xix Billy Sunday, quoted in <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/1998/august/5310.html>
- xx I Will Be Here (Steven Curtis Chapman)