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The Original Manual on Manhood

For Better or For Worse, Part 6

1 Peter 3:7b

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

Men and women were created differently, and although they were created with equal value and inherent worth, Peter reminds his readers that men and women have different roles to play. Specifically, in this part of the verse, Peter encourages men to treat women with gentleness and care and honor.

Discussion Points:

The concept of gender and sex has been under great discussion in our world today in an attempt to redefine the terms themselves. From the beginning, though, God made people male and female. These are not just terms for biology, but functions of personhood as a whole. In his act of creation, God tied together anatomy and identity and they were not to be separated.

- In what ways is God's original design for men and women under attack today within our culture?
- How can the church stand firm in the biblical teaching about the complimentary roles of men and women?
- Where in the Bible would you look to find instruction about what it means to be male and female?
- Where do the writing apostles like Peter and Paul turn to in the Bible to teach about the roles of men and women?
- Why is understanding Creation so important for understanding God's plan for men and women?

Peter exhorts men to show honor to their wives.

- What does it mean to show honor to someone?
- Why does Peter specifically address showing honor to your wife and not showing honor to everyone in general?

Discussion Guide cont.

The second part of 1 Peter 3:7 speaks of a difference between men and women. It should be remembered that this teaching of the woman as a “weaker vessel” is not disconnected to what is previously said.

- What does the first part of 1 Peter 3:7 say about a man’s treatment of his wife?
- How is this teaching related to a woman being a “weaker vessel”?

Peter in no way demeans women or says they are inferior to men, though his comment about women being the “weaker vessel” has led to many misinterpretations.

- Why is it important to know that Peter says “weaker” and not “weak”?
- How would you defend against the misinterpretation of this verse?
- How would you, from Scripture, explain that men and women are created with equal dignity and value?

Peter reminds the men in his audience about the distinctiveness between men and women. He reminds these men to treat women differently because they were created differently. As a leader, a man should fulfill his role by protecting, loving and caring for his wife. Treating your wife like a woman involves honoring her unlike anyone else. It means not treating her like your buddies and not even like other women in general.

- What are some specific ways that a husband can honor his wife according to her femaleness?
- How can an unmarried man use Peter’s teaching and apply it in his own life?
- Why do you think it is important to be reminded of what seems to be simple?
- In what ways can you be actively pursuing the kind of manhood role that Peter is describing?

Gospel Connection:

Whenever the Bible talks about marriage, there is a very close link to the relationship of Jesus Christ and his bride, the church. Peter, in this verse, encourages men to honor their wives in a very special way. In the universal, selfish, fallen state, men could never dream of honoring someone as better than themselves. That is why God’s revelation is so important. God’s ultimate revelation was the incarnation of Jesus Christ who came to give us a perfect and complete example of how we are to live. The Bible shows us this revelation today. Jesus, the bridegroom of the church, showed utmost honor to his bride by laying down his life on her behalf. Like Peter urges husbands to be empathetic understanding, Christ took on flesh and knew exactly how to show us love. He sacrificed himself so that we could be redeemed.

Discussion Guide cont.

Practical Implications:

- Think:** In what ways should the church model manhood and womanhood differently than the world? Are you being a good example for your community about what it means to live biblically?
- Pray:** Ask God to examine your heart and reveal to you where you have bought into the culture and abandoned His teaching. Pray that He will continue renewing your mind to be focused on him and not the things of this world.
- Do:** Go out of your way to love your wife this week. Be intentional to treat her differently than anyone else.

The Original Manual on Manhood

For Better or For Worse, Part 6

1 Peter 3:7b

In this series we've entitled, "For Better or For Worse", we've been in the discovery process of God's design, not only for husbands and wives, but biblical manhood and womanhood.

God designed us to complement one another as we pursue God's design in the created roles of male and female.

I don't think you could ever find a more politically incorrect passage of scripture on the subject of manhood and womanhood, much less on marriage, than the inspired letters written by the Apostle Peter.

But then again, we haven't gathered as an assembly because we are interested in what is politically correct, but what is biblically correct.

In fact, most often in our world, whatever is politically correct is usually biblically corrupt.

I invite your attention back to God's original manual on manhood – specifically delivered in Peter's first letter – and while you are turning, let me read – and please forgive the rather long quote – of the opening chapter from John Piper's little booklet entitled, "What's the Difference? Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible".

He writes, "When I was a boy growing up in Greenville, South Carolina, my father was away from home more than half of every year, preaching across the country. While he preached, we prayed – my mother, and my older sister and I. In those days, I learned that my mother was omni-competent.

"She handled the finances, paying all the bills and dealing with the bank and the creditors. She once ran a little laundry business on the side. She was active on the park board and served as the Children's Department Superintendent in our small Baptist church . . .

she taught me to cut the grass and splice electric cord and pull Bermuda grass by the roots and paint the eaves and shine the dining-room table with a shammy and drive a car and keep French fries from getting soggy in the cooking oil.

"She helped me with the maps in geography and showed me how to do a bibliography and believe that Algebra II was possible.

"I had heard once that women don't sweat, they glowed . . . my mother sweated. It would drip off the end of her long, sharp nose. Sometimes she would blow it off when her hands were pushing the wheelbarrow . . . or she'd wipe it with her sleeves between the strokes of a swing blade.

"It never occurred to me [as a boy] to think of my mother and father in the same category. Both were strong. Both were bright. Both were kind. Both would kiss me and both would spank me . . . both prayed with fervor and both loved the Bible.

"But unmistakably my father was a man and my mother was a woman. They knew it and I knew it. And it wasn't mainly a biological fact, but a matter of personhood and relational dynamics.

"When my father came home he was clearly the head of the house. He led in prayer at the table; he called the family together for devotions; he got us to Sunday school and church – he drove the car, guided the family to where we would sit and made the decision after church to go to "Howard Johnson's for lunch; he led us to the table; he called for the waitress and he paid the check. He was the one we knew we would reckon with if we broke a family rule or were disrespectful to our mother.

"These were the happiest times for Mom . . . oh, how she rejoiced to have Daddy home. She

loved his leadership. It never occurred to me that leadership and submission had anything to do with superiority [or] inferiority. It was not a matter of capabilities and competencies.

Over the years I have come to see from Scripture and from life that manhood and womanhood are the beautiful handiwork of a good and loving God. He [actually] designed our differences, and they are profound . . . they go to root of [who we are].”ⁱ

Well said.

Beloved, the climactic creative act by our Creator God was not the creation of the elephants or the giraffes or the dolphins or the trees or the rivers or the birds or the lakes.

The climactic moment of creation occurred when God designed and crafted and created them male and female (*Genesis 1:27*)

That was the grand finale of the Genesis creation account.

Maleness and Femaleness with all their nuances and complexities and abilities and inabilities were all a part of the glorious creation of God.

And the manual God has given us through inspiration, describing us as male or female in personhood isn't the result of culture or convention, but creation.

Listen to this earthshaking statement, in light of the current confusion in our culture. In fact, when I make this statement, if it strikes you as questionable or strange, it only highlights how far the propaganda of defiance has affected our lives.

Here it is: In His creative design, God never intended to separate anatomy from identity.ⁱⁱ

Anatomy and identity are bound together in personhood – what makes you, you and me, me.

But yes, within a human nature, because of sin, there are the capacities for all kinds of aberrations and inclinations and dispositions and desires and mannerisms and the potential for every evil and defiant act against God imaginable.

But the idea of being fundamentally male or female is a gift from God who knit you together in the womb according to His purposes; and He

knows everything about you – the good, the bad and the ugly. He knows the saint you will become through salvation and the sinner you will battle through temptation.

And to add to the problem, Satan happens to hate the human race because they are uniquely the image bearers of God – Satan wants to destroy that which represents the pinnacle of God's creation – which means divorce isn't his end game; homosexuality and lesbianism aren't his end game; same sex marriage isn't his end game; surrogate motherhood isn't his end game; bisexuality isn't his end game; transgenderism and gender fluidity aren't his end game.

Satan wants to destroy the peak of God's glorious creation within the human race – he wants to eliminate the concept of gender altogether.

Today, we are observing just one more step downward in the enemy's agenda; today there is an all-out attack on male and female distinctives.

In fact, it is terribly out of date today to speak of manhood and womanhood in any kind of fixed sense.

Gender is now considered fluid; fluidity has replaced biology. There is no specific foundation or meaning for manhood or womanhood – and that means there is no longer any structure or plan.ⁱⁱⁱ

Gender confusion is now a growing epidemic. And the consequences are already becoming catastrophic. There are more sexual perversions and aberrations claiming normality today, not less; there is more abuse and promiscuity, not less; there is more social awkwardness and distress, not less; there is more despair and there are more suicides today, not less.^{iv}

Still, our culture continues to defy their Creator and even now, school systems in the Western World especially are churning out inclusive and gender neutral curriculum.

In one article I read, published just last week, school systems are racing to avoid any kind of gender specific language. In one program, under the title, “Welcoming Schools” – you

want to go to a “Welcoming School” don’t you – but what that means is that the curriculum is encouraging teachers to “use their influential role to create conditions where children feel safe in...expressing and identifying their gender.”

The key word is “identifying”. They need to decide whether or not they are a little boy or a little girl. Little wonder that transgender affirming children’s books are at the heart of this program which openly coaches teachers to “teach and affirm gender fluidity”.

One school counselor said that her school’s inclusive policies have eliminated gender-specific language and activities. She cites one illustration – now, there are no more Muffins for Mom and Donuts for Dad. It’s just Muffin Mornings and Donut Day.^v

I read some time ago about the controversy in one school system in England where, in response to complaints, the school lunchroom had renamed the gingerbread man the gingerbread people.

Four hundred schools complied until someone complained to the school board that this was going too far. And the gingerbread man was given back his name.

One author wrote – and here’s the bigger issue – “the male and female sexes have lost the script for their lives and they no longer know what role to play in life.”^{vi}

We need to go back and pick up the script – written and produced by the Creator.

And you find the original manual doing the opposite of today’s culture as it races to eliminate gender distinctions.

Listen to this gender affirming, strange sounding words to the ears of our modern culture, coming directly from God’s original manual on manhood and womanhood.

Don’t even look down yet – let me just read where we left off in our last study at ***1 Peter 3 and verse 7. You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman.***

Talk about politically incorrect! In one phrase, Peter defies culture and defends God’s created order.

Now look at the text. You might make several observations from this text that sort of jump out at you.

- Peter is violating the shrine of gender neutrality by making a statement of gender distinction;
- Peter is clearly saying that women are weaker than men;
- Peter is clearly telling men that they are supposed to treat women differently than men;
- Peter clearly states that the female sex is genetically and anatomically and inherently different from a man.

Peter would never be invited to speak to the local PTA.

Now at first glance it might sound like Peter is condemning or demeaning women. To the ears trained by society’s propaganda, it sounds like it . . . but he isn’t.

He is doing nothing more than telling men to act like men; and women to expect to be treated like women; and, specifically, for a man to treat a woman differently than he would ever treat another man.

In fact, Peter is indirectly challenging all men – not just husbands. This goes for every man. Why? Because textually Peter addresses the issue of women in general –this is how they should be treated. Secondly, he is making it clear that a man doesn’t become a man when he gets married – so this is not just a manual on marriage, but on manhood.

And God’s manual on manhood has a lot to do with how men treat women.

Peter opens this verse by commanding – this isn’t a suggestion – that the husband is to live with his wife with understanding. That is, with insight and with consideration as we learned in our last study. But why?

Because, for one thing, Peter now adds here, she is ***weaker***.

What does this mean – she is someone weaker? Your translation might read, she is a ***weaker vessel***, which is a better translation.

What does it mean that a woman is weaker than a man? Well, it's really not that hard to figure out. As someone once said, "It's not rocket surgery."

The word for *weaker*, from *asthenes* relates to the fact that, in general, the average woman is physically weaker than the average man.^{vii}

Peter is speaking in general terms about the female sex in contrast to the male sex.

And if you don't like that interpretation, you are left with wondering if Peter is telling us here that women are intellectually weaker; morally weaker; mentally weaker; spiritually weaker; theologically weaker; weaker in their resolve or in their faith.

You might be confused like a man who told me recently that this verse clearly teaches that a woman is inferior to a man.

That's not what Peter says. Inferiority and physical weakness are not the same thing.

In fact, the Bible never suggests that. Peter makes it very clear later in this verse that a woman is as much a child of God and as equally deserving of being rewarded in the coming Kingdom as are believing men; she is a fellow heir of the grace of life.

Peter is delivering a general statement about the physical makeup of the average woman contrasted to the physical makeup of the average man.

In general, she can't throw as hard, run as fast or lift as much.

But what's interesting is the fact that the word Peter uses here for a weaker vessel in the Greek text – the word for *vessel* – *skeuos* – is a word used by Paul to Timothy in referring to household vessels or household utensils (**2 Timothy 2:20**).^{viii}

Paul also uses the word to refer to the physical body (**1 Thessalonians 4:4**).

So Peter is simply stating in general terms, to husbands especially, but to men in general, that we should be careful and kind and considerate in the way we treat our wives, specifically, and all women in general.

In other words, don't blur the basic distinctives between men and women; God

intended to highlight them. Acknowledge them; enjoy the distinctives. The original manual from God doesn't remove the concepts of masculinity and femininity; He commands us to respect them.

Referring to women as the weaker sex, which Peter coins here, by the way, isn't derogatory or demeaning. Peter isn't diminishing the value of women. In fact, Peter is essentially commanding men to treat women with distinction and consideration and kindness.

In blunt terms, men, don't treat women like a bunch of guys . . . they aren't a bunch of guys!

Honor them, don't exploit them; treat them with courtesy and deference.^{ix}

Why? Well, for starters, Peter says, because they happen to be women. ***Since she is a woman***, Peter writes. In other words, women deserve that kind of courtesy and kindness and deference because of the simple fact that they are women.

As strange as it sounds, Peter is commanding husbands to treat their wife like a woman.

Let's get as practical as we can here – what exactly does it look like to treat a wife like a woman?

Obviously, Peter has described it for us as consideration and understanding – which means kindness and courtesy.

But let's answer that question by giving the opposite of what it looks like.

The opposite will look more like apathy.

Call it indifference; unconcern for their needs and well-being; irritation rather than interest; criticism instead of commendation.

Call it failure to step up to the plate; failure to provide and protect.

There's an old Hebrew proverb from the Talmud that gives this great advice: "Every husband should eat and drink beneath his means, clothe himself within his means and honor his wife above his means."

Treating your wife like a woman is the opposite of apathy.

Secondly, treating your wife like a woman is the opposite of absence.

You can call that self-centeredness, where her activities never matter and yours are never missed.

This isn't just failing to step up to the plate; it is living as if there's no plate at all, or no ballgame at all.

Absence is where your involvement in your hobbies and sports activities is measured in hours, but your involvement with your wife and family is measured in minutes.

I love what one judge ordered in a recent case. A Florida judge handed down an unusual sentence to a husband following a domestic dispute with his wife. Evidently it was her birthday on this particular day and somewhere in there an argument had really broken out. Well, the judge ended up telling the husband that he needed to figure out a plan for marriage counseling, but in the meantime, the judge said, "On your way home from this courthouse, you are to pick up some flowers for your wife, along with a birthday card; go home and deliver them to your wife; then both of you are to get dressed and you are to take your wife out to dinner at Red Lobster (not Taco Bell this time, but Red Lobster), and after taking her out to Red Lobster for dinner, take her bowling."

His attorney jokingly asked, "Does he have to let her win?"

The judge didn't smile back, but said that if his client failed to comply, he would be back in court.

Treating your wife like a woman is the opposite of apathy and absence and, further, **treating her abusively**.

Call it verbal intimidation or physical threats or outright physical abuse. It is using your strength to your advantage to bully and dominate your wife in order to get your way.

Evidently, what began on the playground in the sandbox with other kids when you didn't get your way was something you never grew out of.

Listen to the words of Paul to the believing men in the congregation – ***Act like men; be strong (1 Corinthians 16:13)***

Act like men. What a concept! Act like men – not like boys – not like women. Paul, like Peter, recognizes that there is a specific way that a man should act – with manly bravery. ***Stand firm in the faith***, he writes. He is not asking men to be macho, he is asking men to be mature.^x

Evidently, Paul, like Peter, is challenging every male in the early church – and to this day – to effectively grow up and act like men.

Acting like a man is not throwing your weight around. You don't yield to selfish anger by yelling and slamming and throwing and name calling and cursing or even huffing and snorting when you don't get your way or your wife gets in your way.^{xi}

Acting like a man, in relation to your wife, is using your strength to make sure she is treated with respect and deference.

One Greek scholar pointed out that Peter's use of the word for **woman** in this text is unusual – ***since she is a woman***; the word translated **woman** is an adjective that serves as an abstract. In other words, it refers to the female nature; Peter is referring to the fact that she is womanly.^{xii} You can understand him to say, ***since she is feminine***.

Now that doesn't mean she isn't as tough as nails. When Peter calls her a weaker vessel, keep in mind that he does not call her weak.

She is weaker . . . but that doesn't mean she is weak. Have you ever been in a delivery room? I can tell you who the weaker one is at that moment . . . at least for me . . . it wasn't my wife.

I came across a mother's courage, evidenced in her determination to save her little boy from harm.

Since reading it, I haven't been able to forget it – a couple built a home on the banks of a small pond at the headwaters of a creek in Florida, not far from the Gulf of Mexico. Their twelve year old son, Michael, loved to snorkel in the two-acre pond and one evening, he and

two of his cousins went for a swim just after dinner. Oblivious to any danger, they were unaware that an alligator was bearing down on them. Neighbors and this couple who were out in the back yard spotted the alligator and tried to distract it with clapping and shouting, which alerted the cousins and they made it to shore. But Michael was snorkeling and his head was under the water as he floated peacefully along. The alligator lunged for Michael's head. It missed, but gashed Michael's skull, ripping the snorkel mask from his face. He began swimming for shore as fast as he could; only momentarily diverted by the mask, the alligator spotted him and was after him again. By this time his mother had run to the water's edge where her son was in a race for his life. He was swimming as fast as he could, but the alligator was gaining on him every second. The mother reached out to grasp her son's hand just as the beast opened its huge jaws and clamped down on Michael's left leg. What followed was a tug of war between an eleven foot alligator and a five-an-a-half foot young mother. Clutching her boy's hand, she pulled with every ounce of strength she had and suddenly, unexpectedly, the alligator let go. Perhaps the rubber flipper on her son's foot had agitated the alligator's throat – but for whatever reason, Michael was saved. Six months later, his wounds completely healed, Michael was showing his scars to his friends – the scar on his scalp; his left leg, broken, but now mended but with scars still visible on his ankle. But he scars he was most proud of – which he showed his friend – were the scars in his hand that had been made by his mother's fingernails. She had literally dug in, in order to keep him from being dragged away.^{xiii} That's one determined lady.

Listen, being weaker doesn't mean being weak. It has nothing to do with resolve and determination; it has to do with her nature and general disposition.

In fact, Peter's use of the phrase here, *a weaker vessel*, can be understood, in the sense of refinement. In other words, she is weaker in

the sense that she has been created as more refined.

One author takes this idea and paraphrases it this way – treat your wife like fine china.^{xiv}

There's a difference between a cheap mug and fine china. The truth is, you drink coffee from a cheap mug differently than you do from a fine china teacup.

This is why men go for the cheap mug every time. Fine china is simply handled differently.

One author wrote that you can understand this analogy to mean that you are to treat your wife like you would treat an expensive vase (vaze).

You spend a little money at Walmart for a vase; you spend a lot of money on one – it's a "vaze". Treat her like an expensive "vaze".

Don't miss this here – Peter is essentially challenging husbands to stop abusive actions and even speech; to never pummel your wife with your hands, or your words.

She is effectively an expensive "vaze" . . . treat her that way.

Abusive speech and physical intimidation and threats and even physical harm – these aren't things to gloss over or quickly get over.

If you are like bull in a china shop – and pieces are littered on the floor of your home life . . . if that's you, reach out to another brother for help and accountability.

Don't excuse yourself. Don't blame your bad day at work or even your wife's behavior. That was Adam in the Garden. With his mouth stained with forbidden fruit, he tells God – it was that woman you gave me . . . she made me.

That's how boys act; men take responsibility for their actions . . . start acting like a man.^{xv}

Let me add this to women – young and older alike, if you are being physically or verbally or sexually abused – what you are experiencing is not your fault. It is not acceptable; it is not a secret you have to keep. It's not only sinful, it's not only wrong, it's dangerous and destructive and it will only escalate to crush and destroy. Let the church – and the leaders in the church – and your brothers and sisters in the church –

provide help and counsel and assistance for those caught in the painful web of an abusive relationship.

There should be no question what it means to occupy the role of a man. According to God's original manual on manhood – here's how we are to treat women in general – because they are women – and especially and uniquely our wives.

This is really a call here to love them as Christ loves His bride – the church – with strong, committed, caring, persevering, humble, faithful love.

That mirrors the Creator's love for us, doesn't it? That's all that Peter is really saying to husbands here; start loving them like God.

I close with this: One day Charles Spurgeon, the famous pastor in 19th century London, was walking through the English countryside with a friend. As they strolled along, Spurgeon noticed a barn with a weather vane on its roof. As they got closer, they noticed etched into the weather vane were the words, "God is love." Spurgeon remarked to his friend that he thought this was

an inappropriate place for such a message. He said, "Weather vanes are changeable – always turning with the wind." His friend responded, "No Charles, I think you misunderstand the meaning. That weather vane is indicating a truth: regardless of which way the wind blows, God is love."^{xvi}

Husbands, Paul wrote to the Ephesians to love your wives as Christ loves the church – no matter how the wind blows.

Live with them with kind consideration – for they are weaker vessels. They have been created, and are to be treated, like fine china. That's how a real man treats a woman. More specifically, that's how a husband treats his wife.

And brothers, there has never been a better time for men of God to be just that – *men* of God.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 9/10/2017 by Stephen Davey.

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iii Strachan & Peacock, p. 13

iv Piper, p. 17

v World Magazine, September 2, 2017, p. 38

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ix The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 13 (Zondervan, 2006), p. 328

x Strachan & Peacock, p. 58

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- xv Adapted from Strachan & Peacock, p. 59
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