

A Wake-up Call to Husbands in Hibernation

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Does the following anonymous piece, titled “The Wall,” describe your marriage?



Their wedding pictures mocked them from the table, these two, whose minds no longer touched each other. They lived with such a heavy barricade between them that neither battering ram of words nor artilleries of touch could break it down. Somewhere, between the oldest child’s first tooth and the youngest daughter’s graduation, they lost each other.

Throughout the years, each slowly unraveled that tangled ball of string called self, and as they tugged at stubborn knots each hid his searching from the other. Sometimes she cried at night and begged the whispering darkness to tell her who she was. He lay beside her, snoring like a hibernating bear, unaware of her winter.

She took a course in modern art, trying to find herself in colors splashed upon a canvas, and complaining to other women about men who were insensitive. He climbed into a tomb called “the office,” wrapped his mind in a shroud of paper figures, and buried himself in customers.

Slowly, the wall between them rose, cemented by the mortar of indifference.

One day, reaching out to touch each other, they found a barrier they could not penetrate, and recoiling from the coldness of the stone, each retreated from the stranger on the other side. For when love dies, it is not in a moment of angry battle, nor when fiery bodies lose their heat. It lies panting, exhausted, expiring at the bottom of a wall it could not scale.

Husbands, the health of your marriage is ultimately your responsibility (Eph. 5:22-25). Perhaps you once had great dreams for your marriage. Looking back on your wedding day, there was such joy and there were so many aspirations. Things are different now. Long and intimate discussions are a distant memory. Romantic nights are rare. Big plans have been squelched by big bills. The wall grows higher every day.

There *is* hope for your marriage, but it will take intentional effort on your part. Peter says, “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 of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” (1 Pet. 3:7, ESV).

What can you do? First, *live with your wife in an understanding way*. Literally, Peter says, “Live with your wives according to knowledge.” We are responsible to know much about our wives and the marriage relationship. How does a husband gain such insight? At least two ways: (1) Through meditation upon Scripture’s teaching about wives and marriage. (2) Through regular, unhurried conversations with his wife. You should know your wife’s joys, fears, dreams, and hurts. This will mean some late nights of discussion, even when you have to get up early the next morning. And yes, you may “get behind” in your knowledge of internet chitchat. But husbands, you must *build* a wall between you and your computer or television, if that’s what it takes to *tear down* the wall between you and your bride!

Second, *show your wife honor as the weaker vessel and as a fellow heir of the grace of life*. As those who are called to happily submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22; Titus 2:5), our wives are also prone to mistreatment by us if we take advantage of their “weaker” status. This must not happen. Our wives are like fine China (expensive dishes)—they are delicate and need us to be tender in how we treat them. They must feel our gentle touches often and know that we aren’t behaving that way just because we want to have sex. Also, we must show them honor because they are fellow heirs of the grace of life. Husbands and wives have different roles, but they are equal in Christ. Our most intimate conversations about the Lord should be with our wives, not the men of the church.

If we fail to heed Peter’s exhortation, not only will the wall continue to grow between you and your wife, but according to Peter something even more devastating will happen: “Your prayers will be hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7). If you do not understand and honor your wife, prayer is useless because God won’t answer. That is a horrifying thought for a true believer because ineffective prayer leads to the absence of the presence and blessing of God, resulting in a discouraged and powerless Christian. One way to determine if you have slipped in your responsibilities is to ask, “Is God ignoring my prayers?”

Hibernating husbands, arise from your slumber and repent. Intentionally live out Peter’s admonition (maybe even write out a strategy). Go to your wife and humbly confess your sins to her and your desire to know and honor her. And take action. Obey 1 Peter 3:7, looking to Christ for strength and motivation to obey (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21-25; Titus 2:11-14). By God’s grace and for His glory, that awful wall that sin has built will come crashing down.