**“Husbands…Live With Your Wives In An Understanding Way” 1 Peter 3:7**

(Kenny Chumbley)

“You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).

These words easily constitute one of the toughest assignments handed out in the Bible. And by saying this, I’m not insulting women (for being difficult or incomprehensible) or impugning men (for being stupid). Rather, I am merely acknowledging the reality that communication between the sexes can be a challenge.

The single, greatest reason for this is likely the fact that God has made men and women to be different – “male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). A woman is not innately designed to look at things the way a man does, and a man is not inherently inclined to see things from a woman’s point-of-view (just recognizing this truth is the first step toward establishing effective transgender communication). A long-running argument in anthropological circles is whether or not the differences between men and women are biological (due to nature) or cultural (due to nurture). While culture is undoubtedly responsible for some differences, the evidence for the differences being biological is undeniable (e.g., boys and girls tend to align themselves with traditional biological patterns regardless of their culture or nurture).

That men and women come into the world with different perspectives, however, does not excuse husbands from the responsibility of understanding where their wives are coming from. A husband can fathom his wife’s outlook, thereby surmounting the frustration that different communication styles can cause, thereby promoting the closeness that comes from learning to speak another’s language.

Although I think I glimpse some of the enormity of the obligation Peter assigns to husbands, no one should think me an expert on the subject; “clueless” is my middle name. Here, though, is some advice I would give husbands who take seriously the divine imperative to understand their wives.

* Understanding involves more than knowing. A husband can know his wife’s favorite color, sweater, restaurant, etc. and still not understand her.
* Understanding involves learning your wife’s communication style. Women, for example, tend to speak indirectly. What your wife may frame as a question ("Does the trash can look full to you?”) may actually be a request, an order, or an expectation (“Take out the trash!”).
* Understanding involves grasping your wife’s communication perspective. Women tend to see communication as the glue of a relationship, whereas men tend to see it as something you do when there is a problem. For women, self-revealing conversations are valued because they make them feel close to another. Accordingly, a wife can be extremely hurt when her husband gives her the silent treatment, or she feels he is keeping secrets from her.
* Understanding involves appreciating your wife’s communication rituals. For instance, when women discuss a problem, they’re often looking for concern, not a solution. When a decision needs to be made, they typically want to negotiate a consensus (unilateral decisions by husbands invite resentment and are asking for trouble). Understanding your wife requires cracking her communication code.
* Understand there are exceptions to every rule. What may be true of women in general may not be true of your wife in particular. If you want to understand your wife, study her, pay attention to what she pays attention to. There is no shortcut to comprehending the feminine psyche.

In Camelot, when King Arthur asks, “How do you handle a woman?” the answer given is the truest answer of all: “love her, love her, love her.” The word is not used in 1 Peter 3:7, but husbands, know this: what Peter says in this verse is what loving a woman is all about.