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Presentation Transcript
God-Based Marriage, The Organizing Principle 4 – Heirs Together
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Early in the series, I attributed to the apostle Paul the statement that husbands and wives heirs together of the grace of life. Actually, it was Peter who said that. So let's look at the scripture. How does it play into our series on the *Organizing Principles of Marriage*? And what does it mean as far as how Christians are to function in a marriage? So let's read the scripture.

1 Peter 3:7 – *Likewise, husbands – he's already talked to wives about their role in marriage. Now he's going to talk to the men. ...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.*

When I first read this scripture, I must have been seventeen or so. And I thought it was somewhat of a backdoor insult to women – honor her, but she weak. I know, for some, that will be the focus of concern about this scripture, so I'm going to go into the "insult," so that we can go on, free to think about the heirs part.

Was Peter saying that women were weak? Think about it? He just told husbands to honor their wives. Why would that be, if they weaker? He also said, they were both vessels for God's use. So there's some equality there.

I heard a great sermon about that topic years ago. Fred Kellers gave it, if you know him. He gave it sometime in the 70s the Lake of the Ozarks festival site at the Feast of Tabernacles. Out from under the podium he pulled a stemmed wine glass made of crystal, and he told a story about how it was given to him and his wife from one of the members in his congregation on the occasion of their move out of the area. He had no idea how expensive it was until they were, one day, walking along a street lined with shops and they saw the same glass in a store window. Out of curiosity, they went inside and found it to be highly valuable. After that, they took a lot better care of it than they had previously. Next, he pulled out from speaker stand a large pressure

cooker that his wife had used for many years to cook and can food for the family. He noted that this pressure cooker was the highest quality money could buy. In fact, it cost around the same amount as the wine glass. And his question to us was, “Which one is superior and which one is weaker?” Well, there couldn’t be a contest, because they were both equally good at fulfilling their purpose and they both cost the same amount of money. The funny part was when he said, “In fact, in order to get the wine glass here without damaging it, we packed it in the pressure cooker.” So the wine glass, though not inferior in any way to the canner, would last longer if protected and taken care of.

Peter was telling men not to take their wives for granted, and honor them for their role in the marriage, to love and care for them. Like Paul also said, Christ loves and cares for the church. We are all the weaker vessels. See everybody has to play both roles in God’s hierarchy. If a woman is considered the weaker vessel in a marriage – in that she’s more delicate, but just as valuable – then a man is the weaker vessel in the church related to Christ, the head of it. So, we all have to be humble.

What’s so bad about having someone who is as concerned for your spiritual well-being and your spiritual growth as you are yourself? Well, that’s what a good husband does. And he says men are to do this, *since* they are heirs *with you* of the grace of life. So he takes men down to the reality of the fact that, in the Kingdom, we will be equals – not in that hierarchical role at that point. All of us are above us and hierarchy is only Jesus Christ. Both husbands and wives are both headed for the same goal – the Kingdom of God.

Now it tells husbands to take care of their wives and help them into the Kingdom – as though they’re in charge of their salvation? Some have erroneously thought so. But it doesn’t say that. It’s about spiritual influence and spiritual support. You know, special forces are taught that one is none, and two is one, and three is two. So when you get in a battle, we all need somebody to have our backs. And, in the spiritual battle, we all fight to enter into God’s Kingdom. We fight every day. The two are to stand back-to-back and look forward – out away from the couple to the dangers and the things that need to be done in the relationship. And that gets a bit ahead, because in another presentation in this series, we’re going to have a look at having the back of our mate. In fact, I think that’s the next one.

At the same time, few seems to notice the scriptures that tell wives, “Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won, without a word, by the conduct of their wives.” So a wife can spiritual influence on her husband, just as well as he can on her. And she’s responsible to do that – not by a lot of talking, but by the example she sets. And that’s also true of the husband as well. Talk is cheap. Action is expensive. So we’re supposed to live good examples in the roles that we play in the marriage and also in following Jesus Christ. So both are supposed to set a good example of playing their roles with the hope that they can help the other enter the Kingdom of God – heirs together of the grace of life.

If we think about football for a minute. Now some may think that's a gauche comparison, but there's something that might be learned if one's mind is open to it. In football, it's generally thought the most important player on the team is the quarterback. He's supposed to have to have the most skill. However, there have been a number of excellent quarterbacks over the years who never won a national championship, because they didn't have a good enough team surrounding them. A quarterback needs protection from oncoming rushers, so that he has time to pass the ball. He needs people also to whom to throw who can catch it. Otherwise, it's to no avail. Without those things, it doesn't matter if he's the best quarterback out there. He won't win. They talk about *skill* positions in football. That's mostly refers to the throwing and the catching. Those people tend to get the most attention – lineman, not as much. But without them, a quarterback spends the game on his back, because he's going to be murdered by the oncoming assault by the defensive players.

When we think about husbands and wives being heirs together of the grace of life, how can we say that today in modern language? Well, different roles, but the same goal.

I had a man come to my office some years ago, who attended one of the mega-churches in town. He'd run around on his wife. He told me he had been a fool and injurious. And I asked him if they were still together, and he broke down and cried, and said, "Yes, she has forgiven me." So her graciousness had convicted him in his heart, and he had repented." That's an example of a wife helping her husband become stronger in the faith, isn't it? And I'm not saying, by the way, that this will happen in every case, or that it's even possible. No one connects all the time. But his wife threw a touchdown this time. And she was probably able to forgive him because she knew that he was willing to change.

One last thing about the phrase *heirs together of the grace of life*: What exactly did Peter mean by that statement? Well, he tells us 1 Peter 1:13.

1 Peter 1:13 – *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

So when we see Jesus, we're going to understand, in a way we have never understood before, what His sacrifice means to us and how gracious He is. So that's specifically talking about the end goal – the victory that comes through Jesus Christ's sacrifice and then when He returns at the end.

While husbands and wives work to maintain a household, and a family, and to earn income to do those things, the real goal for both of them is the Kingdom of God. That's what we have to keep our eye on – the goal.

Here's another football story for you. There was a football game played in 1965 between the

Minnesota Vikings and the San Francisco 49ers. The Vikings were in the act of sacking the 49er quarterback, Billy Kilmer. And as they were, with all the carnage going on around him, he fumbled the ball, and a Viking player, Jim Marshall, picked up the ball and ran seventy yards into his own end zone, scoring a touchback for the 49ers. He ran the wrong way! The reason we remember this is because that's *not* what he was trying to do.

When someone is unfaithful to their mate, or abuses them, or disrespects them in some other way, that's like scoring for the wrong team – going against what marriage is all about – winning together – winning the Kingdom, being victorious, entering into the Kingdom of God – helping one another do that.

Can you see how important it is to *know* that a husband and a wife are on the same team with the same goals set before them – that they can work together and help each other get there together? That's why this aspect of marriage can be called an organizing principle. It organizes our behavior, our boundaries, our outlooks, our responsibilities, our mood, our direction – all toward the Kingdom of God – and working *together* toward that end.

There's something else in this verse I want to read and I want to talk with you about for a minute. It's in 1 Peter 3:7 again.

1 Peter 3:7 – *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel....* Why did he say, "...in an understanding way?" Well, because males and females have a really hard time understanding each other because they think so differently. We're going to talk a lot more about that as we talk about communicating. How do you understand somebody that doesn't think the same way you think. I mean, the tendency is to hear what they say, and think we know what they mean, because we know what *we* would mean had we said that. But they don't think that way, so it doesn't necessarily follow that we *get* what they're talking about, unless we do one thing that's very important. More later on that. But, *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.* Why this emphasis on prayer?

Well, if a couple has gone toward the dark side, and have become contentious, opposing each other, resisting one another, allowing the dissension to enter into their relationship – and we have all done this sometimes – it makes it harder to pray sincerely. Notice something else that Peter said in 1 Peter 3:8.

V-8 – *Finally, all of you* – not talking to couples here, but *all* Christians – *have unity of mind* – so if you're in contention with your mate, that's not going to be true, is it? – *sympathy* – that's not going to be true, is it? – *brotherly love* – that's not going to be true, is it? – *a tender heart, and a humble mind* – well those things fly out the window when we become contentious. *Do not repay evil for evil* – don't get into a tug of war trying to win or get even by repaying evil for evil – *or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless. For to this you were called, that you may obtain a*

blessing. And now he quotes the Psalms. For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days – that's all of us, right? – let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good – even if evil has been done to him first. Let him seek peace and pursue it – instead of arguing. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. Well, that would imply that, if we're not that way, then, it's not, so our prayers are hindered when we're in a bad attitude toward our mate. Right? That's what it's talking about. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

When we are at odds with our mates, the scripture convicts us, and we feel weak and guilty, and we feel angry and self-centered, and our prayers are hindered because of our distance that we have created from the mind of God in the way His Spirit teaches us to be. Enemies cannot be heirs together of the grace of life.

We have two presentations that speak to the issue of dissention. One's about communication – I just mentioned it – and the kind of teamwork that we need. And the other is called *Rupture and Repair*. It's about healing ruptured relationships so that we can get away from contention with each other and start working together.

So let's look now at another revelation about marriage. Is it forever? Some people believe that marriage will last for all eternity. Did you know that? What do you think? Maybe it would be better to ask, "What would you point to in the Bible to support your belief?" Well, let's look at what Jesus said. This is a lesson not only about marriage, but how smart a man Jesus was, because He knew the Bible and all its subtle intents, and had the Holy Spirit of God in Him. It says in Mark 12:18:

Mark 12:18 – *And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. So they didn't believe in the resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. That's so that the inheritance can be passed on, right? – the leverant marriage. So they posed this question: There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection.... See, they don't even believe in it, so this is one of those "what if?" questions, like "If God made you, who made God?" Right? It's a question of the unfaithful trying to show how foolish it is to believe in the resurrection in this case. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife." And Jesus didn't even... I mean He didn't flinch. He didn't have to stop to think. He just said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. Who you married in the first life, no matter how many times, is moot! Because there won't be marriage in the Kingdom of God and all gender will away from us. He then takes another direction*

altogether, addressing the underlying belief that there is no resurrection. *And as for the dead being raised* – as for your belief there is no resurrection – *have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to Moses, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?'* Well, there going to have to say, “Yes,” to that, right? *He is not God of the dead, but of the living.* So there *has* to be a resurrection for that scripture to be true, right? Then He adds: “*You are quite wrong.*” See, God could not have said that if these patriarchs were not to be resurrected. He’s the God of the living.

But back to the main point. There is no gender in the Kingdom. When we are waiting for the return of Jesus, we are all portrayed as young women, because we’re going to marry Christ. Right? And this is *not* the kind of marriage that we have on earth. It’s not a physical marriage between a male and a female. It’s a relationship of siblings and we’re going to marry our older Brother. So that would be incest, wouldn’t it? Except that this is not about having sex in a physical relationship. It’s about a close bond between us and Christ, as our older Brother.

So, if there is no gender, will we be married like we are now? Well, highly unlikely. In fact, I think that was Jesus’ whole point. However, let me ask you this question. Do you remember when Gabriel was talking to Daniel, telling him that, from day one, his prayers had been heard, but he was not able to get through until the only other archangel, Michael – the only other archangel in all God’s realm – came to help him battle his way free? Remember that? Well, do you think those two great warriors of God have a kinship – both represented on the mercy in heaven over God’s throne? Do you think they have a love and respect for one another? Do you think they like joint projects? Do you think they like having each other’s backs and being strongly connected = fighting for the same cause and being able to communicate well with one another? I mean, just think about it. I mean, it doesn’t really talk about that in the Bible, but everything on earth is a model of something in heaven. And we are all relational beings. And as we know that all the beings in heaven are relational as well. So don’t you think that those two love each other? Yet they’re not male and female. It’s not that kind of relationship. In the same way, I can’t imagine, when I arrive in God’s Kingdom, not wanting to be with the one who is my wife in the physical realm. She’ll be there. She won’t be a female and I won’t be a male, but we will know each other. And all the weaknesses that we both have will have fallen away, and we will be connected. So, who would stand in our way of being in close relationship for all eternity? Would God? Would Jesus? Well, They’re the only two that could, but I kind of doubt that They would. If They did, They would probably have a really good reason that we’re not aware of now, and so we wouldn’t mind that. But when all the maleness and femaleness falls away from us, when all our gender is intensely important to us now, that’s just temporary. It’s going to be replaced with something much better – maybe we’d call it *Godlikeness*, instead of maleness or femaleness. We won’t even miss the gender days. We will be in *God’s* family then.

I’ve talked to some people who can’t imagine that. And that’s sad, because imagining is all we can do right now. But just wait. Just wait. Whatever it’s like, it’s going to be good! And you’re going to like it.

Well, that's it for *Heirs Together* – the fourth in the series – so stay tuned for the next one – *Having the Back of Our Mate*.

Don't forget to check out the Website and our podcasts at Apple Podcasting.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.