

A HUSBAND'S GUIDE TO COMPANIONSHIP

Read and study 1 Pet. 3:7-12 along with the expanded list below. As you consider the application questions, pray for humility (a learner's spirit) and an honest self-evaluation. Highlight problem areas (ask your wife for input!), confess sin (incl. sins of commission and omission) to God and your wife (when needed), prayerfully commit to change, and follow through with a concrete plan.¹

1. Live for righteousness

The bookends for this passage (1 Pet. 2:24-25 and 3:15) support a consistent theme in the epistles: the Christian's motivation for godly living is a passion for Christ and a deep appreciation for the work of the Gospel in our lives (cf. 1 Jn. 4:19; 1 Pet. 1:17-19). Since we will live for the things we treasure, true biblical obedience is impossible to sustain apart from a Gospel-centered perspective and passion.

- Do you spend regular time with the Lord in prayer and reading, studying, and meditating upon His Word? Do you pray for your wife daily? (Ps. 1; Col.1:9-12)
- Do you have an abiding conviction that nothing is worth sinning against God? Is obeying God more important than having your own way? (Ps. 119:104,128)
- In times of temptation, do you employ thoughts centered on Gospel truths to motivate you to make wise choices? (Heb. 12:1-3)
- Do you take personal responsibility for your failures and repent? (Mt. 7:3-5; Jer. 31:29-20)
- Are you continually learning how to relate the Scriptures to life and life to the Scriptures? Do you talk about them in the milieu of everyday life? (Col. 3:16)
- Do your habits and attitudes about the Scriptures set a God-honoring tone and example for your wife and children to follow? (Ps. 119:9-16)
- Do you honor the pattern of marriage as God has prescribed? (Eph. 5:22-33)
- Do you have relationships with godly men that are transparent enough for them to provide biblical counsel and meaningful accountability in your life? Do you specifically request that from them? (2 Ti. 2:2; Titus 2:6-8)
- Do you guard against self-pity and bitterness by cultivating gratitude and contentment in your life? (1 Thes. 5:18)
- Do the problems you experience seem "light" and "momentary" to you because of your focus on the "eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" that awaits you in Heaven? Are you free from sinful concern (worry)? (Phil. 4:4-9; 2 Cor. 4:16-18)
- Can your family cite clear evidence of your passionate love for the Lord and your family? (Phil. 4:4-5)
- Do you exercise regularly and eat well? (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

¹ This study is adapted from a variety of sources, including *The Complete Husband* by Lou Priolo (NY: Calvary Press Pub., 1999) and *Tying the Knot Tighter* by Peace & Crotts (NJ: P&R Pub., 2007).

2. Submit yourself (v. 7)

This is tied into the passage by the “Likewise”. While he is not to submit to his wife as his leader (cf. Eph. 5:23-24), a Christian husband is to be sensitive to his wife’s needs, fears, and feelings to the extent that he places his needs as secondary to hers. This is part of what it means to deny yourself as with Christ’s example for us and command to us (Lk. 9:23-24).

- Are you a loving, learning, sacrificial leader for her even when you don’t feel like it? (1 Cor. 13:5b “Love does not seek its own way”; 1 Cor. 13:7)
- Do you seek to love your wife as you love yourself? (Mt. 22:36-40; Eph. 5:28-33)
- Do you prefer her whenever possible? How often do you spend time with her doing something she likes to do? (Ro. 12:10)
- Do you respect her requests even if they don’t seem important to you? (Phil. 2:3-4)
- Do you ultimately trust the Lord for your wife’s sanctification or do you try to be her personal Holy Spirit? (1 Cor. 3:4-15)

3. Study her (v. 7)

This means to live with her in an “understanding way” (NASB), “according to knowledge” (KJV). You must be a student of every aspect of your wife – joyfully willing to put in the diligent effort this takes for as long as you both live.

- Do you know more about your favorite sports teams, hobbies, your computer, etc., than you know about her? (1 Pet. 3:7)
- Do you make enough time in your “schedule” to prioritize these kinds of activities, even if it means sacrificing something you otherwise enjoy doing? Is this activity as important to you as it is to God? (1 Pet. 3:7b)
- What pleases your wife?
- What annoys your wife?
- What are your wife’s strengths and weaknesses?
- What are your wife’s burdens and concerns?
- Are you knowledgeable about godly women in the Bible? How can you use this to help your wife become more like Christ? (Eph. 5:26-27)

4. Protect her (v. 7)

The phrase “weaker vessel” refers to a physical weakness, not an intellectual or spiritual inferiority (cf. Gal. 3:28). This is part of your mandate as your wife’s protector, and it includes an attitude of honor and respect for her.

- Is your wife overburdened in her activities? If so, is it because she also has to do part (or all) of your job as the leader in the home? What changes can you help her make? Are there some things you can take on in her place? (Gal. 6:2)

- Do you make sure that your wife has relationships with godly women that provide wise and meaningful accountability in her life? (Titus 2:3-5)
- Do you make sure that your wife has enough time in her daily schedule for personal time in the Word and in prayer? (Ps. 1; Col.1:9-12)
- Do you instill in your children a priority of joyfully honoring their mother, even when she behaves sinfully? (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3)
- Do you quickly repent and ask forgiveness in order to avoid bitterness between the two of you? (Eph. 4:31-32; Mt. 5:23-24)

5. Honor her (v. 7)

As v. 7 elaborates, she is a fellow heir in the “grace of life”, which refers to God’s common grace extended to everyone whom He allows to live on His earth. This is manifested as well in His gift of marriage; the best human relationship life has to offer. As an image-bearer of God Himself, your wife is also to be given due honor and respect in how you treat her. The end of the verse bears a warning that emphasizes how important this is to God: “so that your prayers will not be hindered”.

- Do you honor “appointments” with your family the same way you would honor a meeting appointment with your company CEO?
- Does she get a sense that her concerns and what she has to say is important to you because it is important to her? (Gen. 2:24)
- In what ways does your love for your wife reflect the love Christ has demonstrated for His bride (the church)? (Study: Ro. 5:6-8; 1 Jn 4:19; Jn. 3:16; Eph. 5:2; Mt. 20:8; Jn. 15:13)
- Do you treat your wife as well in private as you treat your [pastor, neighbor, friends, etc.] in public?
- When you talk about her to others, is it always in a positive light? *Never* slander her, even if what you are saying is true. (Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6)
- Are you warm and gracious to her family and friends? Is your commitment to her obvious to them? (Gen. 2:24; 1 Pet. 4:9; Col. 4:6)
- Do you contradict her in front of others or compare her unfavorably with other women? (Eph. 4:29)
- Do you put her first over the children, your parents, your friends, job, men’s Bible study, etc.? (Gen. 2:24)
- Do you seek to always believe the best of her in any given circumstance? (1 Cor. 7b “Love believes all things”)

6. Be of “one mind” with her (v. 8)

Cultivate oneness with her, pursuing peace and unity as opposed to disruption and disharmony.

- Do you spend regular time with her in the Word (i.e., at least once a week)?

- Have you thoughtfully and wisely chosen a good church home for you and your wife? Do you encourage her (mostly by your example) to give careful attention to the preaching and teaching of the Word? (1 Ti. 4:13)
- What attitude do you set in your home about Sundays and the church? How do you articulate this attitude?
- Do you lead your family in serving your church? (Eph. 4:16)
- Do you know what areas your wife desires to change the most? Are they biblical desires? If so, how are you helping her to search the Word for God's answers? (2 Ti. 3:16-17)
- Do you regularly share your personal need for change and growth with your wife and seek her assistance and prayers?
- Do you make decisions based on Scriptural principles that you have carefully and prayerfully considered? Do you gather (and value) input from your wife when a decision affects her? (Jas. 4:15)
- When you cannot give your wife something she wants, do you make every effort to provide her with valid Scriptural reasons?

7. Show sympathy and compassion (v. 8)

Her problems, hurts, and struggles are also yours. As "one flesh" with her (Gen. 2:24) and leader of the home, you are to take compassionate ownership of such things alongside her.

- Are you sympathetic towards her when she is not feeling well or are you indifferent or impatient? (1 Thes. 4:15)
- Does she take better care of you when you are sick than you do of her when she is sick?
- Do you encourage your wife when she experiences setbacks and discouragements? (2 Cor. 1:3-4; 1 Thes. 5:14)

8. Be her friend (v. 8)

"Brotherly love" means you show affection to her as to a friend. A husband is to be his wife's closest companion and friend.

- Do you save some of your energy for her every day? Do you conscientiously guard against laziness? (Pro. 6:6-11)
- Do you lead in making the dinner time one that is enjoyable?
- Do you joyfully lead in the area of being socially interactive with other couples?
- Do you encourage and welcome opportunities to show hospitality to others? (1 Pet. 4:9; Heb. 13:1-2)
- What types of entertainment (e.g., music, movies, TV, etc.) do you subject her to? Are they a hindrance to her spiritual maturity? (Ps. 101:3)

9. Be kindhearted (v. 8)

Also translated “tenderhearted”, this quality is the opposite of anger and malice (cf. Eph. 4:31-32). This can be demonstrated in your tone of voice, how you listen to her, how you show preference for her, your patience with her, etc.

- Do you avoid using sarcasm with her (e.g., mocking, ridiculing, mean-spirited joking, etc.)? (Jas. 3:9-10)
- Is your speech to her ever condescending (e.g., talking to her as if she were unintelligent, a child, or inferior)? (Col. 4:6)
- Does your communication have a good balance of depth and light-heartedness? Are you fun to be around at home?
- Are you attentive to her when she talks to you (e.g., you stop what you are doing, turn to her, look her in the eyes, and listen intently)?

10. Show her courtesy (v. 8)

When you are truly humble and lowly in your thinking, you will be courteous (chivalrous) to your wife. Humility invites God's grace (cf. 1 Pet. 5:5).

- Do you regularly praise her and express gratitude to her or do you have a critical spirit towards her? (Ro. 13:7)
- Do you exercise tolerance for her little offenses, peculiarities, or quirks? (Eph.4:1-3)
- Do you receive correction in a gracious manner so as to be a student of your critic, or do you respond with a defensive posture, attack her, etc.? (Mt. 7:3-5)
- Do you commonly overreact or are you hypersensitive to her comments, actions, etc.?

11. Bless her, even when she attacks (v. 9)

You do not have the right to return evil for evil (cf. Ro. 12:14-21; 1 Pet. 2:23), but instead are to aggressively return good. This means never pushing her buttons or pouring gas on a flame. This means to seek out ways to serve her, pray for her salvation or spiritual growth, express gratitude for her, speak well of her, and desire her well-being. This unnatural behavior is to be fueled by the realization that God has given you undeserved blessing instead of judgment (cf. 1 Jn. 4:19).

- When your wife sins, is your response characterized by humility, grace, mercy, and gentleness or spiritual pride and impatience? (Mt. 5:5,7; Gal. 6:1)
- Do you tend to withdraw from her during conflict (e.g., cold shoulder, silent treatment, etc.)? (Eph. 4:26-27)
- When she displeases you, are you vengeful towards her (e.g., getting even, trying to hurt back, etc.)? (Ro. 12:14-21)
- When your wife sins, do you reprove her gently and in private so as to give her hope and point her to the Lord? (Gal. 6:1; Mt. 18:15; Lk. 17:3)

- Is “keeping the peace” simply an excuse to avoid pursuing biblical reconciliation? (Mt. 5:23-24; Ro. 12:21)

12. Guard your tongue (v. 10)

Here you are exhorted to guard your tongue from sinful, deceitful speech. Rather, you are to speak the truth in love so as to edify (“build up”) and give grace to your wife (cf. Eph. 4:15, 29; Col. 4:6).

- Does your relationship suffer from frequent arguments or the inability to resolve conflicts? (Eph. 4:26-27)
- Do you have a habit of angry outbursts? If so, what form(s) do they typically take (e.g., raised voice, threats, throwing, hitting, etc.)? (Jas. 1:20)
- Are your words to her kind, soft, and gentle? Are they pure and delightful, and do they bring comfort to her heart? (Col. 4:6)
- Do you speak to her in a way that builds her up instead of tears her down; this includes your nonverbal communication (e.g., facial expressions, tone of voice, posture, etc.)? (Eph. 4:15,29; Pro. 21:19)
- Do you frequently talk for her or interrupt her or do you listen carefully so as to understand her? (1 Cor. 13:5a “Love is not rude”; Jas. 1:19)
- Do you frequently speak to her about the joys of meditating on the Lord and His Word? (Ps. 9:14; Phil. 4:4-5)
- Do you frequently praise her for biblical character traits she is growing in, even in “small” ways (e.g., reverence, self-control, discretion, love, joy, peace, etc.)?

13. Turn away from evil; pursue peace and do good (v. 11)

You are to “flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness” (2 Ti. 2:22); constantly cultivate and guard your purity and any strong desire that would enslave you and thereby cause you to neglect your duties to God and to your wife. Also, pursue peace with diligence, since fighting and conflict come naturally to the fallen sinner.

- Is your sexual relationship with your wife an example of biblical love, which is characterized by giving (rather than receiving)? (Jn. 3:16; 1 Cor. 7:3-5)
- Do you make demands of her sexually that make her uncomfortable or provoke impure thoughts/desires in you? (1 Cor. 7:4)
- Do you have any personal habits, mannerisms, hygiene issues, etc. that hinder your wife’s enjoyment of sexual relations? (Yes, you’ll actually have to ask her!)
- What improvements would your wife have you make to improve your physical intimacy with her? (Ask her!)
- Are you affectionate towards your wife? Does your affection include a balance of non-sexual forms? How would your wife answer this (find out!)?