Men and women are different. If this is the first time you’ve heard this, you should probably talk to your parents first before you read further.

Researchers have discovered that women and men have different biological, psychological, and professional realities. Biologically, women have larger connections between the two hemispheres of their brains and a tendency toward superior verbal ability. Men’s greater brain hemisphere separation may contribute a slight tendency toward abstract reasoning and a superior capacity to mentally rotate objects in space. Psychologically, women frequently find their sense of identity through relationships with others; men tend to find their sense of self through being separate. Professionally, men are often more focused on long-range goals; women are frequently more attentive to the process by which those goals are achieved.

The contrasts between women and men are sometimes so striking one wonders how the attraction between them can be so strong. Yet there is an inherent completeness when a man and woman marry. Our partner makes up for what we lack. When we are discouraged, they are hopeful. When we are stingy, they are generous. When we are weak, they are strong. Because we are male and female joined together, there is wholeness. But our differences, if not understood and accepted, become a source of confusion rather than completeness.

[From Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts, by Les and Leslie Parrott]

FOR DISCUSSION
What gender differences can you identify off the top of your head?

Encounter read God’s Word so that He can speak to you.

1 Peter 3:1-7

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the
wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Explore God’s Word asking questions of what you saw.
The notes which follow may help you to think through these questions

1) What does it mean to be “submissive” (1 Peter 3:1)? And remember that the same command is given to every believer toward each other (Ephesians 5:21).

- How is a wife to show that submission to her husband?

- What affect could this have on her husband—especially an unbelieving husband?

- How is a husband to show submission to his wife?

- What will happen if he does? What if he does not?

2) When it comes to gender differences, the bottom line is not to eliminate them, but to celebrate them. Why?

3) Do you agree that, simplistically speaking, the fundamental difference between the sexes is that men are focused primarily on achievement and women on relationships? What examples can you think of to back up your position?
Husbands, by and large, don’t understand how important emotional intimacy is to their wives. Husbands say, “I want to do things with her, and all she wants to do is talk.” Whose problem is this? The husband’s, the wife’s, or both? How is this misunderstanding related to gender differences?

A wife’s most basic needs in marriage are: (1) to be cherished, (2) to be known, and (3) to be respected. What do these mean, and how can a husband give these to his wife?

A husband’s most basic needs in marriage are: (1) to be admired, (2) to have autonomy, and (3) to enjoy shared activity. What do these mean, and how can a wife give these to her husband?

Notes On The Passage  (Adapted from Dr. Thomas Constable Bible Study Notes)

1-2 - "In the same way" refers to the spirit of deference (humble submission) that Peter had already advocated regarding our dealings with government authorities (2:13-17) and people in direct authority over us (2:18-25). Primarily he meant: "Be submissive" in the same way Christ submitted to the Father (2:21-24).

Clearly Peter was speaking of the relationship of wives to their husbands, not the relationship of women to men generically. Neither was he addressing only wives with unsaved husbands, as is clear from the clause "even if any are disobedient" (even though he specifically included unbelieving husbands.

Wives are not the only people Peter commanded to be submissive. Submission should characterize every Christian. The Greek word hypotasso ("to submit") has in view the maintenance of God's willed order, not personal inferiority of any kind.

As all employees should submit to their masters, even the "unreasonable" (2:18), so all wives should submit to their husbands, even the unbelieving ("disobedient"). In view of his terminology "be won" (v. 1), it seems clear that Peter had in mind the spiritual conversion of an unsaved husband. Peter did not promise that unbelieving husbands would inevitably become Christians as a result of the behavior he prescribed. That decision lies with the husband. Nevertheless the wife can have confidence that she has
been faithful to God if she relates to her husband submissively.

The examples of suffering, that Peter cited as good models for Christians in 2:13-25, did not involve sinning. He said wives should submit "in the same way" (3:1). Furthermore, the wife's behavior is to be "chaste" (3:2) or morally pure (Gr. *agnos*). Peter held up Sarah as an example (3:6), not because she submitted to Abraham by even sinning in Genesis 12 and 20, but because she submitted to him.

It is specifically the wife's behavior, in contrast to her speech, that Peter said may be effective in winning an unsaved husband. His point was, simply, that a godly wife's *conduct* is going to be more influential than anything she might say. "Chaste" is a general term describing her purity, while "respectful" reflects her attitude toward her husband that rises out of her attitude toward God's will.

Submission involves at least four things: First, it begins with an attitude of entrusting oneself to God (cf. 2:23-25). The focus of our life must be on Jesus Christ. Second, submission requires respectful behavior (3:1-2). Nagging is not respectful behavior. Third, submission involves the development of a godly character (3:3-5). Fourth, submission includes doing what is right (3:6). It does not include violating other Scriptural principles. Submission is imperative for oneness in marriage.

3-4 - Peter was not telling wives to refrain from giving attention to their physical appearances. His point was that this should not be their total or primary concern. He urged the cultivation of the inner person ("hidden person of the heart") as well. Beauty is more than skin deep. He contrasted what human society values and what God values. A "gentle" disposition and a tranquil ("quiet") "spirit" can make even a plain woman very attractive, not only to God but to men (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Tim. 2:9-10).

5-6 - "Sarah" is a good example of such a woman. We see her attitude of respect in the way she spoke to Abraham (v. 2). "Lord" sounds servile to us, but an equally acceptable translation of the Greek word is "sir." The point is, that she verbally expressed her submission to him in a way that was appropriate in her culture. Women who behave as Sarah did show that they are "her daughters (children)" in spirit. Such behavior demonstrates trust in God and holiness, separation from sin to God's will.

"Without being frightened by any fear" - If a Christian wife was suffering for her faith because of her conduct, she could gain great confidence by doing what Peter counseled and what Sarah practiced. She could understand that any suffering that came her way was not a result of her sinful behavior, but in spite of her godly behavior (cf. 2:20; Prov. 3:25).

7 - The Christian wife's new freedom in Christ created new problems and challenges for her. Apparently Peter wanted to communicate more encouragement (vv. 5-6) and tenderness to the women because of their "weaker," more vulnerable state, not because he believed they were greater sinners than their husbands. What follows in verse 7 is just as challenging as what we have read in verses 1-6.

As with his instructions to wives, Peter began his counsel to the husbands with a command to think right first (cf. 3:1-2). He said men should cultivate "understanding." This brief charge carries profound implications. It requires active listening to the wife, as well as a study of her temperament, emotions, personality, and thought patterns. It is a tall order to know one's wife, to understand her, even to be "understanding" with her. However, the knowledge in view is probably primarily knowledge of God's Word concerning the proper treatment of one's wife.

By comparing a wife to a "weaker" vessel, Peter was not implying that wives or women are inferior to husbands or males, or that they are weaker in every way or most ways. Obviously, in many marriages
the wife is the *stronger* person: emotionally, mentally, spiritually, morally, and socially. Men are generally physically stronger than women. In view of this, husbands need to treat their wives with special consideration. Both the husband and the wife are vessels, but husbands are more typically similar to iron skillets, whereas wives resemble china vases, being more delicate. They are equally important, but different. Peter banished any implication of essential "inferiority," with his reminder that the wife is a "fellow heir" of God's "grace" just as much as the husband. God deals with both types of people the same when it comes to bestowing grace on them. He shows no favoritism or partiality because of their genders. Wives may normally be more delicate in some respects than their husbands, but spiritually they are equal. "Life" probably refers to both physical life and spiritual life, since husbands and wives share both equally.

The husband who does not treat his wife with honor will not get answers to his "prayers" to the degree he could if he treated her with honor (cf. Matt. 6:14-15; 1 Tim. 2:8). In other words, disobedience to the will of God regarding how a man treats his wife hinders the husband's *fellowship* with God.

One of a husband's primary responsibilities in a marriage is caring for his wife. Caring requires understanding. If you are married, what are your wife's greatest needs? Ask her. What are her greatest concerns? Ask her. What are her hopes and dreams? Ask her. What new vistas would she like to explore? Ask her, and keep on asking her over the years! Her answers will enable you to understand and care for her more effectively.

**Going Further**

One thing we can do to train ourselves to remember, is to memorize a part of what our Father has said to us. The Holy Spirit can use this to change our thinking so that our “heads” are more like Jesus.

This week, memorize 1 Peter 3:7