

EVERY HUSBAND FEELS LIKE A JERK AND EVERY WIFE AGREES!

By Gordon Bals

As I have consistently worked with couples doing marital counseling, I have come to recognize two lies couples believe that weigh marriages down. The first is from the husband's perspective, "Every husband feels like a jerk and every wife agrees." The second is from the wife's perspective, "Every woman feels alone and every husband leaves her there." Although not every couple is caught up in believing these lies, I have regularly watched them haunt husbands and wives in their marriages.

This newsletter and the next will deal with the first lie. There are several reasons it develops. First of all, the Scriptures teach that men are to be the leaders in the marriage relationship. This leadership is first and foremost spiritual even though it involves other aspects. By that I mean the husband is to remember the provision and presence of Christ in the marital context and lead his wife in tasting and being cared for by God. He is to shepherd (guide, direct) the marriage towards the spiritual sustenance God wishes to bestow on both husband and wife.

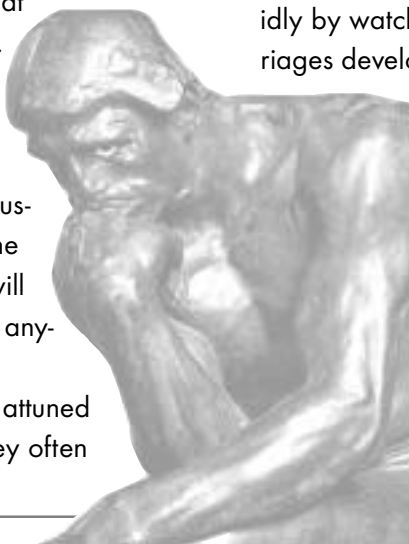
This highlights the initial development of the problem. As fallen human beings we naturally fail at anything we do especially relationships. No matter a husband's competence or effort he cannot lead his wife without failure. God designed life so that we would need His help each day. Every husband will fail at their calling to follow the Lord and nourish their wife, and there will be significant evidence of his failure for anyone who is watching.

By nature, women tend to be more attuned to relational dynamics, which means they often

recognize a husband's failure long before he does. In addition, the creation account in Genesis (Genesis 1-3) makes several things clear. As humans we are made to rule and subdue (make a difference in our world) and be fruitful and multiply (be connected). Men tend to be geared towards making a difference (ruling and subduing), so in God's redemptive discipline, He causes men to experience more struggle in working. On the other hand, women are generally bent towards connectedness (being fruitful and multiplying), so their divine discipline occurs in the domain of relationships. The scriptures record that the wife will experience frustration in relationship with her husband (Genesis 2:16) that is unique to her and different than what the man will experience in marriage. Thus, wives are often paying attention to, and being impacted by, the marital pain long before the husband is aware of it at all.

A man's lack of awareness is the second part of the problem. Ever since Adam abandoned his responsibility in the Garden to see to it that no one ate from the fruit of the tree (God gave him this command before Eve was created), husbands have been following suit. Evil comes in, tempts our wives, and like Adam, we stand idly by watching as evil overcomes our wives. As marriages develop, I find wives getting pulled more and more into deception (and the bitterness, resentment, depression, etc. that come with it) and men becoming more and more indifferent as their wives and marriages are ransacked by evil.

This is where the lie takes on life. The woman is seeing and experiencing the pain of being hunted and hurt by evil, while the man fails to stand up to evil or deal with the way evil is working through



his flesh to cause damage. The wife begins to believe that her husband does not care about her and at the same time begins to pay more attention to the lies of evil. Often she will try to put words to the husband's failure but without the kindness that helps him consider the hope of the Gospel. In response, men move from sins of omission (ones they were not fully aware of) to sins of commission (ones that are more intentional and painful).

Now the fullness of the lie has taken life. The husband feels like a jerk and his wife agrees. What can be dangerous is wives often grow what I will call "relationship righteousness." Since the wife usually sees more of the marital failure and feels more of the marital pain, she naturally (but often foolishly) concludes that her husband has no clue what is going on and the success of the marriage is up to her. In addition, because of failure by the husband (and also past failure by men), the wife usually has a reservoir of resentment and bitterness towards men that evil taps into to cement a subtle arrogance and hardness against her husband. This causes wives to walk in the flesh and look at their husbands according to the flesh. The wives then conclude that they themselves must be the source of leading the marriage out of chaos. Such a belief makes wives very "noisy," further exacerbating the husbands' failure to hear God.

Sadly, men step right in line with the fleshly lie being perpetrated by evil in their marriages. Their shame over failure in the marriage and their fleshly bent towards passivity frequently means they and their marriages are defined by the wife. Marital counseling is typically initiated by the wife and along with her comes an ashamed and passive man who is defining all the problems through the wife's eyes and spending most of his energy defending himself. The man is owned by his failure and feels like a jerk, and the wife wholeheartedly agrees. This lie weighs down a marriage and keeps a couple from finding the redemption and freedom possible in Christ.

Next quarter I will talk about the ways to experience freedom from this lie. In the meantime I want you to try to re-contextualize the lie to a truth that is more fitting to your unique marriage in a way that will help you and your spouse to experience freedom. Perhaps something like, "Every marriage is rigged for frustration so that we have to depend on God," or "Every husband forgets his God and every wife does too" or "Every husband looks only at his resources and every wife gets discouraged as they evaporate" will help you to start moving in a better direction.

NEWS

DAYMARK TEACHING IS NOW ON CD and the sound quality of the teaching has been greatly enhanced (you will notice the difference if you previously heard the messages on tape.) Find a current list of available messages with this newsletter.

The board is prayerfully considering teaming up with an organization that helps ministries do **golf outings as fundraisers**. If we sense the Lord saying Yes the fundraiser will be in early April 2006 in preparation for changes we hope to make this time next year (hiring Dewayne Wood and an office assistant that keeps regular hours). Please pray with and for us in regards to the fundraiser. *Since the end of 2004 the financial giving has been very encouraging*

with some drop off last month. Often the summer months are more difficult financially so if the Lord leads we would greatly appreciate your financial gifts during this time.

JULIE is facilitating a 6 week study at Altadena Valley Presbyterian Church beginning Tuesday, June 7, 2005 at 9:30AM and childcare will be provided. The title of the study is **Furthering the Gospel from Pulpit to Pew: The Impact of the Gospel on Daily Conversations.**

Call AVPC, 967-0680, for more details.

GORDON will be doing a 12 week group next fall for husbands. The teaching and group interaction will cover issues like masculine character (strength and tenderness), spiritual leadership, sexual purity, dealing

with a wife's disappointment, etc. The group will meet one morning each week between 6:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Email Gordon@daymarkcounseling.com for a registration form and more information.

about DAYMARK

Daymark Pastoral Counseling is a non-profit organization designed to make Gospel-centered pastoral counseling and teaching resources accessible to individuals, couples, families, churches and para-church organizations. Gifts or financial contributions made to Daymark are tax deductible.

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