

EVERY WIFE FEELS ALONE AND EVERY HUSBAND LEAVES HER THERE (PART 2)

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BY GORDON BALS

Last newsletter I tried to detail the way marital relationship can leave the wife feeling alone and disconnected. The evil one wants husbands to believe they do not have what it takes to nourish their wives in the Gospel; and he wants wives to believe they don't deserve it, are too difficult to be worthy of it, and are too powerless to invite it. Knowing that the Gospel is alive and growing in her heart gives a wife rest in her relational world. When a wife has confidence in the Gospel, she knows something beautiful is alive in her that is attractive and redemptive.

(It works all things together for good.) Therefore, she is not *owned* by the threat of relational failure. She moves in and through relationships with a growing confidence that her inner character is being enjoyed and that it will maintain, nurture, or restore relationship wherever possible because Christ lives in her. When evil is ruling, a wife feels anguish in her relational world – she feels desolate – like she is not desirable and is unable to nourish relationships.

Recognize that the battleground in the marriage is the wife's heart (inner person). Scripture clearly teaches that a woman's beauty is on the inside (1 Peter 3); while it recognizes that a core calling of a husband is to sacrifice for his wife, so that she becomes more beautiful (Ephesians 5, Proverbs 12:4). A "Gospel-centered marriage relationship" is one where the husband is growing sacrificial love that nourishes a wife's inner beauty, while the wife is growing a merciful response to her husband's

pursuit that encourages him in the process. Husbands turn away from this call in frustration because of the futility involved, while the wife tends to grab hold of it in anger because of the pain involved. Only the Gospel can turn masculine frustration into sacrificial love and feminine control into merciful support.

To start on the journey, husband and wife must recognize the call of marital love – to help the wife become beautiful on the inside. In order to nourish his wife on

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the inside, a husband must change in two ways. First, he must turn from a focus on *external management* to *internal renovation*. Second, he must turn *dutiful compliance* into *caring involvement*. Often a man is attracted to a woman

with his eyes. In addition, he usually begins to think of caring for his wife in categories such as working hard and earning money or taking care of the lawn. Notice, a husband's focus is external and dutiful. To move towards redemption, a husband must conceptualize his calling as giving himself to his wife in such a way that he helps facilitate a change inside of her. For instance, if a wife is stressed over some circumstance, the husband wants to listen with discernment so that he can expose unbelief and encourage faith. Regardless of where he starts or how he uniquely carries out this call, a husband is to provide a place of spiritual sustenance in such a way that his wife grows inner beauty as a result of his care.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- **GORDON** will be teaching a new seminar called "Every Husband Feels Like a Jerk and Every Wife Agrees"! (the content of previous newsletters) Tuesday evenings in July at Red Mountain Church.
- **DEWAYNE WOOD** will officially start counseling with Daymark on Monday, July 17, 2006. He will start taking appointments in the middle of June. Please remember to refer potential counselees his way!
- **JULIE** is teaching her Safety & Strength seminar in a retreat format for the Women in Ministry Group from Reformed Theological Seminary – Orlando on October 7-8, 2006.

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A core quality in this journey is kindness. Proverbs 19:22 says, “What is desirable in a man is his kindness (or steadfast love).” Kindness is a personification of the Gospel – grace and truth mixed together in a battle against evil. Kindness is not indifferent or passive; it is *involved*. A kind man can offer his wife mercy, or he has the courage to help his wife see how easily she is deceived. Kindness, by its very nature, is as truthful as it is tender. The two qualities mix together. A wife will not grow inner beauty without a mixture of both.

How does a wife aid in the process of growing inner beauty? She becomes more vulnerable. The husband in Song of Songs describes his wife as, “A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a spring locked, a fountain sealed” (4:12). In ancient times a garden was walled off for protection from predators. The construction of this passage indicates the woman is like a walled off garden and what would be understood is that the garden keeper, or the wife in this case, has the key. To let someone into the garden, the gate had to be opened. No husband can develop the type of character that leads to perfect care; he will always fail in ways that hurt or lead to disappointment. It takes vulnerability for a wife to open up to a husband.

One thing that can help a wife is to bear in mind that her husband is distinctively designed to remember the Gospel in the context of marriage. Since evil pursues a wife more intensely than the husband (Genesis 3:15), a wife can be more easily deceived than she realizes. It is good for women to remember these words in the context of marriage, “Women should listen and learn quietly and submissively. For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. And it was the woman, not Adam, who was deceived by Satan, and sin was the result” (1 Timothy 2:11-14). I would encourage wives to hear the passage this way, “Wives, in the flesh you will have a tendency to think your husbands are clueless in all that matters in this life – especially in relationships – and you will want to teach them. But remember the Lord has fashioned husbands to help you recognize the ways evil comes after *you*. Your restfulness in the Gospel will be added support for them to speak more clearly and passionately to the ways evil is attacking you.” When women tear apart husbands in despair, they may very well be wounding a primary instrument of redemption.

Vulnerability is the core requirement for the wife. Wives, this does not mean that you don’t speak or even help your husband see his failure. It means, as you speak, you remember that your husband is uniquely designed to remember God – you are rarely showing him things he doesn’t know – you are reminding him of things he is too afraid to take action on. Your belief in his calling helps to diminish the fear in his soul that keeps him from standing in between you and evil. Wives, as you are growing the vulnerability to bolster a husband’s involvement, you must then grow the humility to inspire him. This involves not judging him according to the flesh (seeing only his sin and failure). If you can see his heart (and it will take faith and humility to see it) and speak encouragement to him, his passion will grow to battle evil on your behalf.

A wife’s confidence in relationship is borne out of her connection to the Lord and His life in her heart. This happens as a husband is growing the character to nourish his wife in the Gospel while pushing evil outside the marriage. In response, the wife is vulnerably inviting her husband towards her and encouraging him in the battle. I don’t believe any husband with the life of Christ in him wants to leave his wife alone, and no wife wants to grasp foolishly at the wind for what only God can give her. So let’s stop fighting each other and turn our energies toward the evil one. As we do, wives can come alive with the hope and authority of the Gospel and not even hell itself can prevail against such beauty.



DAYMARK FUNDRAISER UPDATE...

We would to give a huge **THANK YOU** to every individual who participated in the first ever **DAYMARK PASTORAL COUNSELING PICNIC AND PRAYER WALK** held April 23, 2006 at Heardmont Park. Many of you prayed, gave financially and volunteered time to make this a huge success. After paying the expenses related to the fundraiser, we have raised \$39,000 and can now move forward with our plans to hire another counselor, enlarge our office space, update our website, buy a copier, provide professional development, print new brochures, and design some new workshops among other activities.

ABOUT DAYMARK

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