

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for,
it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.
For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*
(Matthew 18:19,20)



SECTION 5 - LESSON 41

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth:

• *Sue's Counsel For The Ezer*

1. "Ride 'Em, Rope 'Em, Brand 'Em"
2. Beware of the Mavericks!
3. Don't Step In Unwisely
4. Monitor the Media!
5. "You Belong To Me"
6. Don't Give Way to Fear!
7. Nurture A Beautiful Spirit
8. Obedience — Isn't That For Dogs?
9. Call *Him* "Lord"??
10. Eve Was Deceived, Are You?
11. Grandmothers—The Queen's *Best* Allies
12. Are You An *Ezer*?



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If he sees the negative effect his wrong life choices have on you, his love will compel him to do anything he can to change.

If your husband is a hardened, mocking, or God-denying fool, he'll resist change. You'll need to fast and cry out to God on his behalf.

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth: *Sue's Counsel For The Ezer*

Introduction

You may notice in these lessons how often we address women. That's because the role of a wife, an *ezer* [EH-zer] or companion/helper suitable for him, is more encompassing than that of her husband.

In a sense a marriage is much like a tree. Jesus is the root, a husband is the tree trunk, and a wife is the many branches.

- **A trunk without branches is a telephone pole, sturdy but fruitless.**
- **Branches without a trunk are a bush vulnerable to predators.**
- **And a tree without roots is dead.**

We've often seen something wonderful happen if your husband is either wise or a *peti*, a teachable man:

I'd like to share some thoughts with you because a wife and/or mother has such a **powerful influence** in her home. In an earlier lesson we discussed that your influence can be used for good or for evil. As in my case, we women tend to bring into our marriage a lot of what we didn't like about our own mothers. And, unless we scrutinize ourselves closely and change, we'll pass that same legacy onto our family.

So much of this culture's values and practices stands against women fulfilling their God-given responsibilities to their husband and children. So many are drawn outside their home and their capacity drained; little is left for their family.

Just as Eve was deceived to exercise self-willed autonomy, so are many within western Christianity following her destructive footsteps. Church couples now lead the divorce statistics in this nation. You may not think you're going to

be among their troubled ranks. But that's exactly what Satan wants you to believe.

Very subtly the Adversary turns a woman away from her husband, as he did by convincing my own mother how much happier she'd be independent, divorced and working full-time. From my youthful perspective, she was definitely *busier*, not happier...

In a very real sense, many Christian women are being seduced like the frog placed in a pot of cool water. Refreshed at first, he doesn't notice that it's being heated gradually until he boils to death.

What may seem refreshingly "free" to you if you put your own interests above those of your husband and family will eventually become a snare that chokes your serenity and enslaves your spirit.

Be aware of your powerful impact:

**What goes on in your home —
the peaceful atmosphere and the
emotional support —
is more affected by you than by
anyone else in the house.**

I encourage you to consider this material seriously and pray about how our Lord would have you apply it to your own life. These insights might also help someone close to you who needs your help as a sister in Jesus.

Whatever you see that God requires of you, follow through in obedient trust. You've got to fight for the *shalom*—the wholeness, harmony and well-being—of your home! Use your influence to make it a sanctuary where Jesus would feel welcomed.

Be sure you don't give in to worry. Worry is an affront to our Lord, because it reveals you don't trust Him. Your quiet confidence and trust as you walk as a woman of righteousness, however, will

find Him intervening in ways that stir songs of praise! "*The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever*" (Isaiah 32:17).

Keep this reality in mind:

**God won't bring about any of the
changes you desire in your husband
until your own heart is at rest
in quiet peace.**

Our Lord so often speaks to us wives first in the "couples" passages (Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, 1 Peter 3) so we'll find our peace in the "*cleft of the rock*", trusting His faithfulness. Then He acts to change in our husbands that which will deepen our covenant bond. If we don't purpose to stay at peace in the Spirit, we'll follow our own initiative with unpleasant results: we nag and become contentious (see Proverbs 19:13; 21:9).

Many of the personal reflections you'll find in this Lesson have been learned over the course of years in the sanctification of our marriage. We hope they'll encourage you, your husband and your children to *press on together*.

Continue to remind yourself that our Father in heaven is faithfully doing His part to help your family find themselves welcomed at the Judgment Throne. What are *you* doing to cooperate with Him?

1. "Ride 'Em, Rope 'Em, Brand 'Em" "Betroth 'Em, Marry 'Em, Belong to 'Em"

How much easier it would be for us to submit to our husbands if we'd been raised with godly fathers who nurtured us to trust in biblical authority! Sadly, far too few of us grew up with this blessing. Between the bruising of personal experience and the deception of media influence, we've been trained to view men

through filters of anxious caution and self-preservation against potential pain.

I was eight years old when my parents divorced, and I didn't know anyone else at that time whose parents had split up. My sister and I had no brothers through whom we could learn to understand the male mind. When I married Mike, I had no clue what it meant to belong to him, since I'd only experienced through my parents what it meant to NOT belong to each other!

How grateful I was for a dear older woman who "adopted" me early on in our marriage. She began the process of mentoring me to become the companion/helper for my husband as God intended. But there were still so many painful hurdles to cross, and often during our numerous relocations there were no older women to guide me.

I can look back now at all those experiences and see that God's grace included using Mike to help me learn to be the *ezer* he needed in both our marriage and the ministry in which we'd later serve.

Let's look at this "belonging" issue from another perspective. I've often thought I should have been raised on a ranch since I've always loved horses. We were blessed a few years ago to spend a week at a dude ranch in Wyoming with two other couples.

We soon found ourselves laughing about the parallels between finding a good wife and getting a good horse. Now don't get offended. If a reliable horse is a necessity for a rancher, how much more is a loving, helpful wife filled with affectionate deference needed by her husband? Our Lord intended that a wife be a bountiful gift to her husband:

• "***A wife of noble character is her husband's crown***" (Proverbs 12:4).

• "***He who finds a wife finds a great good; he has won the favor of the Lord***" (Proverbs 18:22).

A man yearns to marry because he's *incomplete*. That's why God brought Eve to Adam! A wise man who is seeking a godly wife needs to receive counsel from those who know him best. They can help him determine what character traits will complement his in such a way that *as a couple* they will be most effective to serve our Lord's purposes.

For instance, think about the wisdom of a young man (or woman) who asks his parents to list six traits that they think would comprise a suitable spouse for him. Don't you wish *your* parents had offered you that guidance?

From our ranching analogy, this potential wife search is the "**riding**" phase of courtship: discerning the one our Father has chosen to be his life partner.

A man needs to run a gauntlet of male authority, such as the woman's father or an elder who knows her well. Through talking with one these men, the prospective husband's motives can be probed and his readiness for marriage ascertained. When he's proved himself responsible and respected, he's showing his wife-to-be and those who care for her how precious she really is to him.

Next comes the "**roping**": He has courted her and shared with her his dreams and hopes that together they might fulfill our Lord's purposes. The engagement period culminates in the covenant joining at their wedding.

The "**branding**" comes as they become bonded to one another in the day to day sanctification of their lives together. It's critical that you learn the permanence of *belonging* to each other, and especially that you as a wife bask in

the God-given role of your husband to provide for and protect you. You belong to him as a precious jewel! Make it easy for him to walk in that role.

Do you remember the Native American wedding vase we discussed in Lesson 39? Reread Proverbs 31:10-31 to see how valued our Lord intended for you to be, and how He blends your heart with that of your husband.

Were you pursued wholeheartedly by the man who wanted you as his life partner, to work together to raise a generation of children who would learn what it means to love and to serve God?

If not, ask your husband to join you in prayer that he might be filled with the self-sacrificial *agape* love of Jesus toward you, and that you might respond to him with the loving respect and support that he needs.

During this critical time of learning to walk as one in step with the Spirit, your *parents* can be an obstacle if they take sides or meddle. There is a loving and responsible role of wisdom that parents can play in their children's marriage. But if they step in too soon to make themselves the third leg of the marriage stool, they're hindering the mutual dependence a couple needs to develop when ripples disturb their domestic pond.

Unwise intervention of parents can take the shape of listening to *only one side* of a situation and forming conclusions without first listening to *both* parties. Perhaps the rash of divorce in the Christian community has been prompted in part by meddling mothers in particular who have urged their unhappy daughters to flee their marriages.

It takes far greater commitment to come alongside a struggling couple to help them uphold their covenant than

to encourage them to throw in the towel and try again with another partner.

2. Beware of the Mavericks!

While Mike and the others were drowning worms and fly-fishing during our dude ranch adventure, I spent four glorious days in the saddle, roaming the Wyoming wilderness and reveling in our Father's fingerprints of creation.

I also gained some insights that may be helpful to us as women. Horses are impressive to behold, but unless they are broken to the saddle, they're useless to the rancher. A mount must be reliable or you can't trust him, especially if he's to be ridden by novice riders on steep mountainous trails.

After four days with the same horse, I got to know her responses and peculiarities pretty well. I could anticipate when she might try to swipe a mouthful of grass or kick a horse that came too close or lunge up a steep incline. But had she acted unpredictably, such as rearing up for no cause or biting other horses, I would have been very uncomfortable riding her. In fact, the rides would have been more nerve wracking than pleasurable.

Too many unreliable women — mavericks — have gotten the ear of today's wives. A *maverick* is a non-conforming, unreliable horse. There's a certain appeal in her wild beauty and free spirit. But her unprovoked hostility and willfulness agitate other horses and harm the people naive enough to think they can ride her.

Often, maverick women have been through the pain of divorce and haven't released their underlying sense of victimization or emotional betrayal. Or, they may be married "divorce wanna-bes" who have a grudge against men and a distrust of God.

Threatened by wives who are living according to our Father's plan, maverick women create a relational logjam. They sow seeds of discord and doubt in other women's lives, agitating their contentment and stirring up dissension against those women's husbands. Maverick influence can bring about passive-aggressive tactics in wives: stony silence, withheld affection or intimacy, or unilateral decisions, to name a few.

One young couple with whom we'd been sharing phoned us in great distress. They'd agreed on steps to take that would restore peace and wholeness to their home. Then the wife ran into some former friends who totally discounted our counsel and turned her heart against following through with it. When she told her husband about the encounter and the ensuing depression that had overcome her, he frustratedly asked, "*Why did you listen to them?*"

Have you ever noticed how often the Bible warns against *quarrelsome* or *nagging wives*? Look up Proverbs 19:13, 21:9, 21:19, 25:24, and 27:15,16. When you listen to agitating voices, whether in conversation with others or in your own mind, you tend to take it out on someone—most often your husband! And husbands have no defense against a contentious or quarrelsome wife except to flee or fight back.

What is it about us women that so stirs us to argue and make our homes a bastion of discord? (You'd be hard-pressed to find Scripture that pinpoints *men* as nags or perpetrators of quarrels in their homes!)

Yet when we humble ourselves before our Father and our husbands and turn away from contention, we can live as our Father designed. His blanket of peace can surround us even if difficult life cir-

cumstances stay just as they are.

One verse that comes to me often (because I need the reminder!) is the admonition of Isaiah 30:15: "*In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.*" But then the prophet adds this tragic disclaimer to those who refuse God's way, "*but you would have none of it.*"

Don't let mavericks or the world's worries and temptations distract you from the quiet and restful spirit our Father has for those who trust Him wholly. Discern if the women who offer you counsel are filled with the joyful, peaceable fruit of righteousness in their own lives.

Take stock of their marriages. Does Proverbs 31:11, "*Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value*" apply to them? If not, then *both* of you should recount our Lord's faithfulness to you, past and present, and purpose to walk in His way rather than your own!

How else can you spot a maverick? They are women who have no covering of husband or father, nor input from adult son or godly elder. They're "scattered", jumping from one activity, cause or relationship to another. They find it hard to trust a God who would allow them to have made such an unwise choice in husbands or failed male relationships.

Sadly, they're also the first to plant seeds of divorce and independence in their own daughters' hearts. Proverbs 19:3 fits a maverick's motivation: "*A person's own folly is what ruins [her] way, but [she] rages in [her] heart against God.*"

3. Don't Step In Unwisely

Jezebel of Hebrew Scriptures fame was a very religious woman, devoted to her false gods. She must have had a powerful, dominating spirit — she struck ter-

ror into the heart of Elijah right after he'd caused her pet prophets to be killed! Yet Jezebel undoubtedly saw herself as a loving, caring wife who wanted only what was best for her husband, Ahab.

Take, for example, the incident of Naboth's vineyard. (The account is found in 1 Kings 21.) Naboth, an Israelite, valued his ancestral property. So when King Ahab asked for it, he righteously refused to sell it. The pouting monarch whined to his wife, who hatched an insidious plan. She would defame the landowner, have him killed, and snatch his land.

The influence this woman had on her husband was assertive and dominating, bringing upon them both a legacy synonymous with wickedness: ***"Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him"*** (1 Kings 21:25).

Be wise. Know when God is calling you to rest quietly in Him so that He can bring corrective pressure to bear on your husband. Women who take matters into their own hands bring down unintended consequences upon their homes.

- Have you ever intervened to keep your husband from walking obediently in the Spirit as a man? Yes or no? If yes, what did you do? How did he react?

- Do you respond as his wife, or do you mother him and take the decision initiative upon yourself?

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- Do you make excuses for your husband, hide things about the kids from him, manipulate him emotionally to achieve your own desires?

Manipulation and subtle control are weapons you need to cast out of your life. These tools of iniquity may get you what you think you want but will wreak havoc on any hopes of the spiritual intimacy you may long for.

Jezebel paid a terrible price for her pattern of end-around intervention: She was heaved out an upper window and dogs licked up her blood. Your penalty may not be as graphic, but when you see the same duplicity in your children, you'll wish you could turn back the clock and make those changes for their sake!

"The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them" (1 Timothy 5:24).

The sins of most men are readily apparent. Much is made in the media of abusive fathers and husbands. The sins of maverick women, however, entail **control** and **manipulation** — subtle sins that are often difficult for a man to confront. But later, when the children of mavericks struggle in their own marriages, the true fruit is revealed. By then it's often too late to help.

4. Monitor the Media!

We receive Focus on the Family's monthly magazine and generally gain some interesting insights. But I was appalled by a story one month that was fiction but shouted out a very destructive message.

The tale involves an unhappily married woman and her young daughter who by chance meet a "wonderful man" who treats them both "wonderfully". She ends up divorcing her husband and living happily ever after with her new husband.

With women initiating over 85% of the divorces in this nation, need I say what impact that tale must have had on women readers? Are many fantasizing that they, too, can escape a painful marriage and find bliss the second or third time around?

What a deceitful satanic trap! Not only is a sacred covenant being broken, but second marriages, with a 65% divorce rate, are even less likely to succeed.

How many children are being raised with the impression that marriage is like chewing gum that you spit out when the flavor's gone? Certainly the skyrocketing divorce rate among the churched is not going to promote permanence in the biblical concept of marriage.

Remember, grumbling brought disaster on the discontented Israelites. Start looking at your cup as full rather than empty or bitter. Make these choices, and the Spirit of Jesus will empower you to live in them!

Are you willing to thank our Father for the husband He's given you, and start seeking ways to express contentment rather than dissatisfaction?

5. "You Belong To Me"

"The LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man"
(Genesis 2:22).

One afternoon several years ago Mike and I found ourselves at odds. I'd been doing all sorts of "needful things" like a rock-solid Martha, but Mike was in need of something else from me. He'd been swamped learning a new computer program, struggling for 6 weeks against a resistant machine. I'd pretty much left him alone, figuring he was a computer whiz and he'd finally work it all out.

BUT, I didn't realize that I'd given in to a spirit of independence that cut him off when he really needed my encouragement. The same "parallel railroad tracks" of diverse activities and purposes that had so fractured us at the retreat center were creeping in again, and I was blinded to it.

I'm so grateful that the Spirit stirred Mike to step in and confront this division. The way he did it has stayed with me as a striking visual image. Standing me in front of our big bathroom mirror, Mike stepped behind me and put his arms around me. "What do you see?" he asked. "Us together," I responded. He lovingly and emphatically affirmed, "That's right. We're in this together. *You belong to me!... YOU belong to me!... YOU BELONG TO ME!*"

Sisters, the degree to which you lack "belonging" to your husband reflects how deeply the spirit of independence and control has influenced you. As we wrote in our book ***Demolishing Strongholds***, abiding in that spirit's destructive influence ultimately leads to divorce. If you and your husband aren't experiencing a full sense of *belonging to each other*,

you need to repent and cry out to our Lord for help.

- Does your husband feel in his heart that you truly belong to him? Are you *comforted* or *disturbed* by the idea that you belong to one another? Explain your response.

- Do your children or responsibilities or activities push your husband down your priority list? Explain.

6. Don't Give Way to Fear!

“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”

(1 Peter 3:6,NIV).

Mike has previously exhorted men to walk wholeheartedly as loving and obedient servants of Jesus, particularly as they protect and guide their families. But what we are seeing is wholesale **fear** and **resistance** on the part of wives to trust that our Father is greater than their husbands when it comes to decision making!

Fearful of change, a resistant wife digs in her heels like a toddler and refuses to move into uncharted territory with her husband. Like Lot's wife (Genesis 19), when a man takes a courageous step of obedience forward, where is his wife,

his life partner?

Too often she's looking back at what might change to disrupt the carefully orchestrated schedules and activities she thinks are holding her family together. Without realizing it, many women turn into immovable “pillars of salt.”

Each of us was born into a fallen state thanks to the disobedience of our first parents. But don't let that propensity to step off our Lord's path keep you looking back over your shoulder in doubt and fear! Your husband *is* an imperfect person. But so are you and I!

Don't think that by holding onto a catalogue of his past failures you'll be blessed for resisting our Father's strategy of your husband's headship. Only your repentance and God's grace will help you let go of that record of his wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5). And, that's the call of the Spirit's love!

If you're fearful to trust the work Jesus is doing between you and your husband, you're telling Him that His redemptive power to cleanse and to heal is ineffectual as far as your marriage is concerned. Is THAT what you really believe about Jesus?

You'd think that after 18 moves I'd recognize that Mike isn't the one who's initiating the changes—our Father is. But I have to admit, I'm the ultimate “nester”; when our twigs are all in order I'm at peace. *Change* is not my favorite word!

With this in mind, I hope I can pass on to you an awareness of the **total sovereignty of our God**. He Who can redirect the course of rivers can alter my husband's heart to coincide with His purposes — even if it means moving again!

I can cooperate willingly, or I can choose to make Mike's life miserable by withholding affection or dragging my feet. The *choice* is mine, while the *power* to

carry me through change with peace and joy is the Spirit's. If I choose to yield to our Father's will, He responds with grace.

So I offer you this challenge: Decide this day which path *you* want to follow!

- Are you plagued by fear or worry about your husband, children, or anything else? Yes or no? List your concerns. Then repent for insulting God through your distrust and ask your husband and family for their forgiveness.

Please choose the humble path of trust for yourself in order to keep from giving in to fear or worry again.

7. Nurture A Beautiful Spirit

“Your beauty... 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”

(1 Peter 3:4).

The apostle Peter holds up Sarah as an example of trust to women of all time. By expending your efforts on growing a **gentle** and **quiet spirit** “*which is of great worth in God's sight*”, you can make yourself beautiful spiritually.

How much time do you wish you could spend (or already do!) on your *appearance*: your weight and diet, your hair, your clothes, your skin? If you're determined to walk as a woman who is being conformed to Jesus, then you may need to reconsider the energy you devote to your physical self beyond cleanliness and good health.

Does Peter's direction mean that you're supposed to be a drab, silent doormat? NOT AT ALL! Your personality isn't in question here, it's your spirit, your inner woman!

Do you so “spiritualize” your walk with Jesus that you sense His presence only when you're alone, isolated from your husband and kids? Then reconsider: Jesus replenished His relationship with His Father in the wee hours so that He would *be available* for His Father's work when others were around!

He didn't set Himself apart to just get a quick lift, but to *hear His Father's voice* and to put into action through loving obedience and *interaction with others* that which His Father told Him!

- Evaluate the time and effort you carve out to *nurture your spirit* in prayer and internalizing the Word. Be honest. How much more time do you devote to your physical needs than you spend communing with our Lord?

- In what ways do you encourage your husband, children or load-bearing friends with the insights the Spirit is showing you?

- Have you been able to savor the quiet, trusting spirit that comes from abiding in His presence? Yes or no?

If not, seek Him with all your heart and all your soul. Our Lord longs for that intimacy with you!

8. Obedience — Isn't That For Dogs?

"...the way Sarah obeyed Abraham, honoring him as her lord"

(1 Peter 3:6,NAS).

Our Father spoke through Peter an undeniable example for godly women of all time. Wives who trust Him should imitate Sarah, who *obeyed* Abraham, her husband, and called him *lord*. Whoa! That's quite a command, isn't it! Let's look at these two issues separately.

The idea behind the Greek word for obedience means ***to listen*** with the intent of ***following through in yieldedness***. Picture yourself as Sarah, dragged away from your family and relatives to spend the rest of your life wandering around the desert living in a goatskin tent. And yes, even being offered up as a wife to Abimelech, a pagan king, because your husband gave way to fear (see Genesis 20)!

How did God respond to the needs of this faithful woman? He kept Abimelech away from Sarah, and closed up the wombs of all the women in his household. Keep this point firmly fixed: Your trust causes our God to act on your behalf!

We don't get any indication from Scripture that Sarah doubted God's ability to rescue her and sustain her through all their circuitous adventures. (Her trust in His promise to bring forth countless descendants did waver regarding her

yearning for a child to continue Abraham's lineage. Yet she learned from the bitter consequences that Hagar's child was *not* God's plan of fulfillment.)

Do you see the connection between Sarah's ***trust in her God*** and her ***obedience to follow and support*** her husband throughout their life odyssey? This is such an important point that we need to explore it fully.

Our Father has not called you to be the spiritual head of your household! You were joined in covenant union with your husband to become one, but the two can have only *one head*. And He has designated since creation that the head of a wife is her husband!

Have I struggled with that at times during our thirty-six years of marriage? Sure I have, and when I've resisted God's plan, the consequences have disrupted our peace and brought about pain for both Mike and me as well as our son.

But then our faithful Father manages to break through my tears and frustration when I call upon Him in repentance. He restores wholeness and harmony in our home as I choose to trust His loving sov-

Chain of God-given Authority in the Home

God the Father

Jesus Christ — *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"*
(Matthew 28:18).

Husbands/
Fathers — *"Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Corinthians 11:3).



ereignty. Our Lord is fully capable of leading Mike. *I* must choose whether or not to rebel in my role as Mike's wife.

I also need to decide if I will yield or not to His ways. If I choose to walk out from under God's protective design, I remove myself from His power to endure with a "*gentle and quiet spirit*" whatever the aggravating encounter was that precipitated my unrest.

- **You may be one of those wives who thinks you're far more "spiritual" than your husband, and perhaps you are. (But consider that you may be putting yourself on a pedestal, and our Lord doesn't bestow grace on idols!) Does your "spiritual maturity" augment your role as *ezer*? Yes or no? Ask your husband.**

- **The real indicator of your love-grounded obedient trust is this: Do your *husband and children* rise up to call you blessed because you walk in the aroma of Jesus (Proverbs 31:28)? Discuss this with them.**

9. Call *Him* "Lord"??

"Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Peter 3:6,NAS).

Let's examine a second point about this passage. The same Greek word that describes our *relationship with Jesus* as

Lord is the word Peter uses in regard to a husband being called "lord" by his wife. It connotes "*wielding authority for the good of others.*" Doesn't that show you just how serious our Father is about His design of headship for our husbands?

Our righteousness is found through our loving trust in Jesus. But, are we soiling His garment by choosing to defy His Word and His order for our homes? If your husband is "lord", then he's serving in a God-given role to shield you from danger.

That's why independent wives who ignore or fail to seek their husband's input often make decisions that negatively impact the rest of their household. If you make it hard for your husband to walk in the responsibility God has given him, then you'll have to bear the dire consequences your willful pride creates.

You may be thinking, "I really do love *Jesus* as my Lord. But it's *this husband* I have such problems with!" Guess what! Our Father is sovereign. You weren't forced to marry this man, even if circumstances in your life at that time made it seem the best option.

You are in a ***covenant relationship*** with him. That very thought should stir a holy fear in your heart of ever breaking it, no matter what society or counselors or friends say!

Our Father knows that women's fast-moving mental capabilities make us both intuitive and impulsive. (Research has proven this out: The cord that connects the two hemispheres of our brain—the *corpus callosum*—is larger in women than in men. While we're able to come to swift conclusions, we can't always explain how we got there! And we completely miss dealing with the "why" of decisions, an element that men more often weigh.)

By ordaining that wives should submit to the analytical “slowness” of our husbands because they’re created that way, God has positioned us to exercise both loving self-control as well as appreciation for our God-created differences. This earthly journey is a testing ground for our willingness to trust our Father and to submit to His ways.

It’s all too easy to occupy your thoughts with “out there” causes that don’t bless your family or change your character into Christ-likeness. For instance, I used to spend precious time on the Internet getting all stirred up about what was going on in Israel, to the point that my emotional distress over what was happening there interfered with conversations with Mike and the peace in our home!

In a similar vein, my mother was so enmeshed in the personal lives of celebrities through magazines and TV that these strangers became more important to her than involvement in the needs of her grandchildren.

Women often choose to focus on “out there” causes because they can’t hurt you the way people close to you can. But that doesn’t give you the freedom to pursue those interests to the neglect of your family’s well-being! **BE CAREFUL** what you import into your home through causes and activities and involvement that consume your focus and energy!

- **Is it easy for you to call your husband “lord” or to live according to that call? Yes or no? Describe why you answered as you did.**

- **Whatever comes out of your mouth first or you talk about most often indicates where your values and priorities lie. Ask your family what you bring up first or talk about the most. (Don’t argue with them about it!) After you’ve heard what they’ve said, how does it make you feel?**

10. Eve Was Deceived; Are You?

“And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner”

(1 Timothy 2:14).

Whenever I forget that our Father has designed me to be one in union with Mike, I wander around the minefield of my thoughts listening to the demonic voice of the “*accuser of the brethren*” (Revelation 12:10).

I find myself entertaining every past offense Mike ever committed against me. I can almost *see* my anger rising! Yet who’s the one being tormented here? Not Mike! He doesn’t know what thoughts I’m indulging, though he’s certainly the recipient of the negative emotions aroused by all those nasty memories!

By listening to those accusations I’m tiptoeing into dangerous territory. If I don’t take those angry, painful thoughts captive and start thinking the way Jesus would have me think (see 2 Corinthians 10:5), then I’m setting myself up to be controlled by them.

I’ll take action based on those thoughts and start giving Mike the cold

shoulder or making snide comments or just plain ignoring him. Does this pattern sound familiar to you?

If I choose to continue in this stubborn rebellion *against my Father* that I'm taking out on my husband, I'll form a habit based on this rebellion—and a demonic stronghold will be securely lodged in my mind to color and negatively influence every aspect of my marriage relationship.

The most common demonic stronghold among women appears to be ***Independence and Divorce***. This unclean spirit inhabits rebellious, deceived wives who initiate the majority of divorces in this country.

When a wife habitually entertains negative thoughts about her husband, her emotions get agitated to the point of reacting against him. The spirit of independence cuts her off from warmth with her husband; she decides she'd be better off without him and walks away from their covenant.

Is that pattern one that you want to perpetuate, separating yourself from loving obedience to your Father by resisting His design for your husband's role in your life?

Don't be one of those foolish women about whom Paul warns Timothy. A "*silly, weak-willed woman*" pulls herself out from the discernment of her husband in order to be impulsively swayed by all sorts of religious teachings! These women are "*always learning but never able to come to the full knowledge of the truth*" (2 Timothy 3:6,7).

I encountered one such woman at the airport after my flight had been delayed. She and a myriad of other people (mostly women) had participated in a conference led by a widely known teacher from our area.

She was bubbling over about his teachings on intercession and how much she had learned.

I asked her about her home life, and voiced one question in particular: "How will *your husband and your children* be blessed by your having attended this conference?"

She hung her head. "Well," she responded, "my husband and I have been talking about getting a divorce, and my kids are out of control." From that point I was able to direct her heart into God's plan for covenant relationship with her husband. I showed her the foolishness of running off to conferences that concern "out there" situations when her own home lacks the peaceable presence of the Spirit.

If you are choosing willful disobedience, do you really think your "intercessory prayer" is penetrating the heavens? *You* may feel like you're accomplishing something, but our Father can't hear the prayers of those who are living in rebellion to His Word and His ways!

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil (1 Peter 3:12).

Taking action without having all the facts is a dangerous propensity among many women. An example is Bathsheba, most known for her illicit dalliance with King David. But for our purposes, let's look at her conversation with her son Solomon's half-brother Adonijah.

Although David had promised that Solomon would inherit the throne, his son Adonijah craftily turned the heart of the people to himself. Only through the intervention of the prophet Nathan and Zadok the priest was Adonijah's plan to seize power thwarted.

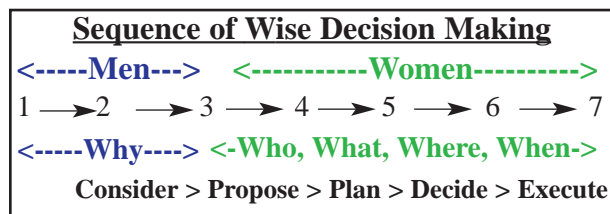
After her son had been established as king, Bathsheba was approached by Adonijah to intercede for him to Solomon in order to marry David's final companion, Abishag. Not realizing that this would add fuel to Adonijah's claim as rightful heir, she approached Solomon, asking that he not deny her request. Solomon saw right through his brother's ploy, reprimanding his mother and ordering Adonijah's execution. (You can study this for yourself in 1 Kings 1:1-2:25.)

Now, why would Bathsheba jeopardize her son's throne so willingly? **She was deceived!** She was unable to consider the "why" of Adonijah's request; but her son Solomon certainly did. By acting without seeking counsel from the wise advisors who had so faithfully served her husband, she allowed herself to be manipulated, just as Eve had in the Garden.

Do you see how needful it is for you to willingly seek out and receive the input that God has given to your husband so you can see the whole picture?

Remember from Lesson 37 the healthy sequence for wise decision making:

(1) Consideration; (2) Proposal; (3) Planning; (4) Decision; (5) Execution.



My heart grieved when I was driving with a certain "intercessor" teacher who ministers among Native Americans. (Sadly, her situation represents so many Native Christian women who are operating independently from their husbands. By inference and example, they're encouraging other women to do the same.)

Her husband was nowhere to be seen. I asked her how long she'd been married. She told me they were coming up on 40 years. "Then this is an ideal time," I answered, "to use this year to become one in spirit and in purpose with him. Forty years is significant biblically as the end of an old journey and a time to begin anew." As far as I know, she's still out there without his input, protection or discernment.

Please memorize this truth paraphrased from Francis Frangipane:

"Once a woman is deceived, she does not recognize that she is deceived, because she has been deceived!"

- Does your husband, children, or others close to you view you as a woman who is easily deceived? Yes or no? How likely are you to find the "why" before you act?

- When it comes to making godly decisions with your husband and family, ask them about your level of cooperation and wise input. How did their responses make feel?

11. Grandmothers— The Queen's *Best Allies*

Grandmothers hold within their power a great potential to either bless or destroy their families. Do you wonder how that can be? Check out Athaliah,

the power-mad queen mother of 2 Kings chapter 11 who slaughtered her grandchildren so that she herself could rule. Women who have become grandmothers and *have to control* are just like Athaliah.

How many women today have urged their unmarried pregnant daughters to abort their babies? How many have spoken ill against their children's spouses? How many have tolerated negative phone calls from their adult children against those spouses and thus given tacit consent to yet another family-destroying divorce?

The Queen of Heaven demonic spirit (see Jeremiah 44:17-19) pursues the power to *destroy* (it was worshipped as the goddess of war) and the power to *control* (as the goddess of sexual prowess and fertility). It has found easy recruits among grandmothers who have no fruitful purpose or meaning for their lives.

The self-gratification lifestyle justified by so many seniors the past few decades flies in the face of holy availability for God's purposes. With their mouths these women have destroyed their own families by breeding disloyalty and estrangement.

Think of the mothers who set their adult children against each other by comparing one against another. One of our friends is at wit's end as he tries to honor his mother by meeting her needs. He finds himself getting angry as she criticizes him on the phone to her other children because he won't fulfill her hunger for luxuries!

“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.

Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and

children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God”
(Titus 2:3-5).

I've observed firsthand among many of Mike's female relatives a tendency to agitate relationships. (He encouraged me to share this as a warning if you've encountered this same situation.) This has especially been the case among the grandmothers, and in particular the widows in the family, who have little with which to occupy themselves other than gossip and self-indulgence.

These ladies are independent operators. Their agitation power takes the form of innuendoes dropped like acid on the unsuspecting heart: “How long has your husband been eyeing the woman next door?” “Your daughter is sure wearing sleazy clothes. Is she sleeping around?” “If I were you, I wouldn't let your husband get away with treating you like that.”

Sadly, like Mike's male relatives, most men refuse to confront their mothers to halt this destructive slander. Their wives then feel trapped as these older women intimidate their men into silence.

I'm grateful that my husband stepped into the gap whenever his mom tried that tactic over the years of her long widowhood. She later admitted that while she was at first angry that Mike confronted her, she saw him exercising godly authority and respected him for it. Her words make a bold statement:

“Of all my children, you love me the most because it takes that kind of love to confront me.”
How very true!

12. Are You An Ezer?

“The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man” (Genesis 2:23).

After God created Adam He realized that it wasn't good for him to be without an appropriate life partner, an *ezer*. As we mentioned earlier, this Hebrew word for a suitable helper means that a wife *completes* her husband in those areas that are weaker.

My role in “completing” Mike is to determine from our Father what he needs so that I can fulfill this and please both him and my Lord by working toward a harmonious relationship!

Obviously we encounter as you do bumps in the road that jar our serenity. But *if* and *how* I choose to restore my part of living in peace and wholeness determines whether we're walking in tandem or straining and pulling in opposition.

If you and your husband aren't yoked together as followers of Jesus on the path He has for you, you'll constantly be hurting each other under the burden of different priorities.

Mike and I found ourselves tugging in different directions a few years back because we hadn't revisited the impact of life changes that had come about. Our son was out of the nest at that point, and our Father was about to reveal to us a new focus in sharing His message of restoration.

We purposely sat down to hash this over, and came away with joyful appreciation that each of us had indeed been transformed the past few years—and these changes needed to be addressed by each other!

- Ask your husband how you're doing as his *ezer*. What changes would help your union?

- Take the time to discuss with your spouse the goals, strengths and weaknesses of your marriage. How have they changed over the years?

“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husband so that, if any of them do not believe in the word, they may be won over without talk by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives”
(1 Peter 3:1,2).

When you submit to your husband out of obedient trust in God, you're really yielding to the Lordship of Jesus, Who has set your husband in authority as servant-leader of your home.

I encourage you to prayerfully seek one or more wiser, older women for counsel and encouragement. Nobody expects a young wife to know everything, and our Lord has some very specific life lessons to impart through godly mature women:

[Older women] may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored (Titus 2:4,5,NAS).

A loving, loadbearing relationship between older and younger women is critical. Satan knows that the wisdom passed along in this friendship will keep God's Word and the way He wants it applied from being maligned. The enemy of your soul will do everything he can to prevent these relationships from occurring.

There are a million excuses for how you can't possibly fit another thing into your life. However, reprioritizing for the sake of peaceable *shalom* in your home is worth any inconvenience when God reveals to you the woman or women who desire to be in a mentoring relationship with you!

And, if you're a more mature woman at this stage in your life, prayerfully ask our Lord to reveal any younger women who need to be strengthened by your loving wisdom!

- **Do you have some cherished friends whom you recognize in your spirit to be mature women of God? Ask them to share with you their life lessons that touch your present needs, both their successes and failures, and to identify which biblical principles they applied or missed.**

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

If you've discovered things in this lesson that need to be changed in you:

1. **Repent of any sin (Psalms 103:11,12; Isaiah 43:25).**
2. **Don't let up on seeking the Spirit's help until the way that is in the character of Jesus is formed in you (Matthew 7:7,8).**
3. **And don't lose sight that our Father is merciful and longsuffering. If you stay repentant, He will continue to readily forgive and restore (Isaiah 30:18).**

Don't stop on your pilgrimage until the character of Jesus is formed in you! Press on, dear ones:

*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, **we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).*

It was a privilege for me to share these thoughts with you. No matter how impossible to you right now it may seem for your own life or marriage to be transformed, your quiet heart and confidence in our faithful God will bring forth His grace. I trust you'll be able look back as I can now and say,

**“It's been worth it all,
to the glory of my Father!”**