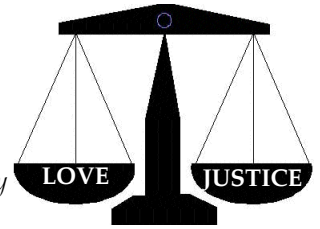


Yeshua MISHPACHAH

A NEWSLETTER TO THE FAMILY OF JESUS FROM RESTORATION MINISTRIES

The Hebraic family is not simply an individual or private matter. Rather, it is an institution in which the whole community has a stake. Thus, the Hebrew word "mishpachah," meaning family, not only refers to parents and children, but to the whole extended family worldwide in the body of "Yeshua"—our Jesus.

UPHOLDING HUMAN
DIGNITY



Matt. 25:31-46

"You Belong To Me!"

Our Dear Ones in Jesus,

This month's letter is a bit different from the norm because Sue is writing to address a vital issue — the self-destructive path of *control and independence* that so many women are treading.

Lest you men or single/divorced women think this topic doesn't apply, please reconsider. You do not live on a desert island in the body of Jesus. If you're indwelt by His Spirit, then, as Paul reminds the believers in Corinth and us as well, you are *interconnected* with every other follower of Jesus on this planet. Whatever issue impacts one part of the Body needs to be brought into the open for every other part's consideration as a warning or exhortation.

Alignment & Role Responsibility

Have you ever driven your car when the tires are severely out of alignment? There's such a tugging and pulling that you really have to concentrate on your steering. And your tires will wear out quickly if you don't get straightened out!

Since God so often addresses wives before He does husbands in the passages that pertain to marriage, I'm going to focus on us women.

Our marriages get out of alignment when husbands and wives disregard our Father's design. As Paul explains it, *"I wish you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the head of a woman is the*

man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3).

The apostle repeats this concept in Eph. 5:22-24: *"Wives are subject to their own husbands as to the Lord because a man is head of the woman as also Christ is head of the church, himself the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives are subject to their husbands in everything"* (These translations are from the Greek.)

This position would seem to place us wives in a pretty precarious place except for our Father's loving care to command our husbands to love us *just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her!*

Does that mean I have the right to wait until my husband fits the parameters established by God? No way! The "wife" words apply to me (and to *you* if you're a wife!), and when our Father speaks, He's needling right into our hearts and spirits directly to trust Him and to evidence that trust by obeying Him.

Along with aligning ourselves according to His Way, we also need to discover and walk in the *role* He's given us as wives and/or mothers. In the Word are verses assigned specifically to men and verses just for women. But for the most part, the commands belong to *all* of us. (And there are almost twice as many commands in the Newer Testament as there are in the Hebrew Scriptures!)

I'd like to share some insights from an intertestamental book of wisdom penned by the Jewish sage Sirach. These words complement other verses directed to us women.

"Happy is the husband of a good wife; the number of his days will be doubled. A loyal wife brings joy to her husband, and he will complete his years in peace. A good wife is a great blessing; she will be granted among the blessings of the man who fears the Lord. Whether rich or poor, his heart is content, and at all times his face is cheerful" (Sirach 26:1-4).

The writer continues in the vein of the man who extols the virtuous wife in Proverbs 31,

"A wife's charm delights her husband, and her skill puts flesh on her bones...Like the sun rising in the heights of the Lord, so is the beauty of a good wife in her well-ordered home...A wife honoring her husband will seem wise to all" (vv. 13, 16, 26a).

You might be thinking that these descriptions are either impossible or irrelevant for you. But just as in Proverbs 31, they are a goal at which to aim on your pilgrimage as a woman who wants to please her God. These elements of godly wifehood will surprise your man and contribute to the well-being and atmosphere of your home. Just be sure that you aren't putting undue pressure on yourself as to what constitutes a "good wife" and a "well-ordered home." Talk with your husband about what brings peace to *both of you* so you can both operate in harmony.

For instance, Mike really enjoys cooking, while I could skip a couple meals or munch on celery and be perfectly happy. I don't mind doing laundry and vacuuming, but if these

Preparing the Family of Jesus for the Dark Days to Come

2] interfere with the editing and writing that is of greater importance to our purpose as a couple, then he'll jump in to help with these chores.

You and your husband need to determine your roles according to our Father's will as revealed by His Spirit in His Word and in prayer together. Then decide which "Martha" activities can slide so that a peaceable "Mary" companionship exists when you're together!

"You Belong To Me"



One afternoon back in Flagstaff 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 by the tides of learning a new computer program, struggling for 6 weeks against a resistant machine. I'd pretty much left him alone, figuring he was the 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 glad that the Spirit stirred Mike to step in and confront this division. The way he did it has stayed with me. 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. "That's right. We're in this together. *You belong to me!*"

If you find yourself recoiling at the thought of "belonging" to your husband, reconsider this before our Lord....

Don't Give Way to Fear!

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, she digs in her heels like a toddler and refuses to move into uncharted territory with her husband. Like Lot's wife, 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 her carefully orchestrated schedules and activities that she thinks are holding her family together.

Each of us was born in a fallen state thanks to Adam and Eve and every person ever since. But don't let that propensity to step off our Lord's path keep you looking back over your shoulder! Yes, 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 that you will be blessed for resisting our Father's strategy of your husband's headship. If you are fearful to step out into 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 you and your husband are concerned. Is THAT what you really believe about Jesus?

You'd think after 17 moves I'd recognize that Mike isn't the one

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, and the *power* to carry me through change with peace and joy is the Spirit's. If I choose to yield to my Father's will, He responds with grace. Decide this day which path *you* want to follow!

A Beautiful Spirit

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.

By how much does that time and effort outweigh the time you carve out to *nurture your spirit* in prayer and internalizing the Word? How are you encouraging your husband 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?

Does this 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!* Are

3] you so “spiritualizing” 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 walk out in loving obedience and *interaction with others* that which His Father told Him!

Obedience — Isn’t That For Dogs?

Our Father spoke through Peter that wives who trust Him should imitate Sarah by *obeying* Abraham her husband and calling him *lord*. Whoa! That’s quite a command, isn’t it! Let’s look at those 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 comfortable home to spend the rest of your life wandering around the desert living under a goatskin tent. And yes, even being offered up to Pharaoh as his wife because your husband gave way to fear!

But do we get any indication from Scripture that she doubted God’s ability to rescue her and sustain her through all their circuitous adventures? No! (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.

You may think that you’re far more “spiritual” than your hus-

band, and perhaps you are. (Although consider that you may be putting yourself on a pedestal, and our Lord doesn’t bestow grace on idols!) The real issue is, do your *husband and children* rise up to call you blessed because you walk in the aroma of Jesus?

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 the woman is her husband!

Have I struggled with that during our thirty-three 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 us and our son.

But then our Father manages to break through my tears and frustration when I call upon Him in repentance. He restores the wholeness and harmony in our home as I choose to trust His loving sovereignty. He 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 turn back from my stand of unyieldedness. If I was the one who chose to walk out from under God’s protective design, I removed myself from His grace to endure with a “gentle and quiet spirit” whatever the aggravating encounter was that precipitated my unrest.

Call Him “Lord”??

“Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him LORD” (1 Peter 3:6). 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. 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 someone is “lord”, then he is in a God-given role to shield you from danger — that’s why independent wives who ignore or fail to seek their husbands’ 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 will have to bear the dire consequences that 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*, and 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 we women have fast-moving mental capabilities that 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 bigger in women than in men. While we are able to come to swift conclusions, we can’t always explain how we got there!)

By ordaining that wives submit to the analytical “slowness” of our husbands because they are created the way God wanted them to be, we are positioned to exercise both loving self-control as well as appreciation for our God-created differences. This earthly life is a testing ground for our willingness to trust our Father and to submit to His ways. Rationalizing a way around *His* way will not bring you the favor of His strength and perseverance that obedient trust does!

It’s all too easy to occupy your thoughts with “out there” causes that don’t bless your family or

4 change your character into Christlikeness. 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.

“Out there” causes 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 the well-being of your family! BE CAREFUL what you import into your home through causes and activities and involvement!

Eve Was Deceived; Are You?

When I forget that our Father has designed me to be one in union with Mike, then I wander around the field of my mind listening to the demonic voice of the “accuser of the brethren”. 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 getting into dangerous territory. If I don’t take those angry, painful thoughts into captivity and start thinking the way Jesus would have me think, 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 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 stronghold that inhabits rebellious, deceived wives contributes to the statistic of 85% of divorces in this country being initiated by women.

Is that pattern one that you want to perpetuate, cutting yourself off 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” comes 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 Tim. 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 by a widely known teacher from our area. She was bubbling over about his teachings on intercession and how much she had learned. Then 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, and show 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 dis-

obedience, do you really think your “intercessory prayer” is going beyond your ceiling? You may feel like you’re accomplishing something, but our Father cannot 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 turned the heart of the people to himself. Only through the intervention of the prophet Nathan and Zadok the priest was Adonijah’s plan 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. (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!* By not seeking counsel from those proven in wisdom 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?

My heart grieved when I was driving alone with a certain “intercessor” teacher who ministers

5] among Native Americans. (Sadly, her situation represents so many Native Christian women who are operating independently from their husbands. By inference and example, they are 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 is still out there without his input, protection or discernment.

Are You An Ezer?

After God created Adam He realized that it wasn't good for him to be without an appropriate life partner, an *ezer* (EH-zer). This Hebrew word for a suitable helper means that a wife *completes* her husband just as the north pole suitably completes the south.

So my role in "completing" Mike is to determine from our Father what my husband 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 the bumps in the road that jar our serenity. But *if* and *how* I choose to restore my end of living in peace and wholeness determines whether we're walking in tandem or straining and pulling.

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

Take the time to discuss your family goals, strengths and weaknesses. They may have changed over the years! Mike and I found ourselves pulling and straining in different directions a few years back because we hadn't revisited the changes. Our son was out of the nest at that point, and our Father was about to reveal 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 undergone change the past few years — and these changes needed to be addressed!

**"Ride 'Em, Rope 'Em,
Brand 'Em"
"Betroth 'Em, Marry 'Em,
Belong to 'Em"**

How much easier it would be for us women 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. Rather, between personal experience and media influence, we've been trained to view men through filters of 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 par-

ents 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 as a daughter early on so I could begin to be mentored as the helper God intended. But there were still many painful hurdles to cross, and often there were no older women to guide me. Now I can look back at all those experiences and see that God's grace included His use of Mike to help me learn to be the *ezer* he needed in both our marriage and our ministry.

Let's look at this "belonging" issue from another perspective. I've often thought I should have been raised on a ranch. I've always loved horses! We were blessed recently to spend a week at a dude ranch owned by friends of James and Joyce Skeet. Along with the Skeets and ourselves were our young nephew Lee and his wife Chestina.

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 a loving, sensible wife? "A wife of noble character is *her husband's crown*" (Proverbs 12:4), and "He who finds a wife finds *a great good* he has won the favor of the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22).

| <u>Are You A Helpmate or A Maverick?</u> | |
|--|---|
| <p>Enjoys protection of husband's authority</p>  <p>Her children call her blessed</p> <p>Yielded spirit</p> <p>Seeks to the best Christlike helpmate to her husband</p> | <p>Bitter toward male authority</p> <p>Jezebelic tendencies</p>  <p>Sees self as abused martyr</p> <p>Strong desire to control and manipulate</p> <p>Divorced, or controlled by stronghold of Independence and Divorce</p> |
| <p>Her husband finds it easy to praise her godly qualities</p> <p>She is a public compliment to both Jesus and her husband</p> | |

6 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 will receive counsel from those who know him best. They can help him to determine what character traits will complement his in such a way that as a couple they will be most effective for our Lord's purposes.

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

This potential wife search is the "riding" phase of courtship: discerning the individual who is the one our Father has chosen as a life partner. When a man has to run a gauntlet to prove himself responsible and respected, he is showing his wife-to-be what a precious jewel she really is.

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 has culminated in that wonderful covenant joining at their wedding.

But the "branding" comes as you become bonded to one another in the day to day enactment of your 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 because you belong to him as a precious jewel! Reread Proverb 31:10-31 to see just how valued you are intended to be.

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 become an obstacle by taking sides or meddling. 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 that the couple needs to discover when ripples disturb their domestic pond.

Unwise intervention of parents can take the shape of listening to only one side of a conflict — their adult child's — and forming conclusions devoid of the justice of listening to *both* parties. I believe that 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 marriage. It takes much more *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.

Beware the Mavericks!

While Mike and the the others were drowning worms and flyfishing, I spent four glorious days in the saddle, roaming the parched Wyoming wilderness and reveling in our Father's fingerprints of beauty.

I also gained some insights that may be helpful to us as women. Horses are lovely to look at, 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 used with novice riders.

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 is a certain appeal in her wild beauty and free spirit. But her unprovoked hostility and willfulness agitate other horses and bring harm to people naive enough to think they can ride her.

Often, maverick women have been through the pain of divorce and not released their underlying sense of victimization or emotional betrayal. They may be "divorce wannabes" who have a grudge against men and an unhealthy distrust of the God Who has revealed Himself in His Word.

Threatened by women 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 the contentment of the naive and stirring 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 had 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 what she shared with them, and turned her heart against the agreed upon plan. 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 19:13b, 21:9, 21:19, 25:24,

7] and 27:15,16. Listening to agitating voices, whether in conversation with others or thoughts going on in your own mind, rouses you to take it out on someone — most often your husband! And husbands have no real 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 back 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 to purpose to turn away from that and to walk as our Father designed, His blanket of peace can surround us even if circumstances stay just as they are.

One verse that comes to me often because I need it 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 fruits of righteousness in their own lives. If not, then perhaps you can recommend that *both* of you recount His faithfulness, past and present, and purpose to walk in His way rather than your own!

How else can you spot a maverick? Women who have no covering of husband or father, nor input from adult son or godly elder are "scattered", jumping from one activity, cause or relationship to another. They find it hard to trust a Father 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."*

Stepping In Unwisely

Jezebel was a very religious woman. She must have had a powerful dominating spirit to have struck fear into the heart of Elijah right after he'd caused her pet prophets to be killed! Yet she undoubtedly saw herself as a loving, caring wife who wanted only what was best for her husband Ahab when he was downcast.

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

Have you ever intervened to keep your husband from walking as a man? Have you made excuses for him, hidden things about the kids from him, manipulated him emotionally to achieve your own desires? Manipulation and subtle control are weapons that you need to lay down and 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 spiritual intimacy you may long for.

Jezebel paid an awful price for her end-around: 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 marriages, the true fruit is revealed. But then it's often too late to help.

Monitor the Media!

We receive Focus on the Family's monthly materials 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 involved an unhappily married woman and her 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.

Need I say what impact that must have had on women readers thinking that they, too, can get out of a painful marriage and find bliss the second or third time around? Not only is a covenant broken, but statistics reveal that second marriages have a 65% divorce rate.

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

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

Your sister in joyful trust and obedience,

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