

Kingdom Living Today

Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World

25. She Speaks With Wisdom And Faithful Instruction

“THE OLDER WOMEN THEN MUST TRAIN THE YOUNGER WOMEN TO LOVE THEIR HUSBANDS AND CHILDREN SO THAT NO ONE WILL SPEAK BADLY AGAINST THE WORD OF GOD.”

“Someone once said that women are like a hurricane when our feelings have been hurt, and men are more like a tornado.” Dee smiled at the shepherd/elder’s wives meeting in her living room while their husbands were gathered with Jack on the back deck.

“So men and women can react like two different kinds of storms if we’re not responding to the Spirit of Christ in us,” Sharee, José’s wife, laughed. “Am I going to like where this is going?”

“Yes, you will,” Dee answered as she glanced around the room at these sisters who had become so dear to her over the years. “How we deal with hurt is one of the key issues we women must come to terms with if we’re to be the helpers our husbands need.”

Most of the women had been married for quite awhile and were eager to hear how they could more faithfully follow the will of their heavenly Father. They listened intently as Dee went on, “We women tend to hold on to past hurts for a long time, remembering every detail surrounding each occasion of emotional pain. On the other hand, when most men go through a painful situation or discussion, they’re able to get past the emotions more quickly.”

Nods of agreement passed around their circle. Megan spoke from her 25-year history with Tom, “So we’re like a hurricane that lasts longer and brings more far-reaching havoc than a tornado which lasts just a short time but is pretty devastating.”

“That’s a good way of putting it, Megan,” Dee responded. “We’re far more likely to develop *begrudging bitterness* because of something that may have happened years ago, and that impacts all our relationships. (Hebrews 12:15) Sometimes we women *never* let go of emotional hurt, especially if our husbands are the source of our pain.”

“Until you helped me out of this, Dee, I lived in that prison of fear and apprehension,” Lauren broke in softly. “I was always guarding myself against the time when Ted might hurt my feelings again.” She continued with a gentle smile, “Now I can really appreciate why Peter insists that we women put aside fear and follow the pattern of Sarah, Abraham’s wife. She listened to him with wise submission, not allowing anxious ‘what ifs’ to seize her thoughts. And, trusting that God was working in and through her husband, she called him ‘lord’ out of loving respect.” (1 Peter 3:5,6)

Mary jumped into the discussion. “I couldn’t see what was wrong with protecting myself from emotional hurt by Bill until Dee asked me to read *Hinds Feet on High Places* and go through the study guide, *Going to the High Places*, on the Restoration Ministries website. When I did that,” she smiled, “I could understand the powerful lesson Much Afraid had learned: that God permits our wounding to develop the sac-

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rificial love of Jesus in each of us.^(Romans 5:3-5) And, our husbands are one of His key instruments in helping us do that.”

“It seems like holding onto past pain is a lot more symptomatic of us women than of men,” Olivia, one of the more recently married women, noted.

“I agree,” Dee responded. “Beginning with Eve wanting to be like God,^(Genesis 3:5) we women have been plagued by false expectation and a desire to take control. And in recent decades,” she added, “many books penned by misguided divorced women have seduced thousands of wives to pursue divorce if they’re unhappy in their marriage.” (See *Discussing How To Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 32, for extensive discussion on the sin of false expectation.)

Genuinely wanting to recognize anything that might be hindering her relationship with Bob, Abby asked, “Dee, remind us again of how false expectation hurts our marriage.”

“False expectation, especially that our husbands should treat us better, leads to resentment and bitterness. We stew in unforgiveness, and this is where Satan gains victory over us—because he knows that our Father won’t forgive us as long as we refuse to forgive.”^(Matthew 6:15) Dee went on, sadly shaking her head, “In fact, God makes it clear that we’ll suffer emotional torture until we *do* forgive.^(Matthew 18:34,35) That kind of love sounds tough, but He knows how much He’s willing to forgive us through Jesus. We have no right to hold on to *any* unforgiveness!”^(Matthew 18:33)

At that point Mary added thoughtfully, “The Bible is so honest about marriages that sure didn’t seem like they were made in heaven! Just look at Hosea, whom God ordered to marry a prostitute,^(Hosea 1:2) or Abigail with her foul-tempered husband Nabal.^(1Samuel 25:3) Yet each of these examples shows us how faithfully God can mature our trust even in trying circumstances.”

“That’s a good point!” Dee exclaimed. “Our Lord gave us to our husbands because they were incomplete alone. They needed a suitable helper.^(Genesis 2:18) We each need to help the women in our fellowship families mature into the best helping companion possible.^(Titus 2:3-5) That’s what our Father wants for each of us, and His Spirit in us will work to bring that about as we yield to Him in obedient trust.”

“I’m so comforted,” blurted Lauren, “that even if the learning curve is sometimes painful, our Father sees what I’m going through and will never forsake me!”^(Psalms 37:28)

As the others nodded their agreement, Sharee asked, “What do you think is the key reason we don’t easily get hold of God’s goal for us as wives?”

Dee paused for a moment, wanting to make sure she was speaking according to the Spirit. “To put it simply, our minds work so fast we succumb to manipulation rather than trusting that God will work sovereignly as we do our part.^(Genesis 16:1-3, for example) As a result, we end up undermining our husbands in a whole variety of ways.”

As knowing nods encompassed the circle Dee went on, “We may fail to give them deference... or we may withhold affection... or we may bad-mouth them, especially to our mothers. And, the worst of all pits we women fall into is how easily seduced we can be into believing that we’re ‘more spiritual’ than our husbands. It’s so important that we take the log out of our own eyes^(Luke 6:42) and face up to how much we fall short of being the helper our Lord calls us to be!”

Silence filled the room as each woman examined her heart to see if the sins Dee had verbalized for them were indeed soiling their own spirits.^(Psalms 26:2) They for

sure didn't want to be hypocritical, exhorting the younger women in their various fellowship families toward Biblical standards while harboring sin themselves!

After a while Megan spoke up. "It seems to me that the sins of men are generally outward and more obvious than those of women. I mean, men may more likely give way to porn or get drunk or cheat or steal. But I think we gals are more likely to allow *internal* sin to fester inside us."^(1Timothy 5:24) She added with remorse, "We feel good about what we *don't* do rather than committing overt sinful acts. That's why it's so hard for us to confront our own deficiencies."^(Luke 11:39)

"With Jack and Dee's help, Ken and I have put a lot more effort into our marriage since we embraced the Hebraic foundations. That's something we pretty much let slide during all that time we spent in the religious system," Olivia explained. "I remember from the Restoration Ministries website that one of the reasons the early followers of Jesus gathered in each other's homes was because they knew that couples needed that 'one-anothering' that connectedness with other believers brought."^(1Corinthians 16:19)

The others smiled at her, urging her to continue. "Young couples didn't live far away from their families, especially their extended spiritual family in Jesus," she went on. "They knew they needed the help of older couples while their problems were still bite-size. And Ken and I have certainly been helped by having you all feed into our lives!" she added, gratefully reaching over to Dee and some of the other sisters in Jesus who had modeled Christ's presence in their own marriages.

"When José and I came to understand that interpersonal tensions are *not* signs of failure but instead opportunities to help each other become more Christ-like, our entire relationship changed," Sharee interjected.

Turning toward her, Lauren asked, "In what way?"

Sharee responded, her eyes twinkling. "With my heart at rest in Jesus, I could trust that any tensions that rose between me and José were opportunities for change.^(Colossians 3:12-14) With that kind of perspective instead of my natural tendency to criticize, my Latino husband realized that his honor wasn't being attacked." She added with warmth, "His love for Jesus and the desire to be more like Him overruled any potential resistance to things I might point out."

"I can see how having the right attitude and motive makes all the difference in how we can help our husbands," replied Mary. "That's a lesson I sure want to impress on my daughters before they get married."

Each of the women agreed, recognizing how important this window of time was to prepare their own nearly grown children for a marriage that would last. After a brief pause Abby began a new topic. "I'd like to share an important change Jesus has made in me in regard to Bob. It's one of those habits that I finally figured out really hurt him and was hindering how I could help him."

Dee smiled gently at her sister in Jesus. "Please, tell us."

Abby continued, "I guess you could say that I was a motor-mouth. I'd just dump information on Bob without recognizing if he was even ready to hear—never mind that he couldn't process all the nonessential details that just left him confused." The other women knew what she was saying. How many times had they inundated their own husbands with details and problems as soon as he walked through the door or just before they were going to bed?

Abby pressed on, “I realized I was just trying to unload my own baggage and concerns in a way that was hurting him! God has put it within a man to want to solve problems, especially for his wife. But I need to be considerate of *when* I present these things and if I’m stating them in a way that’s clear to him, without all the added details that aren’t important.”

Dee followed up, “You’re so right, Abby. That’s key to giving our husbands deference and seeing things from his perspective rather than just ours.”(Philippians 2:4)

Abby added with a smile, “Since I’ve been making these changes, Bob’s been showing me so much more affection and appreciation. He knows that because I love him, I want to help him since he’s the one bearing responsibility for our home.”(Ephesians 5:23)

“I have a testimony, too,” Lauren interposed, “and I didn’t learn my lesson easily. For years I thought that Ted was too hard on the kids. I always felt like I had to be the go-between.” Some of the others could relate to that. “That’s when we went to Jack and Dee. They helped us see that we needed to work out how we were going to discipline the kids consistently, and that I needed to learn deference toward my husband and not be stuck in the middle between him and them.”

“You said that you didn’t learn that lesson easily, Lauren. What do you mean?” Sharee queried.

Lauren’s voice was tinged with sorrow. “When you think you’ve been the ‘good guy’ and your husband the ‘bad guy’, it can be awfully hard to come to grips with the damage your lack of deference to him has created in your home.” She looked gratefully at her mentor and friend. “With Dee’s help I began to see how manipulative my children had become. And to be honest, they really were very disrespectful—something I’d been totally blind to. Even my own parents were telling me this and I didn’t believe them!” She sighed then went on, “The toughest realization I came to was that Ted’s bouts of anger toward the kids was a result of how he saw them hurting and exploiting *me*.”

Olivia broke in, “I don’t get it.”

“Well, during one conversation with Jack and Dee,” Lauren continued, “I saw for the first time that Ted didn’t get upset so much with things directed at him. It’s when people hurt *me* that his real emotions got aroused. I’ll never forget the day Ted took my hands in his and said, ‘You’re the most loving person I have in life. When anyone, including the kids, hurts you or manipulates you, my strongest emotions are aroused.’ I’d never understood it this way, and here I was, thinking I was protecting the kids from him—and I was just hurting him more! I was standing in the way of the character development they needed, and inadvertently agitating my husband to anger!”

Dee then addressed them all. “Jack and I have served together over the years to help each of you cooperate in working things out in your marriage relationship. You’ve all come to realize that the areas of character and motive you *haven’t* lined up with those of Jesus only adds to the tensions you experience with each other and with others.”

She stopped for a second then added, “Let’s keep this goal in our hearts as we grow together with our husbands: that our relational union with each other increasingly reflects what we claim in our Covenant with our Father and Jesus. That’s the example we need to set for those our Father has entrusted to our husbands to shepherd others in Christ.”(Acts 20:28)

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