

CHRISTIAN FAMILY CHAPEL HOPE CENTER

THE WIFE'S PURPOSE

A Glorious Mystery Unfolded

LISA ANDERSON

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WELCOME

When our son was turning 18, we asked him what he wanted for his 18th birthday, and he said, "Well, either a gun or a pitbull". So, we got him a rescued pit bull named Bear. At dog training school Bear did great with the leashed walk down and around the pylons, but when it came time to be trained to "lie down" he'd have nothing to do with it – not even for a piece of liverwurst from the lady next to me. (I had taken fat free hot dogs. Note to self: Bear does not like fat free hot dogs.) As a matter of fact, the huge former marine who led the class had to come over and manhandle him to lie down. Bear even snarled at him in rebellion! The marine explained to me that lying down was a position of submission for a dog. Bear did not want to submit and was making that amply clear. I was embarrassed! (Over a dog? I could write a pamphlet on that!)

Anyway, on the way home I wondered, "Do I look like that dog when I need to submit? Do I buck and snarl?" There have been plenty of times (I'm sure my husband would give an amen) where my submission had looked like that incident with Bear! I'm still working on submission, but these truths

from God's Word about the role of the wife changed me and changed my marriage. What I thought would steal my joy actually has brought me growing peace, joy and hope! I pray this for you as well!

Note - If your husband is oppressing or afflicting you, it is best to get wisdom from your church leaders because what your husband may be requiring in the name of "submission" is not godly at all, and he may be putting you or your family at risk. This pamphlet does not address this painful and complicating factor as a wife. Please see the resources at the end of this pamphlet on the subject of abuse.

FIRM FOUNDATIONS

Salvation

I imagine it is not a surprise to you that living by godly principles as a wife can be hard. But understanding certain truths about who God is and what He does will give us an awe and desire to be faithful to His commands to us. First, and most importantly, are you saved from the penalty of your sins? What Jesus Christ did is the most important thing in your life, and it will determine whether you will be *able* to change or not because only a person who has the Holy Spirit is going to have the desire and the ability to change for the glory of God. You are not going to be able to be a godly wife and experience the peace, hope, and joy that is the result of growing as a godly wife if you don't have the Holy Spirit with His power in you through salvation. If you have questions about your salvation and eternal destiny, I encourage you to avail yourself of the resources at the end of this pamphlet before you continue.

God is powerful

The next truth we want to consider is that God is powerful. God has created the entire universe, galaxies that have billions of stars in them! Astronomers are still discovering more galaxies as stronger telescope lenses are developed! His creation is amazing! His power is greater than any power!

Consider this verse:

“. . . He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: 'What have You done?'" Daniel 4:35

How does knowing He is powerful affect your decisions to submit or not to submit? When your husband refuses to lead you in prayers at night, is your husband holding back the hand of God in your life? How about holding back the hand of God in your kids' hearts and lives? When your husband does not parent as you think best, is your husband holding back the purposes of God in your children's lives? God answers those questions, no, "no one can hold back God's hand."

How about this verse:

*"Many are the plans in a man's heart,
but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."
Proverbs 19:21*

Your husband may have lots of plans, but whose purpose is it that prevails? God says it's His purpose that prevails. Can you see how anxiety about submitting can be greatly relieved when you remind yourself that God is sovereign over your husband, and that God's purposes cannot be held back in your life, or your children's lives?

Let's add this verse -

*". . . according to the plan of Him who works out
everything in conformity with the purpose of his
will." Eph 1:11b*

Notice that word "everything". Has your husband done things that brought pain or difficulty to the family? Or are you concerned that the results of a decision he will make will be bad for the family? Consider this - if your husband has done something, and it has brought the family into very difficult times, does that fall into the category of "everything"? Of course, the answer is yes, it does. Everything is everything. God works everything in conformity to the purpose of His will.

Your God is powerful. His perfect will cannot be thwarted.

God loves you perfectly

In addition to being all powerful, God tells you that He loves you perfectly. Psalm 108:4:

*"For great is Your love, higher than the heavens;
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies."*

And then in Jeremiah 31:3:

*". . . I have loved you with an everlasting love. I
have drawn you with lovingkindness."*

Are there times when you wish your husband would be more loving? Or perhaps he is not loving at all. Then how wonderful it is to know God's love for you is perfect and everlasting! It doesn't change no matter what you do or don't do. He has drawn you unto Himself, your perfect Groom. He proved His love to you at the cross where Christ died to pay your death penalty. We should willfully and intentionally recall to mind this extravagant, gospel proof of His love and faithfulness to us many, many times a day. We don't need our husbands to love us perfectly, we already have a Groom who does that!

Take note of how this next verse makes clear that the proof of His love on the cross is why we can count on His love, faithfulness and kindness every day of our lives. Romans 8:32:

*"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave Him
up for us all—how will He not also, along with
Him, graciously give us all things?"*

Are you wondering if God is withholding something good from you? Perhaps this marriage thing is not all you had thought it would be. Perhaps you are disappointed in your husband. God addresses such concerns in this verse. If, for our good, God did not withhold His own Son, the most costly sacrifice, then of course He would not withhold from you good things that are less costly. God is explaining His character to us.

A good way of understanding the principle in this verse is: if it were best for your eternal soul (your heart) for you to have something, then you'd have it. If it is best for your eternal soul not to have something, then you won't have it. Only God knows what needs to be put into your heart. He knows what needs to be taken out of your heart. That husband and marriage is the perfect field for that to happen. God loves you perfectly. He's not withholding what's good for your eternal soul. That's not His character. He does not do that. He says He does not. The truth is that this is the perfect set of circumstances for your progressive sanctification, in other words – for you to become more like Christ and therefore grow in great hope, peace and joy! Christ is our great hope, He is our peace. He gives abundant joy. Therefore, the more you become like Him right there in your current circumstances, the more hope, peace and joy you will experience. That is who He is, that is what He does. He says so. God's instructions to you are the MOST loving instructions in the universe.

God is infinitely wise

God is all powerful, perfect in love and – God is infinitely wise. He's infinitely wise in His purpose and plan for you. Isaiah 55:9:

*"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are
My ways higher than Your ways and My thoughts
than Your thoughts."*

His ways and thoughts are as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth. This verse says His wisdom and commands cannot be improved upon by man or woman. He knows everything, and because of that He knows what is the best course for me and you. So how is this helpful to you as a wife? Before I was saved, though knew a lot about the Bible, I thought, 'Submission is not a great idea, and it isn't fair either. I sure could have come up with better instructions to a wife than submission!' As you can see, I was basically saying - "My thoughts about submission are higher than God's thoughts about submission", but that is not true. If I could measure, in distance, how wrong I was, it would be about as far as the heavens are above the Earth! What is true about submission is that it's better for me to submit, not worse, because God's instructions, God's wisdom, is higher than mine, not lower.

Let's put the 3 together – God is all powerful, perfect in love and infinitely wise. This means He knows what is best for you, always brings about what is best for you and does it in the most loving way. That is good news. You can rest in that.

God's perfect purpose

*“. . .everyone who is called by My name, whom I created **for My glory**, whom I formed and made.”
Isaiah 43:7*

God tells us what our purpose is – to display God's glory - to manifest, or show, what Jesus is like to the seen and the unseen world. It is to show the character of God through our own words and deeds. We are to reveal His worthiness and the goodness of His instructions by the way we act and respond in heart (i.e., thought and attitude) and deed. We

are to be proving to the seen and the unseen world that God is worthy, and His instructions are good for us. So, our loving, wise, all-powerful God has given you a perfect purpose, and He hasn't left you to have to scratch your head to try to figure out what that looks like as a wife. He's given us very clear instructions on how to be a godly wife, and He's given us ample resources.

You need not wonder why God has put you in this marriage with this man. It's all for God's amazing glory, and because we are one with Him, His glory is always for our good.

God equips

To accomplish His plan, He has equipped you perfectly for the task. This doesn't mean we're going to do it perfectly, but He has equipped us perfectly.

2 Peter 1:3:

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . ."

Everything we need for life and godliness, everything we need. Notice it says His divine power—that goes back to salvation. If you are not saved you won't have that divine power, but a saved wife has everything she needs to glorify God as a wife. She is thoroughly equipped.

But what about all those temptations we undergo as a wife?

1 Corinthians 10:13:

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can

bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

No temptation has seized you except that which is common to man. At the end of that passage, God says that He will give us all that we need to escape the temptation and persevere to obey His commands. So when you are tempted not to respect your husband, or help him or submit to him, you can counsel yourself - "Oh, no, God will give me enough. I can do what God wants me to do in His strength." And then we follow through. We graciously respect, help and/or submit.

Ephesians 3:20:

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."

Immeasurably more than I could ever ask or imagine, and I've got a pretty good imagination! God has equipped you perfectly.

WIFE: FINISHER, FOLLOWER, AND FAN

So what are God's perfect commands to the wife? The 3 words above make it easy to remember your 3 primary responsibilities of a wife.

Finisher: Companion and Suitable Helper

Genesis 2:18:

"Then the Lord God said, 'it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'"

In other words, to accomplish all that God created man to do, it was not good for man to be alone. He gave Adam a companion, Eve, and she was to be Adam's suitable helper. A companion and a helper.

Companion

Let's start with companion. ". . . not good for the man to be alone." The opposite of alone, of course, is together. So, God created Eve so they could do things together, to enjoy God together, to enjoy God's creation together, to work the garden together—to be his best human friend. A wife is to make her husband the highest priority in her life after God - not the kids, not her girlfriends, not the neighbors, not TV nor Facebook - her husband is her highest priority after God.

How are you doing in seeking to be your husband's companion? What do you guys do together? What is your husband interested in? Learn about it, web search it, then put what you learn into action.

My husband was a huge baseball fan when we first got married. I knew a little bit about baseball, but not very much. When I learned about "companionship" as a wife, I realized I needed to learn a little about baseball. I decided well, I'm going to go to a bookstore and look in sports magazines just

long enough to get a few pieces of information. Just enough to ask some half intelligent questions about baseball. I did ask them one night, but I did it during a baseball game! Oops! In my case, that did not go so well because back then there was no remote, and no pause button. So basically, I was just interrupting a good game! This was a learning curve for me, but I had made progress, and this pleased my Lord! I gotta say, getting interested in what husbands are interested in is a LOT easier today with the internet, remote controls and pause buttons!

But that's what we're talking about. Companion. What is he interested in? Maybe it's politics. I counseled a lady, who just was not into politics, but her husband really was. Sadly, she just would not enter into conversations with him about that. Yet Philippians 2 explains that we are to consider the interests of others as more important than our own interests. Pray and seek to get interested in what your husband is interested in out of your love for Christ. Some other areas may include vacations or hobbies.

And of course, companionship through physical intimacy. You know, husbands can go anywhere and experience momentary, physical sexual pleasure, but they are stuck with regret, with guilt, with shame. We're the only ones who, as wives, can give them that enjoyment and encouragement without their experiencing the many sorrows of guilt. When your kids go down for a nap, how about you go down for a nap to have more energy for intimacy later? If the dishes don't get done, I'm just guessing most men will find physical intimacy more important than whether the dishes are done or not. You be the one to bring it up, even if you are not particularly desiring it yourself. It is all part of God's perfect design.

Suitable Helper

God said He was giving Adam a "suitable helper" The meaning of the term is one who completes, complements, corresponds to, is fitted perfectly to. In other words, a wife makes up for what a husband isn't. They're perfectly suited together. Eve made up for what Adam was lacking to complete God's perfect purposes. A wife can make up for what her husband is lacking.

In Ephesians, God says the husband is to be the head of the marriage as Christ is the head of the church. I like to look at it this way. The husband is like the CEO. Now in business CEOs can be women or men. CEOs in large businesses cannot run the business themselves. They have many high-level employees who report to them. I bet you fulfill at least many if not all these roles – COO, Chief Operating Officer, CFO, Chief Financial Officer. CIO, Chief Information Officer. CTO, Chief Technical Officer. CAO, Chief Administrative Officer. She is in charge of many areas, but she reports up to the CEO, her husband. She wears many hats to be the suitable helper for the great glory of God.

A wife who fulfills any of these many roles is displaying to the seen and the unseen world what God is like as our "Help". God describes Himself as our help. Many Scriptures make that clear, Ps 46:1, Ps 27:9, Ps 30:10. So for us to be called helpers is NOT a demeaning term at all. Consider this passage:

Ps 63:7

"Because You are my help, I sing in the shadow of Your wings."

Well, let's be practical, how can you be a better help to your husband? Hey, here is a crazy thought – you could just come right out and ask him! "I was created to be your suitable

helper, and I want to know how I can do that."

There is hope for you if you are like I was. When I was engaged to Tony, I thought, "We are a perfect match! He is weak in things that I am strong in!" A year into marriage my thoughts were quite different, "What is up with this?? Why isn't he ever doing the things I am doing!?" Guess what happened, I got focused on others serving me rather than on me serving others! I fertilized my lazy heart with complaints! I am so thankful for God's promise that when I confessed, God forgave me and cleansed me, and He will do that for you too! 1 Jn 1:9.

Parenting. One place where we can be a great help to our husbands is being a helpful wife as a mom to the kids. CPO, Chief Parenting Officer, who gives information and wisdom on the issues, then the husband makes the final decision. Once the husband has made the decision, our job is to implement it in the home graciously and support it to the kids and others. In other words, we would not want it to sound like this, "Come on, kids. Dad says we have to do ABC, but I mean, if it had been me, I'd have said to do the way easier XYZ! But I'm submitting to your Dad, so here we go." It should be supportive. "Today we are going to do ABC and see how God provides for us to do this for His great glory and become more like Jesus as we do it. What a great opportunity to depend on the Lord and see His goodness in this!" And why can we do this as wives? Because God says that no one can hold back His loving and wise hand in our own lives and the lives of our children. Not even a husband who does not think our wisdom is the best option.

Ministry. Another area where we can be our husband's suitable helper is with his volunteer ministry at church. Getting practical again, this could include making phone calls or sending emails. It could be making food for his fellow volunteers, offering the home for his committee meetings,

etc. Ask him how you can help with his ministry work.

Once again, perhaps you can learn from my mistakes. When my son was very young, I would sign up for just about everything so I could go and have ADULT fellowship WITH FREE CHILDCARE. Because of this, many responsibilities (COO, CFO, CIO, CTO, CAO, etc.) at the house started falling behind. My primary ministry was to my husband and to my family. Tony helped me with a good response when asked to serve, "Let me check with my husband, and I will get back to you." And then, "Tony does not think this is the wisest choice for our family right now but thank you for thinking of me." I was so thankful for these God honoring responses. I put them to use many times to keep my priorities right.

Work. How about with our husbands' work? We don't know what our husbands are thinking, but we usually know their way of thinking. We may know some areas of weakness. With this knowledge, if he's willing to be helped, you can help him think through ideas, help him think outside the box. You use your mind to help your husband. One way I have been able to do that is listening to his sermons and offering ideas before he gives them to the congregation and preparing power point presentations for Tony. Other ideas might be having coworkers or bosses over for dinner or dessert and coffee. Sending in goodies for the workroom, etc.

Home. How can you be a suitable helper concerning the home? Eve's home was the Garden of Eden, and she had work to do there even before the fall. We have the great privilege of making our homes warm and welcoming. A place of rest and respite for our husbands. A little piece of heaven – talk about displaying Christ! But a warning here – some women I have counseled have gotten the idea that to be a godly wife, the house had to look perfect all the time. I mean, the throw pillows had to be a certain way on the bed or couch. The dishes had to be just a certain way in the cabinets, etc.—

and the husband thought this was ridiculous. Is it helpful to your husband if you keep your house perfect, and it drives him nuts? No, that desire for throw pillows to sit with the blue long rectangular pillow behind the beige circular pillow about 3 inches to the left is probably really for you not for him. What a difference it made when I realized I needed the home to be about him more so than me. He got to leave his PJs on the floor next to his bed (and without ridicule!) As he says, "Why make up a bed every morning? It's like running shoes. You don't take them off and then tie them in a bow, do you?" I like the way this man thinks. A made-up bed is no longer a priority in my life.

Spiritual walk. Another area we are to be suitable helpers is in our husband's walk with the Lord. This is different than ministry. I'm talking about His walking in the Spirit versus walking in the flesh. Is your husband struggling with unrepentant sin? If you're aware of it, you have a responsibility before the Lord to help him with that, to help him see that. Matthew gives us instructions on this.

Matthew 18:15-17 is talking about believers to believers.

"If your brother sins, go and point out his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won him over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'"

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him about his fault between you and him alone. That is a wife's responsibility. If she is aware, then she needs to talk to him about it. Before she goes, she should be prayerful and patient (unless it puts people in danger in which case the police need to be involved quickly) and give the husband an opportunity, some time, to

repent. If he does not, you need to address it with him. A question is a good place to start. Let's consider this example: your husband is yelling at the kids, and you are going to talk to him about it. A path of humbly using questions might be, "Ephesians 5 says not to provoke your children to wrath. Do you think your yelling falls into that category?" Does he then repent and prove his repentance by his deeds? Matthew says, "if he listens, you have gained your brother." Praise God! He repented. But then verse 16 says "if he does not listen to you take one or two others along with you." What is your responsibility as a wife here? Who are one, two, maybe three Christian men that your husband respects from your church? Go to your husband and say something like, "You know, we've been talking about your provoking the children to wrath for a couple of weeks, and you're still doing it. This is a significant problem. According to Matthew 18, I need to lovingly handle this in a specific way. I've got these three names here, maybe we could discuss another? Which one of these three, would you prefer I call to get us help with this? "

So the men come to help one night. Let's think about what may occur. Matthew 18 then says, 'That every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.' So, guess what could happen? Those two or three witnesses, they come in, the husband and wife tell the two or three witnesses what's going on. It turns out that what the wife calls "provoking to wrath" is actually raising the voice so the kids can hear upstairs to come to dinner or come downstairs to redo a chore done haphazardly. The witnesses may see it is not a sin issue, but a wisdom issue of whether to call the kids downstairs or to go up and get them. A wisdom issue does not require repentance. On the other hand, it could be that what they hear shows the witnesses that yes what is happening is sinful anger displayed in wrath towards the children in word, tone and/or body language. The husband needs to repent of this and prove his repentance by his deeds going forward. They

may require biblical counseling and accountability to help the husband learn how to grow in godly parenting.

If you keep on reading Matthew 18, the next part is about taking the continuing unrepentant sinner to the church. If you're going to a Bible believing/Bible practicing church, church discipline, which our church calls an Amber Alert (because it is a rescue effort even by people who don't know the one needing rescue), the next step is to get the whole church involved. This is for the unrepentant sinner's sake. What does the Bible say? Many are the woes of the wicked, those who do evil. Tribulation and distress for those who do wrong. This process is for his sake that he would repent so that he can experience the peace, the hope, the joy that can only be found through obedience to the Lord. Following these biblical steps should be done in humility, recognizing our own sins. This should be done NOT so we can have our own way or embarrass our husbands, but for their own spiritual benefit. Let us prayerfully ask God to show us any offensive motive in ourselves before we take the first step.

This issue of being a suitable helper in the area of your husband's spiritual walk is very dear to my heart due to some couples we have counseled. Out of fear of other people finding out about their spouse's sins, they chose not to follow the commands of Matthew 18. One of those ended in a death from a life enslaving sin, another ended up with very bizarre behavior from involvement in a cult. Do not hear me say it was the "innocent" spouse's fault it ended so badly. It was not. Each is responsible before God for our own sins. But I can't help but wonder if in similar circumstances, if Matthew 18 were followed at the early signs of refusals to repent, might there be different outcomes? God commands Matthew 18, and His ways are perfect.

Follower

We have seen God created us to be a “Finisher” as a companion and suitable helper. Next, let’s look at “Follower”.

Ephesians 5:22-24,32 says:

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, His body, of which He is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. . . . This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the Church.”

So a mystery is revealed. That is interesting! As we live out the biblical role of the wife, we display what used to be a mystery – that marriage is to show all people the relationship between Christ and His Church! In Ephesians 3, Paul says that the manifold wisdom of God concerning the mystery (of Gentiles being co-heirs in the promise of Christ) is to be revealed through the Church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. Whose responsibility is it to reveal God’s manifold wisdom? The Church. Today that is you and me. Paul uses the same wording of rulers and authorities when explaining the armor of God in Ephesians 6 – clearly the dark side of the heavenly realm.

Let’s put all this together, Paul says marriage reveals what used to be a mystery – the relationship of Christ’s relationship with the Church. Now this is amazing and sobering – not only are we to display that relationship to our children, husband, girlfriends, and every other person who watches me relate to my husband, but also to that unseen realm. God is watching all the time, and perhaps the unseen world is watching you

right now too. I used to roll my eyes when Tony left the house, and I was alone, and I had to submit to something. Not any more.

Job displayed to Satan, TO SATAN, that God was worthy of following, though it appears Job never knew the heavenly spiritual impact of his suffering. In the book of Job we actually get to sit in on a conversation that just blows me away every time I read it. A conversation occurred between Satan and God, and we get to hear it! Satan basically tries to make the case to God that “Oh, Job, only worships you and praises you because you’ve made his life so easy and full. He wouldn’t worship you if you made his life hard. It’s just because you made his life so great that he worships and follows you.” So God gives Satan permission, limited permission, and Job loses all his servants, all his animals, all his children in a day. Job’s response, in Job 1:21 was:

“... naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised.”

Job had an opportunity to show something to Satan. There is no record that Job ever knew that was at least part of the purpose for which he was suffering. But Job’s response to his suffering was “May the name of the Lord be praised.” In other words, Job was displaying to Satan that God is worthy of praise not because of the people or material things God had given him, but because God is who He says He is. We as wives, have the same opportunity to prove to the spiritual realm that God’s commands are good. They are right, they are wise. It’s a privilege to get to display to the seen and unseen that God’s commands to a wife are good. He is worthy of our worshipful obedience to Him. The Church is to submit to Christ as the head, so we submit to our husbands.

Now that we have discussed the right motivation for submission, what is the history of submission and the lies about submission? We know that Satan was the first not to submit, then Adam and Eve did not submit, and since then all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Rom 3:23. And not surprisingly since Satan is involved in our culture, there are so many lies propagated about submission! Look up these Scriptures and make note of how the passages prove these are lies:

- **Lie:** A wife should submit because she is inferior to man.

Truth: _____ submitted to His Father but is not inferior to God. Phil 2:5-9

- **Lie:** A wife should submit because her husband is infallible.

Truth: For _____ have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Rom 3:23

- **Lie:** In submitting, a wife should not speak or think.

Truth: Speak _____. Eph 4:25

- **Lie:** A wife should not try to influence.

Truth: Prov 11:14, 24:6, Gen 2:18

Those are some of the lies, but what is the truth about submission? In the Bible, the word submission is a military term meaning to arrange yourself in rank under. Now all people are required by God to submit in some areas – government, IRS, police, bosses, etc. So, we are not alone in this.

We have looked at Ephesians 5, let's look at 1 Peter concerning submission. In 1 Peter 2, God gives the 5 examples of how Christ suffered for doing good. Here they are - He did not sin in response, He did not lie, He did not retaliate, He did not threaten in response to unjust treatment. What He did do was "entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly." Then we go to 1 Pet 3 and Peter says, "Wives, in the same way . . ." In the same way as Christ responded to suffering for doing good.

Our husbands will sin against us. That is a given. The question is, how will I respond to that in the moment and then for the rest of my life with him? Stop now and read Peter's instruction to wives in 1 Pet 3:1-6. This was written to wives of disobedient husbands (perhaps saved, perhaps not). The Holy Spirit through Peter uses the example of Sarah. The Jews Peter was writing to would have known all about what happened with Abraham and his wife Sarah. Those were BIG names and stories to the Israelites. Why would Peter use Sarah? Three historical accounts come to mind about Abraham that pertain to marriage – 1 unrighteous and 2 righteous (but still would have been scary had I been Abraham's wife). Now 3 common reasons women give for not wanting to submit are fear of results with our kids (parenting), fear of loss of relational security, and fear of loss of financial security. So how do Abraham and Sarah fit in? Unrighteous - Abraham pawned Sarah off to a king as his sister and not his wife, twice, to save his own hide. Now that was a terrible thing for Abraham to do and just about all the Jews who read 1 Peter would have known that. After that Sarah would certainly have struggled with fear of losing the relational security a husband would offer. Two righteous accounts – Abraham gave Lot the choice of which land for Abraham to give him, and Lot chose the most fertile land. Now I don't know about you, but if my husband who had been told he was going to have offspring

as numerable as sand on the shore, came home and told me he gave away the best land, I'd have struggled with that one. Fear about financial security. The third account - how about when Abraham righteously took Isaac up prepared to kill his son on the altar as God commanded? Hebrews tells us Abraham reasoned that God would raise him from the dead. But if I had been Sarah, when Abraham had told me he was packing up to sacrifice our only son, I would have been struck with fear. Parenting. Peter used this woman to help us see we should still submit even when we don't understand parenting decisions. Share our wisdom and preferences, but unless it is clear sin, we are to submit. God says to be like Sarah and do what is right and do not give way to fear. In other words, we should not make a decision about whether to submit or not based upon fear of losing something or not getting something. We should not put our hope in our husbands for our financial security, relational security, nor parenting results. Our hope is in our Lord who is all-powerful, infinite in wisdom and perfect in His love. No one can hold back His hand. We can submit even when we are fearful.

The last thing I want to say about submission is that you and I as wives will NOT be held accountable by God for the final decision our husbands make. Whew! What a relief! What we will be accountable for includes the wisdom we sought to share, how we shared it, how we responded to the final decision when it is made, and how we followed through with his decision. As well, should the decision get the family in a ditch, then we are held responsible for encouragingly helping our husbands out of the ditch.

Fan

Let's go back to Ephesians now. Ephesians 5:33 says, "Let the wife see that she respects her husband". We are a "Finisher" in being a companion and suitable helper, we are a "Follower" by submitting, and we are a "Fan" by honoring, esteeming, praising, and loving our husbands. This is in the same chapter of Ephesians where wives are instructed to display what the church looks like under Christ, so it makes sense that wives would show respect to our husbands as the church shows respect to Christ.

This is an easy concept to grasp. What does the church do?

- Sings praises about Christ. So a wife can sing praises to her kids, in-laws, parents about the good things her husband does.
- Celebrates the good things Christ has done. So a wife can have the kids celebrate by a favorite daddy party with cupcakes the kids help her make.
- The church gives thanks to God for what He has done. So a wife can keep a thankful journal – looking for the good and writing it down – and tell him each day what she has recorded.
- The church loves Christ and shares her heart and desires with Him. So a wife does the same with her husband.
- The church acknowledges that she does not understand all that Christ commands. So a wife can acknowledge she does not understand and still respect and submit.
- The church puts Christ's desires above her own. So a wife should put her husband's desires before her own.

Conclusion and Assignment

What an amazing God we serve! All-powerful, infinitely wise, perfect in love for you. He is so good to us, and part of His goodness is in giving us instructions on how to bring Him glory as a wife. Don't believe the lies of this world that the Bible's view of a wife makes her a doormat, stupid and old fashioned. Believe what God says about His Word:

Ps 19:7-14

*The law of the LORD IS PERFECT,
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the LORD ARE TRUSTWORTHY,
making wise the simple.*

*⁸ The precepts of the LORD ARE RIGHT,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the LORD ARE RADIANT,
giving light to the eyes.*

*⁹ The fear of the LORD IS PURE,
enduring forever.
The decrees of the LORD ARE FIRM,
and all of them are righteous.*

*¹⁰ They are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
than honey from the honeycomb.*

*¹¹ By them your servant is warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.*

¹² *But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.*

¹³ *Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.*

*Then I will be blameless,
innocent of great transgression.*

¹⁴ *May these words of my mouth and this medi-
tation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
LORD, MY ROCK AND MY REDEEMER.*

EPHESIANS 4

PUT OFF / BE TRANSFORMED / PUT ON STRATEGY SHEET

This is a sample. Once you have reviewed it, make one of your own in an area from this pamphlet in which you want to grow. Then prayerfully review it daily, and put it into practice.

1. Problem: *My husband makes "unwise" decisions and so I don't want to submit to him in those areas, and because of those areas, I don't want to submit to him in any area. Plus he hardly ever reads the Bible, so he is not trustworthy.*

2. Read Ephesians 4:22-24.

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

3. Date started: *xx/xx/xxxx*

4. My personal behavior within the problem:

When he makes a decision, I tell him what I think. If he does not change his mind, we argue about it. If he still doesn't change his mind, I don't speak to him for about a day or so. I figure that will help him change his mind and show him how important it is to me to go the other way with the decision.

5. Applicable scripture:

Pro 27:17, Eph 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 1Pe 3:4 but let your adorning be the

hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit... also Isa 55:8-9, Pr 27:17, Rom 8:28-29

6. What do I want when I am tempted to sin in this way? (heart/inner man/deceitful desire)

I want my husband to see the value of my wisdom on this and do it my way even if he thinks his way is better. I guess I'm seeing that what I want is to have control over my husband's decisions.

7. What are the lies that I am believing about God, myself and my happiness? Why do I believe that this will make me happier than what God has already given me? (heart/inner man/deceitful desires)

Lies – *I can only be happy if I submit to only what I think is wisest. Submission is old fashioned and stupid.*

Why? - *I see that I have been believing that I think my way "me in control" is better, wiser, more loving than God's way – "husband has last word on final decision." I think I've been believing that because it just "feels better" when I get to have control. And I've bought into "if it feels good, do it" mentality of the world.*

8. Personal sin(s) associated with the problem:

(Be sure to confess all sins to God so that you can receive the joys of forgiveness and being purified.)

Wow, I see that I have actually thought I am smarter, more loving and better at things than God! That my plans would have been higher and better than His! Oh my!

9. Specific times or situations when I am tempted to choose to sin in this way:

Every time when we disagree! Specifically – child discipline, being ready to go places way too early, vacation decisions, free time decisions, what church to attend, when kids should to homework, sex.

10. Specific prayers I'll pray each day concerning this temptation:

Lord, please help me to live by faith that your ways really are higher and better than mine so that I will choose to submit when we disagree! Help me to be a godly helpmate by sharing my wisdom with humility, then trusting you with my husband's decision as you are all powerful and do all things for your glory. Help me remember that this submission will help me to become more like Christ, who willingly submitted to You. Help me to submit with a gentle and quiet spirit because You are trustworthy. Help me depend upon your strength to do so as I remember your goodness. (turn the page over for specific put off/put on strategy)

My strategy will be to prayerfully depend on the power of the Holy Spirit; and using the Ephesians 4:22-24 put off/be transformed/put on command, I will:

11. Desires (Heart transformation according to truth from God's Word):

- **Off: (Deceitful Desires)**

(What do I want more than pleasing God?)

To have control and get my way because I think it's better than my husband's.

- **On: (Godly Desires)**

(What does God say I should want?)

2 Corinthians 5:9, 15)

To please God at all cost because I am so overwhelmed by His love shown in the extravagant sacrifice of Christ's death to pay for what I justly deserve – eternity in Hell.

12. Thoughts (Heart transformation according to truth from God's Word):

- **Off: (Sinful thinking concerning God, self, others and/or circumstances)**

Because he does not read the Bible, I should not have to submit to him. So many decisions of his have made our lives so much harder, so I'm just not going to go through another hard thing because of him again!

- **On: (Right perspective concerning God, self, others, and/or circumstances)**

God is sovereign over my husband and will use even the decisions that will make our lives harder to make me more like His Son. If I want to become like His Son who learned obedience through His suffering, then it will be good for me and the kids to suffer if my husband is wrong this time.

13. Words: (Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6)

- **Off (Old self words):**

"I am so sick of you thinking you can make all the decisions" "This is just going to be like the last time you made this kind of decision" "This is a stupid idea." Or silent treatment of no words.

- **On (New self words):**

"Honey, may I share a few thoughts about this? I'm just thinking that something we learned in the sermon, Bible, past experience, (etc.) was . . . But if you decide the other way is the way you want to go, I will respect that and support what you say. And I know I have not done that well in the past, so please pray for me that I will do better at trusting God and submitting with a gentle and quiet spirit."

14. Actions (How can I actively love God and others at this time?)

- **Off (Old self actions):**

Frowns, slumped shoulders during conversations, slamming cabinet doors, slamming down the phone after conversations, withholding sex, sending mean looking messages with my eyes that basically say "drop dead."

- **On (New self actions):**

Smile because God is good in all things; hold his hand when I bring up a hard thing; look lovingly at him with sweet looks rather than "I am gonna win" looks. Close doors gently, say I love you when we hang up the phone whether I feel like it or not, because Christ died for me, expressing His love to me when I was yet his enemy, so I can express love to those whom I feel good about or bad about. Loving my husband in thought/word/deed is a covenant I made with God, not a feeling that may come or go. I will find a helpful time to seek to be intimate with him because that seems to give him the grace to help him and makes his life a little easier for him.

Resources:

Example Ephesians 4 Put Off/Be Transformed/Put On Strategy Sheet

Blank Ephesians Put Off / Put On

– email request to LisaAndersonHopeCenter@gmail.com

Christ and Your Problems, Jay Adams

How to Handle Trouble, Jay Adams

The Attitude of Gratitude, Nancy Leigh DeMoss

You Can Trust God, Jerry Bridges

Helper by Design, Elyse Fitzpatrick

On Salvation, Eternal Destiny:

Gospel Primer pamphlet (or longer book), Milton Vincent

I and Christian Family Chapel's Hope Center are greatly indebted to the wonderful teachings that include "Fan, Follower and Finisher" from Faith Lafayette, Lafayette IN. faithlafayette.org

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